



	International	National	Regional and Local
Events, Opportunities Go to articles	02/09 NKorea guards against Olympic defection 02/09 Snow, freezing rain pummel France 02/08 Russia angry over US extradition efforts 02/08 Russia athletes Olympic appeal rejected 02/08 Russia denounces US airstrike at UN 02/08 Claim: Myanmar starving Rohingya 02/08 Colombia tightens border controls 02/08 Taiwan rescuers search for victims	02/09 Government facing limited shutdown? 02/09 Major storm continues to pound Midwest 02/08 Study: youth violence declines 02/08 US body brokers supply the world 02/08 Dow plunges in full market correction 02/08 DACA recipients in military 'protected' 02/08 EPA enforcement actions hit 10yr low 02/08 ACLU: citizenship checks buses, trains 02/08 SoCal: no more 'voluntary' evacuations	02/08 Seattle City Light harassment settlement 02/08 USA Swimming facing scrutiny in probe 02/08 Native Americans homeless at high rate 02/08 Port's deal leaves truck drivers worried 02/08 Exploratory drilling Mount St Helens? 02/08 Rattlesnake Ridge Q&A
Cyber Awareness Go to articles	02/08 Hackers head start on Winter Olympics 02/08 First SCADA cryptominer seen in wild 02/08 Dark web vendors moving to Litecoin 02/08 Attempted online fraud jumps 113% 02/08 Warning issued to Pornhub users 02/08 Swisscom discloses data breach	02/08 Malware pervasive across cloud platforms 02/08 Alaska dangerous state for online dating 02/08 Russian trolls posed as black activists? 02/08 Tenn. hospital hit by mining malware 02/08 New POS malware designed to steal 02/08 Social media 'influencer marketing'	02/08 Official: pot tracking system hacked 02/08 Firefighter lieutenant charged w sexting 02/08 Seattle pushes Facebook on political ads 02/08 Spokane BBB: reports of mysterious text
Terror Conditions Go to articles	02/09 Security alert Trinidad, Tobago Carnival 02/09 Turkey resumes strikes on Kurd enclave 02/09 Extremists flourish in Indonesia prisons 02/09 Egypt: massive anti-terror operation 02/08 Resurgence of al-Shabaab 02/08 Syria slams US strike as 'war crime' 02/08 Last 2 ISIS 'Beatles' captured in Syria 02/08 Uruguay extends aid ex-Gitmo inmates	02/09 Endgame for US in Syria gets murky 02/08 Iran-backed militias warn US 02/08 US strike hit Russian mercenaries 02/08 Rare US strikes on pro-regime forces 02/08 Left to join ISIS: but many abandon fight 02/08 Military targets Chinese Uighur militants 02/08 Ex-Marine pleads guilty in FBI terror sting 02/08 DOJ: strip terror group leader citizenship	
Suspicious, Unusual Go to articles	02/09 Racism rises in Italy electoral campaign 02/08 NKorea sends clear message w/parade 02/08 Drones size, numbers can overwhelm	02/08 Official: NYPD ignored all ICE requests 02/08 Study: alarming find on ibuprofen use 02/08 Mysterious death Border Patrol agent	02/08 Mysterious wind blows down big trees 02/08 Skagit County: stop stealing trees
Crime, Criminals Go to articles	02/09 Los Zetas cartel faction leader captured 02/09 ICC probes Philippines, Venezuela 02/09 Indonesia foils artifact smuggling 02/08 Toronto police: serial killer probe 02/08 Mexico officials bust corrupt police ring	02/09 Expert: Sinaloa cartel moved to fentanyl 02/08 'Far reaching' Mass. wiretap in drug sting 02/08 Judge: neo-Nazi must reveal his location 02/08 Texas: 13 cases biker shooting dropped 02/08 Suburban mom takes down drug ring	02/08 Fatal road-rage shooting on I-5 near Fife 02/08 Seattle to clear minor pot convictions

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Event Calendar

[Top of page](#)

Date	Event	Location/Time	Other Information
9-13 Apr 2018	LEIU/IALEIA Training Event	Marriott Hotel, 700 West Convention Way Anaheim, CA 92801 (714) 750-8000	http://www.ialeia.org/2018_conference.php
Return to Top	**indicates new event/new information added during reporting week		

Events, Opportunities

[Top of page](#)

HEADLINE	02/09 Major storm continues to pound Midwest
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/US/major-winter-storm-continues-pound-midwest/story?id=52956660&cid=clicksource_4380645_1_hero_headlines_headlines_hed

GIST	<p>The biggest snowstorm of the season hit the Midwest hard overnight, where up to 9 inches of snow has already fallen with more to come.</p> <p>But today's storm is not the end, as yet another storm is forecast to hit Midwest, parts of the South and the Northeast this weekend.</p> <p>Because of all the snow -- and flooding forecast -- storm alerts are issued for 20 states from Wyoming down to Georgia and into New York.</p> <p>The storm system is moving through southern Great Lakes Friday morning bringing snow from Iowa to Ohio. Snowfall rates are 1 to 2 inches per hour from Chicago to Detroit.</p> <p>Snow will be done in Chicago by Friday's evening commute, and mostly over in Detroit. Snow will continue to fall from Buffalo, New York, to Albany, New York, and parts of western New England.</p> <p>By Saturday morning, the storm system will begin to weaken but will bring light rain and snow to parts of the Northeast and New England from Buffalo, New York, to Burlington, Vermont, and into Maine.</p> <p>Just as one storm system moves out, a new storm system moves right behind it for Saturday night into Sunday morning.</p> <p>This second system will be much larger, stretching from the Midwest into the South and Northeast.</p> <p>More snow is expected for cities like Chicago and Detroit with heavy rain expected from Nashville to Charleston, West Virginia, that could cause some flooding. Heavy rain is also forecast for Washington, D.C., Philadelphia, New York City and Boston.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	02/08 Rattlesnake Ridge Q & A
SOURCE	http://kimatv.com/news/local/rattlesnake-ridge-your-questions-answered
GIST	<p>With the Yakima County Emergency Management Teams no longer doing press conferences, we took the most common questions we get on social media and took them to those studying the Rattlesnake Ridge landslide.</p> <p>Why haven't they blown up the ridge? It seems like the easiest way to put this all past us. Just blow up the ridge force everything to come down and clean up the mess on our own terms.</p> <p>It's one of the first things Yakima County Emergency Management Teams considered when it came to dealing with the landslide. But the experts they spoke with said they don't think it's that simple.</p> <p>"In effort to move this landslide, it would take an immense number of explosives to even have an effect on this landslide, and there may be some unnecessary consequences from that," Senior Emergency Planner Horace Ward said.</p> <p>Some of the unnecessary consequences include having to put people on an active landslide and drill into it. Plus, if for some reason the bombs don't blow up as planned, the ridge will be filled with live explosives and no way to take them out safely.</p> <p>What is the current rate of the slide and is it accelerating? The Department of Natural Resources has been monitoring the slide since the beginning of the year. "We still have all the pieces of monitoring equipment up there and they all show that it's still moving at about 1.6 feet per week. The same rate it has been for the last several weeks," Joe Smillie said.</p>

There have been rates of 1.5 or 1.7 feet a week reported, but Smillie said when you average all the data it's still moving at the average of 1.6 a week.

He said this slide is different than most they see in Washington because of how slow it's moving and the makeup of the ridge itself.

“We have a column of basalt that was built up by lava flow and it's on a thin layer of sediment so that's why it is moving slower,” Smillie said. “It's more of gravity pulling the rock down the hill.”

Why is I-82 still open?

Driving down I-82 you might have wonder if it's safe being so close to the landslide. Emergency teams said there is no risk, as of right now, when it comes to the highway and The Department of Transportation has a plan to reroute traffic.

“It's moving so slow that, right now there's no risk to travelers on I-82. Dot has a plan in place where the detour route would go off of granger over to 97 and then back up to union gap in both directions,” Emergency Management Director Jeff Emmons said.

Thorp Road right next to I-82 was closed and evacuated right away, but as of right now Emmons doesn't see the slide making its way down to the interstate. As a safeguard, The Department of Transportation put up large metal containers along Thorp Road to protect I-82 from any rocks that may fall.

While some of Thorp Road has opened for people living there, they will keep the containers there and the rest of the road closed for the time being.

How do I stay up to date with the ridge?

You might not be living right next to the landslide, but we've been getting a lot of comments from people living here in Union Gap and surrounding cities of how they can stay up to date with what's going on. You can sign up for emergency alerts on the county's website by clicking "notify me" at the top of the page.

Then you can set up for what kind of alerts you want to get.

There are up to five email addresses you can sign up to make sure everyone in your house hold can get them. And even though the county recently let people move back into their homes off Thorp Road, Emergency teams highly suggest they sign up for alerts and be ready to leave at any time.

"Make sure you have some extra water in the house,” Jeff Pfaff with the Yakima Fire Department said. “Try to make sure that you have some food supplies, because we could lose power there could be things that happen in that small percentage but that great catastrophic thing that could happen at any time.”

Which brings us to our final question: will the landslide reach the river?

With the landslide so close to the Yakima River, we've gotten a lot of comments about the danger that poses. It would probably be the worst-case scenario, but also the most unlikely to happen when you combine how far the landslide would need to go and how slow it is moving.

Emmons said that geologists monitoring the slide told him it would take years for it to reach the water. He said they're watching the landslide to see if it will keep moving south, but as of right now there is no risk of it reaching the river.

“It would have to come south, go over both lanes of 82, up over it and into the river. With moving a foot and a half a week that could take some time and we would see it coming, so that it a really, really, really low risk,” Emmons said.

[Return to](#)

[Top](#)

HEADLINE	02/08 Russia angry over US extradition efforts
SOURCE	https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/world/2018/02/08/russia-angry-over-alleged-hackers-extradition-alleged-hacker-warns-u-s-stop-hunting-down-our-citizen/318770002/
GIST	<p>The Russian foreign ministry demanded Thursday that the U.S. "stop hunting down our citizens around the globe."</p> <p>The strongly worded request comes one week after the U.S. secured the extradition of an alleged Russian botnet hacker from Spain.</p> <p>"The number of Russians arrested in other countries at the request of the U.S. continues to increase," said Foreign Ministry spokesperson Maria Zakharova, according to the MFA Twitter account. "There were 11 such cases in 2017. We demand that the U.S. stop hunting down our citizens around the globe."</p> <p>Zakharova singled out the case of Peter Levashov, who was detained in Spain in April 2017 on federal charges of Internet scamming. He was extradited to the U.S. last week to face the charges.</p> <p>U.S. prosecutors charged that Levashov, 37, operated the Kelihos botnet, a network of more than 100,000 infected devices used by cyber criminals to spread viruses, ransomware, phishing emails and other spam. The charges carry a prison sentence of up to 52 years if convicted.</p> <p>Although Russian media has tied him to efforts to influence U.S. elections, the federal indictment does not include any election-related charges.</p> <p>Levashov, who denies the charges, was scheduled to appear in court in Bridgeport, Conn., on Friday. He also faces federal civil allegations in Alaska in connection with the Kelihos botnet, The Hartford Courant reports.</p> <p>Levashov, who fought the extradition, told Spain's High Court he worked for Russian President Vladimir Putin's United Russia party for the last 10 years, Russia's RIA news agency reported. He was arrested while on vacation in Barcelona.</p> <p>Zakharova said Levashov has complained about his detention conditions.</p> <p>"We regard this as an attempt to pressure the Russian citizen into making him more compliant," she said.</p> <p>Levashov told the Spanish court that U.S. authorities would torture him for information about his political activity if he was extradited, RIA said.</p> <p>Other Russian nationals extradited to the U.S. from third countries in recent years include Konstantin Yaroshenko, a professional pilot convicted in 2011 of cocaine trafficking, and Viktor Bout, convicted in 2012 on terrorism charges related to intent to smuggle weapons. Both denied the charges.</p> <p>Yaroshenko was arrested by FBI agents in 2010 in Liberia, and Bout, a businessman dubbed the "merchant of death," was arrested in Bangkok in 2008, Russia's RIA Novosti reports.</p> <p>In November, the Justice Department charged six members of the Russian government in the hacking of Democratic National Committee computers before the 2016 U.S. elections, the Wall Street Journal reported.</p> <p>In addition, two Russian intelligence agents and two hackers were charged in early 2017 with masterminding the 2014 theft of 500 million Yahoo accounts.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	02/08 Port's deal leaves truck drivers worried
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SOURCE

<http://crosscut.com/2018/02/ports-seattle-tacoma-deal-leaves-truck-drivers-worried-emissions/>

GIST

After a one-day walkout that helped win a delay of a clean-air rule, hundreds of independent truckers at the ports of Seattle and Tacoma say they still can't fathom how their meager earnings will allow them to buy newer and cleaner trucks by the new deadline of next Jan. 1.

The truckers remained nervous as they got behind the wheel again Wednesday after winning a nine-month reprieve from the ports on a looming April 1 deadline for the more modern but far more expensive trucks.

The drivers said they were unsatisfied by the port commissioners' vote Tuesday to delay putting the clean-truck requirement into effect until Jan. 1 and establish a \$1 million loan program to help drivers buy newer, cleaner trucks. Port staff members said they will also seek grants for new trucks from other sources.

"They didn't solve the problem," said 50-year-old Yemane Behane, whose 2001 truck fails to meet the federal air-quality standards for diesel trucks that went into effect in 2007.

He said the extension doesn't change any of the fundamental challenges of trying to buy a new truck without expectations of a higher income.

Many of the ports' independent drivers are immigrants who own their trucks and contract with dispatching companies to pick up and deliver containers filled with consumer goods to warehouses and rail yards. With some earning as little as minimum wage once their expenses are paid, they said there is no way they can afford the \$40,000 to \$60,000 cost of a truck outfitted with a newer diesel filter system.

Several hundred drivers staged Tuesday's walkout in order to attend the port commissioners' meeting, a crowd large enough that it filled the main meeting room at Seattle Tacoma International Airport and spilled out into the hallway. Dozens more filed into a second viewing room set up by port officials to allow drivers to watch the meeting remotely.

The ports in 2008 committed to upgrading the truck fleet to the newer and cleaner trucks by Jan. 1 of this year. But only about half the trucks hit that deadline. On Tuesday port commissioners met to impose a new April 1 deadline. But commissioners agreed they do not have much information about the independent drivers who make up an estimated 80 percent of truckers serving the ports.

"Ultimately, whose lives are we impacting?" said Commissioner Fred Felleman. "I feel irresponsible in taking a vote not knowing who I'm impacting."

In fact, the ports, which handle their waterfront operations jointly under an alliance, don't even know exactly how many truck drivers are affected. It says 53 percent of the approximately 4,500 trucks registered to do business at the ports comply with the clean-air rules. Driver Yared Meconnen, who helped organize the walkout and lobbying campaign, told port commissioners that more than 2,000 drivers still own the older trucks.

Seattle Port Commissioner Stephanie Bowman, who is also executive director of a nonprofit that serves low-income populations, said the drivers' concerns amount to an "economic justice issue."

"There are a lot of brown faces in this room," Bowman said.

Under the compromise approved Tuesday, the ports will begin enforcing the new standards on April 1, 2018, but older trucks will still be allowed to pick up and deliver shipping containers provided they register with the ports, according to Jason Jordan, director of environmental and planning services at the Seaport Alliance.

A group of 10 trucking company owners who bought new trucks in anticipation of the original deadline at the start of this year have said they intend to file a lawsuit against the Seaport Alliance if the April deadline was extended. The owners say the enforcement delay forces them to compete with other drivers

	and companies who opted not to invest in new trucks.
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	02/08 Seattle City Light harassment settlement
SOURCE	http://crosscut.com/2018/02/seattle-city-light-settlement-harassment-discrimination/
GIST	<p>Three years before #MeToo — and before the City of Seattle’s own public reckoning with harassment — a group of four Seattle City Light female employees complained of a department and an HR director uninterested in taking discrimination, harassment or hostility seriously. The director, they alleged in a lawsuit, was quick to retaliate for their speaking out.</p> <p>The City of Seattle agreed last spring to pay \$375,000 to three of the women, quietly ending that 2014 lawsuit. The settlement was signed last March but was not made public until now.</p> <p>None of the three women still work for Seattle City Light. One agreed as a condition of her settlement to never again seek employment with the City of Seattle. Another now works in the city’s Information Technology Department. The third no longer works for the city and is the co-founder of a DIY home improvement company, See Jane Drill.</p> <p>Meanwhile, the HR director accused of ignoring discrimination complaints and fostering the hostile work environment remains in her position. Years later, as City Light once again finds itself the target of harassment, discrimination and sexism complaints, employees continue to point the finger at the department’s HR unit for not doing enough.</p> <p>The settlement, provided to Crosscut by the City Attorney’s Office, was borne out of a 2014 lawsuit in King County Superior Court. It was filed by Annette “Nettie” Dokes, Olayinka Ogunyemi and Karen DeVenaro as well as a fourth woman, Patsy Taylor. Taylor withdrew from the litigation in 2016 and no longer works for the City.</p> <p>“City Light has a long-standing history of discrimination and retaliation against older female employees,” their complaint read. “City Light has a history of discriminating against employees substantially motivated by the sexual orientation of the employees.”</p> <p>In the complaint, all four women alleged theirs was a troubled work environment. Each also singled out the department’s HR director DaVonna Johnson, who has held the position since 2008. In the suit, Johnson was repeatedly described as ignoring the employees’ complaints of hostility and discrimination. When the matters were brought to Johnson’s attention, the four women said they were met with retaliation.</p> <p>At the time of the original lawsuit, Dokes was described as being older than 50 and an electrical lineworker, which the complaint describes as a “nontraditional trade for women.” She said since 2010 she “repeatedly reported to Ms. Johnson about the hostile work environment she was enduring and about the ongoing discrimination that was occurring against her in the workplace by union officials and union members.”</p> <p>But after meeting with Johnson, Dokes says no action was taken. The work environment became so hostile, according to the complaint, that Dokes was forced to take an extended medical leave.</p> <p>Dokes was shortly thereafter fired from her job, which she claims was retaliation for complaining. As part of the settlement, Dokes will switch her status from termination to “retirement” but on the condition she not apply for a job with the City again.</p> <p>Ogunyemi, who was also over 50 at the time of the complaint, had been working as a Personnel Specialist since 1999. She similarly says she complained to Johnson about discrimination in City Light based on age and race. (Her race was not listed in the complaint.) But after raising the issue, Ogunyemi says Johnson subjected her “to false allegations of policy violations and suspended [her] from work.” Like Dokes,</p>

Ogunyemi said she was forced into taking medical leave due to stress.

DeVenaro was hired by City Light in 1994 and worked as an Apprenticeship Manager. She says she reported to Johnson that an employee was accepting alcohol from apprentices in exchange for positive evaluations. As a result of her actions, she says the HR director began excluding her from discussions and that her job duties were eventually reassigned to “younger, less experienced employees.” In the complaint, she was described as being over the age of 40.

In 2012, DeVenaro complained she was being discriminated against due to her sexual orientation. And in 2013, DeVenaro “was forced to relinquish her position at City Light because all of her job duties had been reassigned.”

“City Light’s hostile, discriminatory, and retaliatory actions against Ms. DeVenaro have caused her severe emotional distress and economic damages,” reads the complaint.

According to City Attorney’s Office spokesperson Kimberly Mills, the City did not settle with Taylor, who made similar allegations as the other three women before withdrawing from the lawsuit.

At the time the suit was filed, the city strongly denied the employees’ allegations and pointed out their shortcomings. “We will vigorously defend City Light against these unfounded claims,” Katrina Kelly, the assistant city attorney assigned to the case, told the Seattle Times in 2014.

City Light also defended Johnson, whom they noted is an African-American woman. The department credited her for making “fundamental changes to streamline the hiring process and shift the focus of the Personnel Specialists from processing hiring paperwork to customer service — providing internal clients with professional consultation and support and guidance for their hiring processes,” according to papers filed with the court.

On Wednesday, when reached for comment, City Light spokesperson Scott Thomsen said, “The parties have resolved the matter and agreed not to discuss it further.”

The city has not admitted to any wrongdoing. The City Attorney’s Office declined to comment on the settlement.

Attorneys for the women, Joel Nichols and Susan Mindenbergs, said neither they nor their clients could discuss the settlement due to the confidentiality clause. The same confidentiality agreement, Nichols said in an email, bars the attorneys from explaining more fully why Taylor withdrew from the litigation in 2016.

In late 2017, more than 40 City Light employees signed onto complaints of sexism inside the department, The Stranger reported then. They petitioned the department for more anti-sexism training and better training for supervisors on how to receive employee complaints; they also asked that management be more communicative.

Spurred on in part by those complaints, City Light employees took the lead in organizing a new group for City employees who say Human Resources hasn’t been doing enough. In recent weeks, the group that calls itself the Seattle Silence Breakers has seen its membership grow to more than 50 people.

Over the past several months, employees from City Light and other departments have told Crosscut about their frustrations with their respective HR departments. Many echo the allegations of the 2014 lawsuit.

Last January, the City reached a \$220,000 settlement with two library security guards who accused two supervisors of sexual harassment, according to The Seattle Times. One woman said she was spanked by a colleague, and when she complained her supervisor only laughed.

Both women had to leave their City jobs as a condition of the settlement while the manager retained his.

	<p>The incident sparked outrage among members of the Silence Breakers, in part catalyzing their desire to go public.</p> <p>In January, Mayor Jenny Durkan told Crosscut she had no sense of whether the City had a sexual harassment problem. “At any given time as the mayor if I said, ‘Do we have a problem with sexual harassment? How many complaints have been brought?’ No one could answer that,” Durkan said. “[Departments] were settling things in darkness.”</p> <p>In response, she’s demanded all departments notify the City’s Department of Human Resources before settling. She also said she favors consolidating the City’s disparate HR functions into one central system, a process already begun under her predecessor Ed Murray.</p> <p>Members of the Seattle City Council are also considering new and more independent avenues for employees to bring harassment complaints.</p>
<p>Return to Top</p>	

HEADLINE	02/08 USA Swimming facing scrutiny in probe
SOURCE	http://mynorthwest.com/895403/swimmings-governing-body-faulted-following-sex-abuse-probe/
GIST	<p>SEATTLE (AP) — Another national sports governing body is facing scrutiny over how it dealt with sexual misconduct allegations after a U.S. champion swimmer said a team coach sexually abused her when she was 16.</p> <p>Ariana Kukors, now 28, also told authorities that coach Sean Hutchison took thousands of sexually explicit photographs of her. Hutchison denies abusing Kukors and has not been charged with a crime. U.S. authorities and police executed a search warrant at his Seattle apartment this week, seizing electronic devices.</p> <p>Hutchison faced an investigation by USA Swimming in 2010 over his ties to Kukors but it was closed with no misconduct found. USA Swimming, the national governing body for the sport, said Thursday that it learned of the underage abuse allegations this week.</p> <p>The investigation of Hutchison comes amid scrutiny over the supervision of people who work with young athletes. Former sports doctor for USA Gymnastics, Larry Nassar, was sentenced recently to decades in prison for sexual abusing young girls in his care.</p>
<p>Return to Top</p>	

HEADLINE	02/08 US body brokers supply the world
SOURCE	https://ca.news.yahoo.com/special-report-u-body-brokers-supply-world-torsos-133238485--finance.html
GIST	<p>PORTLAND, Oregon (Reuters) - On July 20, a Hong Kong-flagged cargo ship departed Charleston, South Carolina carrying thousands of containers. One of them held a lucrative commodity: body parts from dozens of dead Americans.</p> <p>According to the manifest, the shipment bound for Europe included about 6,000 pounds of human remains valued at \$67,204. To keep the merchandise from spoiling, the container’s temperature was set to 5 degrees Fahrenheit.</p> <p>The body parts came from a Portland business called MedCure Inc. A so-called body broker, MedCure profits by dissecting the bodies of altruistic donors and sending the parts to medical training and research companies.</p> <p>MedCure sells or leases about 10,000 body parts from U.S. donors annually, shipping about 20 percent of</p>

them overseas, internal corporate and manifest records show. In addition to bulk cargo shipments to the Netherlands, where MedCure operates a distribution hub, the Oregon company has exported body parts to at least 22 other countries by plane or truck, the records show.

Among the parts: a pelvis and legs to a university in Malaysia; feet to medical device companies in Brazil and Turkey; and heads to hospitals in Slovenia and the United Arab Emirates.

Demand for body parts from America — torsos, knees and heads — is high in countries where religious traditions or laws prohibit the dissection of the dead. Unlike many developed nations, the United States largely does not regulate the sale of donated body parts, allowing entrepreneurs such as MedCure to expand exports rapidly during the last decade.

No other nation has an industry that can provide as convenient and reliable a supply of body parts.

Since 2008, Reuters found, U.S. body brokers have exported parts to at least 45 countries, including Italy, Israel, Mexico, China, Venezuela and Saudi Arabia. Whole bodies are studied at Caribbean-based medical schools. Plastic surgeons in Germany use heads from dead Americans to practice new techniques. Thousands of parts are shipped overseas annually; a precise number cannot be calculated because no agency tracks industry exports.

Most donor consent forms, including those from MedCure, authorize brokers to dissect bodies and ship parts internationally. Even so, some relatives of the dead said they did not realize that the remains of a loved one might be dismembered and sent to the far reaches of the globe.

“There are people who wouldn’t necessarily mind where the specimens were sent if they were fully informed,” said Brandi Schmitt, who directs the University of California system’s anatomical donation program. “But clearly there are plenty of donors that do mind and that don’t feel like they’re getting enough information.”

MedCure shipments are now the subject of a federal investigation. In November, the Federal Bureau of Investigation raided the company’s Portland headquarters. Though the search warrant remains sealed, people familiar with the matter say it relates in part to overseas shipping.

MedCure is cooperating with the investigation, said its lawyer, Jeffrey Edelson. He declined to comment on the FBI raid, but said: “MedCure is committed to meeting and exceeding the highest standards in the industry. It takes very seriously its obligation to not only deliver safe specimens securely, but to do it in a way that respects the donors.”

Edelson also said MedCure “partners with government and industry agencies to follow and exceed requirements for shipping human tissue,” and that “shipping handlers, drivers and carriers are specially trained for the safe handling and transportation of human specimens.”

INFECTED PARTS AT THE BORDER

As a Reuters series last year revealed, the body donation industry is so lightly regulated in the United States that almost anyone can legally buy, sell or lease body parts.

Although no federal law expressly regulates the body trade, there is one situation in which the U.S. government does exercise oversight: when body parts leave or enter the country. Border agents have the authority to ensure that the parts are not infected with contagious diseases and are properly shipped.

This authority played a leading role in the government securing a conviction last month of Detroit broker Arthur Rathburn, who stored body parts in grisly, unsanitary conditions, according to trial testimony. The FBI began to focus intently on Rathburn’s business, International Biological Inc, after repeated border stops in which he was found ferrying human heads, court records show.

The jury found that Rathburn defrauded customers by supplying body parts infected with HIV and hepatitis.

“The fraud scheme orchestrated by IBI shocked even the most experienced of our investigative team,” said FBI special-agent-in-charge David Gelios. Even in death, Gelios said in a statement after the verdict, donors were “victimized as IBI intentionally and recklessly marketed and transported contaminated human remains... Personal greed overcame decency.”

Rathburn was also convicted of transporting hazardous materials — the head of someone who had died of bacterial sepsis and aspiration pneumonia. The transportation conviction underscored the U.S. government’s growing concern about shipments of body parts that might endanger public health, officials said.

Martin Cetron, director of Global Migration and Quarantine for the Centers of Disease Control and Prevention, said that when brokers dissect a body that is infected, there is added risk of transferring that disease to anyone who handles the parts.

“In the case of saws (used) to cut bones or limbs, there may be additional procedures that could potentially turn a fluid into an aerosol that could be inhaled and be communicable,” Cetron said.

A Reuters review of government records shows that border agents intercepted body parts suspected to be infected at least 75 times between 2008 and 2017. Border agents pay more attention to goods entering the country than those departing, and virtually all of the intercepted shipments were remains of American donors whose body parts were being returned to United States. Typically, body parts are returned to America for three reasons: to comply with foreign laws on final disposition; when cremation is not available in the foreign country; or when a U.S. broker intends to reuse the parts.

In 2016 and 2017, for example, federal agents stopped shipments being returned to MedCure at the border, law enforcement records show. The body parts they stopped included torsos carrying infectious biological agents that cause sepsis, a body’s extreme response to infection. At least one carried the life-threatening MRSA bacteria, the records show.

For more than a year, records show, U.S. officials and some body brokers have disagreed over whether the presence of sepsis in a corpse — without further information about a person’s cause of death —poses enough of a risk to warrant special packaging and warning labels.

“Sepsis itself is not a disease diagnosis but it raises a red flag,” said Cetron, the CDC official. The pathogen that caused sepsis, he said, “could be a bacteria, could be Ebola, could be salmonella, could be E. coli.” That’s why further documentation, including a death certificate, must accompany any body part imported into the United States, he said.

The CDC has an exemption intended to allow for shipping blood and other lab testing samples. Reuters found dozens of examples of brokers labeling customs manifests and packages with a version of the term “exempt human specimen” to ship body parts.

“I think that’s a deceptive practice,” Cetron said. “If they are human remains, part or in whole — heads, arms, limbs, etc. — they are not exempted.”

Several brokers said the government should clarify the rules — whether the CDC’s or those of other regulatory entities. They cited, for example, a U.S. Department of Transportation regulation that, they believe, exempts body parts. Transportation officials declined to comment on their regulations.

Alyssa Harrison, executive director of Oklahoma-based broker United Tissue Network, said most in her industry want to follow the law. But, she added, “there are many guidelines that are unclear and or contradictory to other department’s regulations.”

	<p>The disconnect between what the industry and government believe is dangerous, and what precautions are required by law, should be resolved, said Matthew Zahn, chairman of the public health committee for the Infectious Diseases Society of America, a group that represents doctors, researchers and other health professionals.</p> <p>“It’s a situation where we don’t have a huge amount of regulation or clarity as to what the risks are,” Zahn said. “It feels like one of those cracks in the system where a practice has developed and the risk factors and oversight have not fully matured.”</p>
<p>Return to Top</p>	

HEADLINE	02/08 ACLU: citizenship checks on buses, trains
SOURCE	http://www.foxnews.com/us/2018/02/08/immigration-activists-decry-citizenship-checks-on-buses-trains.html
GIST	<p>U.S. Customs and Border Patrol agents in the far north do far more than keep watch over the country's frigid border with Canada. At a bus station in Bangor, Maine, where people often hop on rides to bigger cities, agents recently asked boarding passengers if they were U.S. citizens.</p> <p>One of those questioned reached out to the American Civil Liberties Union of Maine. Lawyers for the organization find the practice troubling.</p> <p>"None of us want to live in a society where we're consistently being told we need to show our papers," said Zachary Heiden, legal director for the ACLU of Maine.</p> <p>Though they declined our request for an interview, U.S. Customs and Border Patrol officials confirm their agents routinely engage in operations at transportation hubs throughout the state.</p> <p>The law grants immigration officers broad powers, enabling them to search for illegal immigrants on boats, planes, trains, buses and other vehicles – without a warrant – within 100 miles of the border.</p> <p>According to the ACLU, that puts the whole of Maine within reach and the entirety, or near entirety, of 10 other states, too.</p> <p>ACLU attorneys are now seeking federal records.</p> <p>"We do not know nearly enough about the stops. We don't know why they're doing it. We don't know how often they're doing it and we don't know what the results have been," said Heiden.</p> <p>"We don't know how widespread it is but we are hoping to learn more. It does seem like there's been an increase."</p> <p>Last week, a passenger on an Amtrak train in Syracuse, N.Y., captured video of agents asking those on board about their citizenship.</p> <p>In Maine, reaction to the agents' actions was mixed.</p>
<p>Return to Top</p>	

HEADLINE	02/08 Exploratory drilling Mount St. Helens?
SOURCE	http://www.kiro7.com/news/local/us-forest-service-to-allow-exploratory-drilling-near-mount-st-helens/696724319
GIST	<p>The U.S. Forest Service gave authorization for a Canadian company to conduct exploratory drilling to create a hard-rock mine near Mount St. Helens. But it's just a step in the process for the permits filed by Ascot USA, Inc.</p>

U.S. Forest Service Cowlitz Valley District Ranger Gar Abbas signed off on the decision with specific conditions on Thursday.

It's now up to the Bureau of Land Management to decide whether to issue the prospecting permits and approve the exploration plans. Before the plans go to BLM, the Forest Service has to give consent.

The company wants to drill to collect mineral samples like copper, gold, molybdenum and silver, according to a local lawmaker. The Forest Service found that no significant impact would come from the project and gave consent.

If approved, the sites would be adjacent to the south-facing slope of Goat Mountain, approximately 12 miles northeast of Mount St. Helens. It would not be on land within the Mount St. Helens National Volcanic Monument.

The sites would include 2-to-3 inch boreholes covering about .23 acres of land.

In his decision notice, Abbas writes that the Goat Mountain area historically has been dominated by logging, recreation, mineral prospecting, and limited mineral development.

Multiple options for the sites were discussed over the last year, and the Forest Service said they picked the one that's not supposed to impact water or wildlife.

But some are still expressing their displeasure for the consent, including ranking member of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee Maria Cantwell (D-Wash.)

“Opening the door to drilling at the edge of Mount St. Helens is a short-sighted decision that undervalues the important benefits these public spaces offer both to our booming recreation economy and to families who come from near and far to enjoy their beauty. This mountain should be managed for current and future generations to enjoy, and I hope the Trump administration will cease their efforts to jeopardize that by allowing it to be explored for drilling,” she wrote.

Last year Cantwell asked the Forest Service to deny the drilling permits. She believes mineral exploration and development would likely interfere with the recreation and conservation purposes.

[Return to](#)

[Top](#)

HEADLINE	02/08 Native Americans homeless at high rate
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/homeless/native-americans-are-this-regions-original-residents-and-they-are-its-most-likely-to-be-homeless/
GIST	<p>In King County, Native Americans and Alaskan Natives are less than 1 percent of the overall population but nearly 6 percent of its homeless population, a pattern that repeats in cities across the U.S. Once homeless, they also find housing at lower rates than any racial or ethnic group.</p> <p>The city of Seattle, wrestling with a growing homelessness crisis, is trying to address the racial disparity for the first time this year.</p> <p>Last year, when the city rebid its homeless-services contracts, five Native-led organizations were awarded \$3.2 million to prevent and end homelessness; four of those groups had never received city funding for those programs. The idea was that Native American organizations could best serve their own communities.</p> <p>“These guys have an understanding of how to tailor their care for Indian people,” said Michael Reichert, president and CEO of Catholic Community Services and Catholic Housing Services of Western Washington and a member of the Minnesota Chippewa Tribe.</p>

But with the new opportunities and resources come new requirements.

Seattle, after the contract rebidding, is pledging to house 7,400 homeless people by the end of this year, more than double the total from 2017. To reach that goal, the city is requiring service providers — including the Native-led groups — to hit quarterly performance targets.

Despite the city’s desire to reduce racial disparities, housing can’t actually be prioritized based on race — the federal Fair Housing Act prohibits explicit set-asides. And organizations receiving public dollars for housing can’t turn anyone away, even if they typically cater to specific cultural or racial groups.

Add to these potential limitations the historical discrimination of Native people, and the resulting social ills within that community, plus a regionwide affordable-housing shortage.

These realities are perhaps all the more distressing in a city named for Chief Seattle of the Duwamish and Suquamish peoples.

“There’s something out of balance when the First Nations people of this country are the most likely to be homeless,” said Colleen Echohawk, executive director of Chief Seattle Club, one of the newly funded organizations.

Across the country, other cities, like Seattle, are focusing on the intersection of homelessness and race. The Center for Social Innovation, a Massachusetts-based think tank, recently launched partnerships with eight communities, including Tacoma and Pierce County, to understand the wide racial and ethnic disparities in homelessness.

But no cities have come up with a cure-all. The efforts are focused on analyzing data to understand who is more likely to be homeless, but there are no proven strategies to reduce the disparities.

Locally, King County has for several years funded culturally specific organizations to provide homeless services. Seattle is also trying to reduce the high rates of homelessness among African Americans, but has emphasized addressing Native homelessness.

The city, however, hasn’t set an overall target for housing homeless Native Americans — the focus on disparities is just a broad objective.

But it is holding individual organizations to the specific performance goals. They must get 80 percent of their clients, participating in certain programs, into permanent housing; if they fail, they could lose 12 percent of their funding.

Leaders in the Native community say they need time to develop their programs, and tailor them to a community suffering from high levels of substance abuse and long-term homelessness. At least 75 percent of Chief Seattle Club’s members, for example, have mental-health and substance-abuse issues.

That’s why the cultural connections are so important, said Mother Nation’s Executive Director Norine Hill. Their clients participate in sweat-lodge ceremonies. They do traditional beading and participate in talking circles, telling their stories as part of their therapy.

Chief Seattle Club refers to people they serve as “members” or “relatives,” not clients.

“A lot of organizations, they just throw homeless people into housing,” Hill said. “And if you don’t heal them, how do you expect them to stay there?”

[Return to](#)

[Top](#)

SOURCE	https://www.upi.com/Health_News/2018/02/08/Youth-violence-in-US-declines-but-the-wars-not-over/1391518141976/?utm_source=fp&utm_campaign=ts_hn&utm_medium=15
GIST	<p>THURSDAY, Feb. 8, 2018 -- Far fewer young people are turning up in U.S. emergency rooms with assault injuries, but youth violence remains a serious issue, a new government study shows.</p> <p>The good news: The number of nonfatal assault patients aged 10 to 24 dropped 28 percent between 2011 and 2015, reaching the lowest level in the 15 years studied, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported.</p> <p>Still, almost 486,000 youths were treated in ERs for assault-related injuries in 2015. Most were males in their early 20s, the researchers found.</p> <p>More than 81 percent had been intentionally struck. Stabbing, cutting and piercing accounted for more than 8 percent of the injuries. Guns led nearly 6 percent to seek treatment.</p> <p>The cost of all this bloodshed: \$3.4 billion, including lost work.</p> <p>"Youth violence remains a major public health problem," said psychiatrist Dr. Victor Fornari, who wasn't involved in the research.</p> <p>"The underpinnings of this violence include mental health problems, substance abuse and histories of childhood adversity," said Fornari. He's director of child and adolescent psychiatry at Zucker Hillside Hospital in Glen Oaks, N.Y.</p> <p>The CDC researchers noted that certain policies and programs can reduce the risk for youth violence. They include school-based programs that build communication and problem-solving skills.</p> <p>Also, working with parents or caregivers to set age-appropriate rules and monitor youth activities can help stem conduct problems and violence, the researchers said.</p> <p>"Violence among young persons is preventable," wrote researchers led by Corinne David-Ferdon, of the CDC's National Center for Injury Prevention and Control.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	02/08 Russia athletes Olympic appeal rejected
SOURCE	http://www.foxnews.com/world/2018/02/08/appeals-by-47-russians-against-olympic-bans-rejected.html
GIST	<p>Sports' highest court rejected appeals by all 45 Russian athletes plus two coaches who were banned from the Pyeongchang Olympics over doping concerns in a decision announced Friday less than nine hours before the opening ceremony.</p> <p>The International Olympic Committee had refused to invite the group of Russians, saying it had evidence of alleged doping in Russian sports.</p> <p>The Court of Arbitration for Sport ruled that the IOC has the right to set its own standards for who is eligible.</p> <p>CAS Secretary General Matthieu Reeb, reading from a statement and declining to take questions, said the IOC process "could not be described as a sanction but rather as an eligibility decision."</p> <p>The IOC issued a statement welcoming the decision. "We welcome this decision which supports the fight against doping and brings clarity for all athletes," the statement said.</p> <p>A vetting process was designed to exclude Russian athletes from the games if IOC officials weren't sure</p>

	<p>they were clean, even if they hadn't been banned for doping.</p> <p>The IOC has invited 168 Russians to participate as "Olympic Athletes from Russia," competing in neutral uniforms under the Olympic flag.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	02/08 Taiwan rescuers search for victims
SOURCE	http://www.foxnews.com/world/2018/02/08/taiwan-rescuers-search-building-for-7-missing-in-earthquake.html
GIST	<p>HUALIEN, Taiwan – Rescuers in eastern Taiwan are continuing to search for seven people after Tuesday's deadly earthquake that tilted a 12-story building on a 45-degree angle.</p> <p>The seven are a couple from Hong Kong who hold Canadian citizenship and five members of a family from China, including their 12-year-old son.</p> <p>All are trapped in a hotel on the bottom floors of the Yunmen Tsuiti building, one of several damaged by the magnitude 6.4 temblor. The official death toll stood at 10 on Friday, including three tourists from China and a 27-year-old Filipino employed as a household helper.</p> <p>Taiwan's National Fire Agency said Friday that 273 people were listed as injured.</p> <p>Taiwan has frequent earthquakes due to its position along the "Ring of Fire," the seismic faults encircling the Pacific Ocean.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	02/09 Snow, freezing rain pummel France
SOURCE	http://www.foxnews.com/world/2018/02/09/eiffel-tower-closed-as-snow-freezing-rain-pummel-france.html
GIST	<p>PARIS – The Eiffel Tower is closed and authorities are telling drivers in the Paris region to stay home as snow and freezing rain have hit a swath of France ill-prepared for the wintry weather.</p> <p>The company that manages France's most-visited monument said the 19th-century Eiffel Tower will be closed all day Friday and Saturday "to ensure the security of visitors."</p> <p>Workers with hand shovels will carefully clear snow from the intricate ironwork and de-ice stairs and platforms. The company said in a statement they can't use salt because it could corrode the metal and damage the elevators.</p> <p>Heavy snowfall earlier this week trapped hundreds of drivers in cars and caused the worst-ever traffic jams in the Paris region. More snow is forecast Friday and authorities are warning of dangerous conditions in about a quarter of the country.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	02/08 SoCal: no more 'voluntary' evacuations
SOURCE	http://www.foxnews.com/us/2018/02/08/california-mudslides-spur-evacuation-terminology-changes.html
GIST	<p>SANTA BARBARA, Calif. – Emergency authorities in a Southern California county are eliminating the word "voluntary" from language used in evacuation orders following the devastating mudslides that struck last month.</p>

<p>Return to Top</p>	<p>Santa Barbara County officials said Thursday that the new terminology will be "pre-evacuation advisory," "recommended evacuation warning" and "mandatory evacuation order."</p> <p>A huge downpour unleashed raging torrents laden with large boulders and other debris that bulldozed through the sleeping community of Montecito, sweeping away homes and people. More than 100 homes were destroyed, many others were damaged, 21 people were confirmed killed and two others remain missing.</p> <p>Many residents remained despite mandatory or voluntary evacuation orders when the deadly storm hit on Jan. 9.</p> <p>"We recognize that with respect to the latter category, the voluntary evacuation order, we found after the January 9th event that for some the focus was on the word 'voluntary' rather than on the word 'evacuation,'" Sheriff Bill Brown said at a press conference.</p> <p>"And the reality is that some people misinterpreted that and believed that there was a measure of safety there that there really wasn't."</p> <p>Brown said the new terminology is clearer by stressing that evacuation is still recommended.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/09 NKorea guards against Olympic defection
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/02/09/asia/north-korea-olympic-defection-fears-intl/index.html
GIST	<p>Seoul, South Korea (CNN)Almost 500 North Koreans are in South Korea for the Winter Olympics -- in a land they have been brought up to see as enemy territory; one clearly more prosperous and more free than their own.</p> <p>It's also a place to which more than 31,000 of their comrades have defected over the past six decades -- a fact not lost on North Korea, which isn't taking any chances with its delegation this time.</p> <p>The group of athletes, officials, performers, reporters and cheerleaders -- including the younger sister of Kim Jong Un -- will be surrounded by support staff, minders and informants. They're also likely to be vetted, well-treated and loyal members of North Korea's elite.</p> <p>North Korean athletes have defected before. A women's ice hockey player defected in 1997 and a judo athlete defected while at a competition in Spain in 1999.</p> <p>While unlikely, it isn't impossible for a member of North Korea's Pyeongchang delegation to defect as the world watches the Games -- and it would be both a huge embarrassment for the North, and geopolitical mess for host South Korea.</p> <p>Now living in South Korea after defecting in 2006, Han Seo-hee was chosen in her twenties to be part of a North Korean cheerleading troupe after she performed for late leader Kim Jong Il.</p> <p>She says it's unlikely that cheerleaders would defect during such a high-profile visit.</p> <p>The team would be monitored everywhere they go and would be keenly aware of the consequences their family back home would face were they to make such a move, Han says.</p> <p>"I wouldn't have even considered it." Han says. "It will be the same for the cheerleading squad this time. They have family back home, they know if they defect, their family will be terrified and punished."</p> <p>"A North Korean group sent abroad is always composed of three parties. Party members, security members and administrative members. This time will be the same."</p>

	<p>The relentless glare of public scrutiny would be intense -- even intimidating -- for any athlete competing in the Games, which officially begin Friday.</p> <p>A former North Korean police officer, who didn't want to be identified because he still has family in the North, told CNN scrutiny would continue for the North Korean athletes out of the public eye.</p> <p>He said team members would be under 24-7 surveillance -- unable to go to the bathroom alone and informants would monitor who is talking to whom.</p> <p>Han said the very nature of North Korean life means everyone is encouraged to look for unusual or suspicious behavior in friends or family and report it.</p> <p>"Not only the leaders but also the rest of the performers will be punished for not reporting suspicious signs of a defector."</p> <p>The North Korean athletes have taken three floors of accommodation in the Gangneung Olympics village. Each apartment has two or more beds — the North Koreans would not be staying in rooms alone, according to the former police officer.</p>
<p>Return to Top</p>	

HEADLINE	02/08 Dow plunges in full market correction
SOURCE	https://www.nbcnews.com/business/markets/dow-plunges-1000-points-entering-correction-territory-n846091
GIST	<p>The Dow plunged more than 1,000 points just before the final bell clanged Thursday. It represented a full market correction, defined as a 10 percent drop from its 52-week high, the first time it had done so since 2016.</p> <p>The S&P 500 also dropped 3.7 percent to a new low for the week.</p> <p>After a record run-up, stock markets have been newly volatile following a stronger-than-expected January jobs report. Some investors saw the fastest rate of wage increases in recent times as a signal that the Fed might hike interest rates higher and sought to lock in gains, leading to the sell-off.</p> <p>"It's really about people thinking the Fed is either behind the curve or actually has to be more aggressive," Stephanie Link, global asset management managing director at TIAA, told CNBC. "That fear, that unknown, is really what's driving a lot of the anxiety."</p> <p>By closing at 23,860 points, the Dow Jones industrial average was set back to its level on Nov. 17, 2017, and officially corrected. The index peaked at 26,616 points just two weeks ago.</p> <p>On average, the stock market corrects about once a year, according to research from Deutsche Bank. The last time the market corrected was two years ago, in February 2016. By many measures, stocks have been overvalued and due for a come-down for some time.</p> <p>And the ride isn't over.</p> <p>"With the market closing at the low end of the day's range, expect more gyrations in the days and weeks to come," Greg McBride, chief financial analyst for Bankrate.com, said in an email.</p>
<p>Return to Top</p>	

HEADLINE	02/08 EPA enforcement actions hit 10yr low
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SOURCE	https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/white-house/epa-enforcement-actions-hit-10-year-low-2017-n846151
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON — The number of new enforcement actions by the Environmental Protection Agency has fallen significantly over the past year, according to data released Thursday by the Trump administration.</p> <p>The EPA initiated 20 percent fewer civil cases against polluters for violating environmental laws from the beginning of September 2016 to end of September 2017, as compared to the previous fiscal year, according to the EPA's latest enforcement numbers.</p> <p>The EPA also opened 30 percent fewer criminal enforcement cases during the same time period.</p> <p>The past fiscal year marked a historic low for enforcement actions across the board: The number of new civil and criminal cases, defendants charged, and federal EPA inspections and evaluations all reached their lowest levels in at least a decade, according to the data.</p> <p>The EPA said the declining numbers were not a sign of lax enforcement.</p> <p>"EPA is focusing on finding efficient ways to deter noncompliance and return facilities to compliance with the law," said EPA spokesperson Liz Bowman. "EPA is increasing the deterrent effect of EPA's enforcement program through criminal enforcement actions to address the most egregious cases."</p> <p>But environmental advocates say the new data makes it clear that EPA administrator Scott Pruitt and the Trump administration are letting polluters off the hook.</p> <p>"The drop-off in actions is very worrying," said Andrew Rosenberg of the Union of Concerned Scientists, an advocacy group. "It shows across the board a lack of desire to hold polluters accountable and that means the public health risks are greater."</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	02/09 Government facing limited shutdown?
SOURCE	https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/2018/02/08/trump-administration-advises-federal-agencies-prepare-limited-government-shutdown/321883002/
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON – The federal government shut down early Friday morning for the second time in less than three weeks after Congress failed to pass a spending bill to keep the agencies running.</p> <p>But this shutdown is likely to be short-lived – maybe just a few hours.</p> <p>The government ran out of money at midnight Thursday when plans to pass a sweeping bipartisan budget deal hit a snag in the Senate, causing Congress to miss a funding deadline and triggering a partial government shutdown.</p> <p>Sen. Rand Paul, a conservative Kentucky Republican and one-time presidential contender, temporarily blocked a Senate vote on the bill to lift strict budget caps and pave the way for lawmakers to spend an extra \$300 billion over the next two years on defense and domestic programs. The deal is attached to a short-term spending bill that will fund the government through March 23.</p> <p>Paul's objection slowed the bill's progress, but didn't stop it altogether. His right to object will expire in the wee hours of Friday morning and the Senate is expected to pass the bill.</p> <p>Congress and the White House had hoped to avoid another shutdown, especially coming less than three weeks after the government was shuttered for three days after lawmakers failed to pass a short-term spending bill.</p> <p>But late Thursday, the Trump administration began advising federal agencies to get ready – just in case.</p>

The Office of Management and Budget sent word to federal agencies that they should prepare for a "limited shutdown" of perhaps a few hours while Congress gives final approval to the spending bill.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE 02/08 Claim: Myanmar starving Rohingya

SOURCE <http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/ap-exclusive-rohingya-military-cut-off-food-myanmar-52946493?>

GIST Abdul Goni says the Myanmar government was starving his family one stage at a time.

First, soldiers stopped the Rohingya Muslim from walking three hours to the forest for the firewood he sold to feed his family. Then Buddhist neighbors and seven soldiers took his only cow, which he rented out to fertilize rice fields. Next, he says, they killed his uncle and strung him up on a wire for trying to stop the theft of his buffalos.

By the time Goni saw bodies floating down the local river, of fellow Rohingya killed for illegal fishing, he knew his family would die if they didn't leave. On bad days, they carved the flesh out of banana plant stalks for food. On the worst days, his children ate nothing.

"I felt so sorry that I couldn't give them enough food," the 25-year-old says, tears running down his face, in a refugee camp in Bangladesh, just across the border from Myanmar. "Everything just got worse and worse. ... Day by day, the pressure was increasing all around us. They used to tell us, 'This isn't your land. ... We'll starve you out.'"

First, massacres, rapes and the wholesale destruction of villages by the Myanmar military in western Rakhine state forced nearly 700,000 Rohingya Muslims to flee to Bangladesh, in reprisal for Rohingya militant attacks on Aug. 25. Now, the food supply appears to be another weapon that's being used against the dwindling numbers of Rohingya in Myanmar.

The accounts of hunger could not be independently confirmed, as Myanmar's government does not allow reporters into the northern part of Rakhine state, where most of the Rohingya lived. However, more than a dozen interviews by The Associated Press with the most recent refugees show growing desperation, as the noose tightens around their communities in what U.N. officials have said may be a genocide. The U.N. and human rights groups such as Amnesty International have also warned of increasing hunger among the Rohingya in areas where conflict and displacement have been most rampant.

Repeated calls to Myanmar's military weren't answered, but the Myanmar government denies ethnic cleansing and says it is battling terrorists. Social Welfare Minister Win Myat Aye says the government has been distributing food aid to as many people as possible.

"There are many ways that we have been reaching out to villagers frequently," he says. "And that's why it's not possible that there are people who are completely cut off from food or facing hunger."

The Rohingya Muslims, who have been loathed by Myanmar's Buddhist majority for decades, are locked down in their villages — sometimes even in their homes — and prevented from farming, fishing, foraging, trade and work, the refugees and aid groups say. In other words, they can no longer do what they need to do to eat. While restrictions on freedom of movement and access to food have long been in place, they have tightened dramatically in recent weeks, the AP interviews show.

The hunger the Rohingya faced at home is evident when they come to the Bangladesh camps, where new refugees, especially children and women, suffer from "unbelievable" levels of malnutrition, according to Dr. Ismail Mehr.

"They are definitely coming in starving," says Mehr, who recently returned to the United States from

treating refugees in the camps. "We saw the vitamin deficiencies in the children and the adults; we saw ... severely malnourished people who are basically skin and bones. It looked like the pictures from the Nazi camps."

Activists, aid groups and researchers say Myanmar squeezed the Rohingya by severely hampering many of the humanitarian operations that were crucial for their survival. Food aid was further disrupted by violence in 2016 and the bloodshed after Rohingya insurgents staged an unprecedented wave of 30 attacks on security posts across Rakhine state in August and killed at least 14 people.

Even before August, aid agencies in 2017 predicted a spike in severe malnutrition in children. In a report released today, Amnesty International details evidence of forced starvation by the military, including stopping the Rohingya from harvesting their rice fields in November and December. The Food and Agriculture Organization has also warned that the lack of access to food and fuel is adding to hunger in Myanmar.

Buddhists in Rakhine state began blocking food aid when they noticed that the Muslims were getting more than they were, according to Thomas MacManus, a specialist in international state crimes at Queen Mary University of London who has researched the Rohingya since 2012. Tightened curfews meant people couldn't harvest shrimp or rice, tend to their cattle, gather firewood or fish. Since August, an almost 24-hour-a-day curfew means no one is leaving their villages, he says.

MacManus says the Myanmar government has regularly employed a scorched-earth strategy that has denied food to other ethnic groups it has battled, including the Shan and the Kachin.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	02/08 DACA recipients in military 'protected'
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/mattis-says-daca-recipients-in-military-are-protected-even-if-program-expires/
GIST	<p>Defense Secretary James Mattis said immigrant members of the military who are currently protected by the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program will continue to be protected — even if the program expires without congressional action next month.</p> <p>Mattis, speaking to CBS News Pentagon correspondent David Martin and other reporters Thursday, said he has spoken with Homeland Security Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen and confirmed that anyone who has enlisted in the military and is waiting to report to boot camp, anyone on active duty or in the active reserves or anyone with an honorable discharge will not be deported. Two exceptions for that would be for anyone who has committed a serious felony or is the subject of a deportation order.</p> <p>If Congress fails to act before March 5 — the deadline upon which the program is set to expire — "they're protected," Mattis said.</p> <p>But relatively few members of the military currently benefit from DACA. In September, the Pentagon said fewer than 900 people currently serving or who have signed contracts to serve are recipients of the program.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	02/08 Colombia tightens border controls
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/colombia-tightens-border-control-venezuela-migrants-surge-52938756?
GIST	Colombia will tighten control of over its porous border with Venezuela as thousands of migrants fleeing a rapidly deteriorating political and economic crisis escape into the neighboring Andean nation.

	<p>In a visit to a border city at the epicenter of Colombia's mounting migration crisis, President Juan Manuel Santos on Thursday announced new measures that could make it more difficult for Venezuelan migrants to cross into the country illegally or remain there without any official status.</p> <p>"Colombia has never lived a situation like the one we are encountering today," Santos said.</p> <p>Migration into Colombia has surged as Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro has moved to consolidate his rule and the nation's economy plummets. Colombia migration authorities say there are an estimated 600,000 Venezuelans currently in Colombia — double the number six months ago. Venezuela exile associations and some border city officials have said they believe that number is higher.</p> <p>The unprecedented migration wave is putting strains on Colombia at a delicate time in its history. The nation is crawling out of a five-decade-long armed conflict following the signing of a peace deal with leftist rebels in 2016. Many of the Venezuelans are arriving illegally and in need of medical attention.</p> <p>"This is a tragedy," Santos said. "And I want to reiterate to President Maduro: This is the result of your policies."</p> <p>More than 2,000 additional military officers will be deployed to control the hundreds of dirt-road crossings known as "trochas" that dot Colombia's 1,370-mile (2,200-kilometer) border with Venezuela. A new migration patrol unit will also police public spaces where Venezuelan arrivals congregate, provide them orientation and to control ills like prostitution that have surfaced in the migration wave's wake.</p> <p>Migration authorities will no longer issue temporary border crossing cards, which have already been granted to 1.5 million Venezuelans to allow them short visits to purchase food and medicine. All Venezuelans inside the country will also be required to present themselves to officials and enroll in a registry.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	02/08 Russia denounces US airstrike at UN
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/latest-syria-confirms-us-airstrike-reports-casualties-52925188?
GIST	<p>The Latest on the situation in Syria (all times local):</p> <p>10:30 p.m.</p> <p>Russia's U.N. Ambassador Vassily Nebenzia says he has told the U.N. Security Council that the U.S.-led coalition's airstrikes on Syrian government-backed troops were "inadmissible" and "deplorable." He says they cannot be repeated — no matter what reasons the coalition gives to justify an attack.</p> <p>Nebenzia said U.S. Ambassador Nikki Haley raised the issue of the airstrikes at a closed council meeting Thursday where she defended the bombing that the U.S. military says killed about 100 fighters. The U.S.-led coalition said its action in eastern Syria was in "self-defense," citing a major attack on its allied forces and U.S. advisers in Deir el-Zour province.</p> <p>Nebenzia told reporters at U.N. headquarters in New York that he reminded the council that the coalition wasn't invited into Syria, and Russia sees that its fight against "international terrorism" is going "beyond that."</p> <p>Nebenzia also said that while the humanitarian situation in Syria is "deplorable," it is "in no way much more different than it used to be a month ago — but now we are being presented with it as if something dramatic has happened."</p>
Return to Top	

Cyber Awareness

[Top of page](#)

HEADLINE	02/08 Alaska dangerous state for online dating
SOURCE	http://www.ktva.com/story/37463493/alaska-most-dangerous-state-for-online-dating-report-says
GIST	<p>Alaska is the most dangerous state in the nation in which to date people online, according to a ranking released Thursday.</p> <p>A SafeWise.com overview of the nation's five most dangerous online-dating states – compiling risks of rape, fraud and sexually transmitted diseases – put Alaska at the top of the list followed by New Mexico, Louisiana, Nevada and Arkansas. The group's 2017 report had listed Alaska second behind Washington, D.C.</p> <p>The 2018 report was compiled using states' cybercrime and violent crime data from the FBI's Uniform Crime Reports for 2016, as well as their chlamydia and gonorrhea infection rates from the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.</p> <p>Alaska's FBI data for 2016, which led to an online report calling Alaska the nation's most dangerous state last month, shows a rise of more than 16 percent in rape cases that year-- which included 960 rapes and 89 attempted rapes. Although Alaska's data didn't include specific categories for rapes resulting from online dating, a VICE News report from 2016 said the United Kingdom reported a 450 percent rise in reported rapes linked to online dating over the previous five years.</p> <p>According to SafeWise, Alaska has the nation's second-highest rate behind Nevada of "romance scams," during which criminals cajole money from people during quickly formed relationships-- including those online. Alaska's 2016 cybercrime data from the FBI's Internet Crime Complaint Center lists a total of 50 reported victims from romance and confidence scams; the total losses from those crimes, \$894,062, work out to an average loss of \$17,881 per victim.</p> <p>State health officials said this week that Alaska continues to suffer a wave of gonorrhea cases amid high STD rates nationwide in recent years. Alaska also suffers the nation's highest infection rate of chlamydia infections, with nearly 5,700 reported in 2016 – almost 80 percent of them among people under 30.</p> <p>Susan Jones, with the state Department of Health and Social Services, said in October that one factor in Alaska's higher gonorrhea rates was an apparent rise in high-risk sexual activities. Those activities, she said, included "finding your partners through sex-seeking websites or apps and not knowing the STD status of that individual."</p> <p>The report's five safest states for online dating were Vermont, Maine, New Hampshire, Idaho and Utah.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	02/08 Warning issued to Pornhub users
SOURCE	https://www.leicestermercury.co.uk/news/uk-world-news/porn-pornhub-malware-cyber-attack-691910
GIST	<p>Potentially millions of visitors to adult website Pornhub could have been infected with malware, experts say.</p> <p>Cyber security firm Proofpoint say a major attack has been uncovered where fake adverts for web browser updates were sent out.</p> <p>They say the attack has been going on for more than a year with victims in many places, including the UK</p> <p>It's since been shut down by Pornhub, the Coventry Telegraph reports .</p>

	<p>The hack was carried out by a group known as KovCoreG, Proofpoint said, who hoped to infect users with an ad fraud malware known as Kovter.</p> <p>This type of malicious software is traditionally used as a form of online advertising fraud to generate money through clicks on fake adverts.</p> <p>In some cases a "clickbot" is installed which then requests and interacts with random adverts online.</p> <p>In the case of Pornhub, Proofpoint said users were shown fake adverts urging them to click to download a new version or Flash update to their web browser - but would instead infect their computers.</p> <p>Proofpoint warned that this technique of tricking users into clicking on fake adverts and infecting themselves was effective, and had the potential to reach "millions of web surfers" if used elsewhere.</p>
<p>Return to Top</p>	

HEADLINE	02/08 Attempted online fraud jumps 113%
SOURCE	https://www.infosecurity-magazine.com/news/fraud-attempts-soar-113-in-q4/
GIST	<p>Attempted online fraud jumped 113% year-on-year in the final quarter of 2017, to hit a massive 251 million attacks, with e-commerce firms hit particularly hard, according to ThreatMetrix.</p> <p>The fraud prevention company analyzed 7.6 billion transactions to compile its Q4 2017 Cybercrime Report.</p> <p>The firm claimed that companies are most exposed to fraud during the period straight after a major data breach but before it has been reported or detected.</p> <p>Given that Q4 covers the busy Christmas shopping period, it's perhaps no surprise that e-commerce firms came under particular scrutiny from the fraudsters. Almost 193 million transactions were rejected by ThreatMetrix as fraudulent, a 173% increase on the same time in 2016.</p> <p>However, fraudsters seem to be eschewing payment fraud in favor of account takeover and creation attacks.</p> <p>In fact, e-commerce account creation and login attacks were four times more likely than payment fraud, with the log-in attack rate growing 294% compared to the same quarter in 2015.</p> <p>Automated bots are playing an ever-increasing role in fraud, used on an unprecedented scale again during Q4, according to the report. There were 34 million bot attacks during the peak festive shopping period alone, rising to 800 million for the quarter.</p> <p>They're increasingly used for more than merely to test stolen credentials, the firm claimed.</p> <p>"Bot attacks continue to evolve from their basic velocity-based functions, to complex bots that are used in more advanced ways to spoof IP addresses, emulate browsers or spoof apps, to masquerading bots, that are attempting to mask their true context and pretend to be legitimate user traffic," the report noted.</p> <p>Also last quarter, Russia and Vietnam emerged as top five attack originators, alongside the UK, US and Germany. However, more attacks are said to originate in Europe than anywhere else.</p>
<p>Return to Top</p>	

HEADLINE	02/08 Malware pervasive across cloud platforms
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SOURCE<http://www.securityweek.com/malware-pervasive-across-cloud-platforms-report>**GIST**

Cloud Access Security Brokers (CASBs) provide visibility into the cloud. Some CASBs provide malware protection. Some clouds provide malware protection. Bitglass analyzed the efficacy of cloud-only protection by scanning the files of its customers that had not implemented its own Advanced Threat Protection (actually Cylance).

Bitglass scanned tens of millions of customer files and found (PDF) a remarkably high number of infections: 44% of organizations had at least one piece of malware in their cloud applications; and nearly one-in-three SaaS app instances contained at least one threat. Among the SaaS apps, 54.4% of OneDrive and 42.9% of Google Drive instances were infected. Dropbox and Box followed, both at 33%.

The research discovered that the average company had nearly 450,000 files held in the cloud, with more than 20 of the files containing malware. Forty-two percent of the infected file types were script and executable files, 21% were Office documents, 10% were Windows system files, and 8% were compressed formats. The other 19% were in various different file formats.

Among the infections it discovered a malware that Cylance confirmed as a zero-day ransomware -- which it calls ShurL0ckr. ShurL0ckr is ransomware-as-a-service, "meaning," says Bitglass, "the hacker generates a ransomware payload and distributes it via phishing or drive-by-download to encrypt files on disk in a background process until a Bitcoin ransom is paid." No analysis of the malware and its inner workings is provided.

It is, however, undetected by either Microsoft's or Google's cloud offerings.

"The sad truth," comments Meni Farjon, co-founder and CTO at SoleBIT Labs, "is that today, most cloud services providers still do not supply advanced malware detection capabilities, thus making this vector a perfect choice for attackers who aim to infect corporate users on a massive scale. I believe we will definitely see more ransomware variants targeting cloud application in the coming months, at least until the major cloud services providers offer malware detection capabilities to those services."

Bitglass checked whether mainstream anti-malware would detect the ShurL0ckr ransomware. "The team," writes Bitglass, "then leveraged VirusTotal to scrutinize a file containing the ransomware across dozens of antivirus engines. Only 7% of said engines (five in sixty-seven) detected the malware - one of these engines was Cylance, a Bitglass technology partner."

VirusTotal was acquired by Google in 2012.

The key takeaways from this research are that security teams' concerns about cloud security are valid, and there's a new ransomware that goes largely undetected. That last point is, however, not clear cut. The purpose of VirusTotal (VT) is to allow concerned users to gain insight into a suspect file -- could it be, or is it likely not, malicious? It is not an anti-malware comparative tool.

VirusTotal itself says, "Antivirus engines can be sophisticated tools that have additional detection features that may not function within the VirusTotal scanning environment. Because of this, VirusTotal scan results aren't intended to be used for the comparison of the effectiveness of antivirus products."

"In other words," comments ESET senior research fellow David Harley, "a VirusTotal report is not a reliable indicator as to whether a product detects or blocks a given sample out in the field, because VirusTotal doesn't necessarily make use of all the layers of protection made available by a specific product in the real world. To draw any conclusions about the efficacy of any product based on one sample isn't testing at all," he added; "it's just marketing."

Lenny Zeltser, VP of products at Minerva Labs, isn't surprised by the VT engines' low detection rate. "Attackers continually find ways of getting around AV tools, due to the inherent weaknesses of any approach to detecting malicious software on the basis of previously-seen patterns. This is a reality for all types of AV solutions," he told SecurityWeek, "regardless of whether they employ AI or not."

[Return to](#)

[Top](#)

HEADLINE	02/08 Swisscom discloses data breach
SOURCE	https://www.scmagazine.com/dial-b-for-breach-unauthorized-party-access-data-on-800k-swisscom-customers/article/742976/
GIST	<p>Telecom giant Swisscom yesterday disclosed that an unauthorized intruder misappropriated an unnamed sales partner's access to its data, thereby compromising basic information pertaining to approximately 800,000 customers.</p> <p>In a Feb. 7 press release, the \$11.6 billion Switzerland-based company acknowledged that in Fall 2017, a malicious actor gained access to Swisscom customer names, addresses, phone numbers, and birth dates. Swisscom labeled this data as “non-sensitive,” noting that sensitive data such as passwords, conversations and payment information was not impacted, and that there was no evidence of additional malicious activity stemming from the breach.</p> <p>Swisscom emphasized that no systems were hacked, which suggesting the adversary may have stolen the partner's access credentials.</p>
Return to	
Top	

HEADLINE	02/08 First SCADA cryptominer seen in wild
SOURCE	https://www.scmagazine.com/first-cryptocurrency-malware-attack-on-a-scada-network/article/742992/
GIST	<p>The first documented cryptominer attack on a SCADA network of a critical infrastructure operator was seen in the wild.</p> <p>Radiflow researchers spotted the malware attacking the OT network of a water utility company in order to mine the Monero cryptocurrency, according to a Feb. 8 press release.</p> <p>The malware was designed to run in a stealth mode on the networks' devices and even disable the device's security tools to operate undetected and maximize its mining processes for as long as possible.</p> <p>“While it is known that ransomware attacks have been launched on OT networks, this new case of a cryptocurrency malware attack on an OT network poses new threats as it runs in stealth mode and can remain undetected over time,” Radiflow Chief Technology Officer (CTO) Yehonatan Kfir said in the release.</p> <p>The malware was discovered after researchers detected several abnormalities, including unexpected HTTP communications and changes to the topology of the customer's OT network and communication attempts with suspicious IP addresses.</p>
Return to	
Top	

HEADLINE	02/08 Dark web vendors moving to Litecoin
SOURCE	https://www.scmagazine.com/litecoin-emerges-as-popular-bitcoin-alternative-among-dark-web-underground-community/article/743007/
GIST	<p>An analysis of 150 of popular dark web message boards, marketplaces and illegal services has revealed that underground vendors have been gravitating toward Litecoin cryptocurrency as a viable alternative to Bitcoin when conducting transactions.</p> <p>Conducted by Recorded Future's Insikt Group research team between Jan. 20 and Feb. 1, the study found that Litecoin – the second oldest cryptocurrency in existence (after Bitcoin) – is now accepted as a Bitcoin</p>

alternative by 30 percent of the 150 observed dark web vendors. The next most widely accepted cryptocurrencies are Dash (20%), Bitcoin Cash (13%, not to be confused with Bitcoin itself), Ethereum (9%), and Monero (6%).

Recorded Future suspects that this development could portend a greater diversification of cryptocurrency-based transactions on the dark web in the next six to 12 months.

"Bitcoin will lose its place as a dominant payment method in the dark web in the next six to 12 months. However, contrary to a widespread assumption that criminals are abandoning Bitcoin altogether, we are convinced it will remain one of the main payment instruments, albeit with a significantly smaller market share," wrote Andrei Barysevich, Recorded Future's director of advanced collection, and intelligence analyst Alexandr Solad, in a company report that was released today. "On the other hand, Litecoin and Dash will take their place next to Bitcoin as the everyday payment currencies of the dark web."

Bitcoin has already notably fallen out of favor with cybercriminals who extort their victims in ransomware attacks, because other digital currencies are more anonymity. In this instance, however, the dark web vendors are seeking Bitcoin alternatives because Bitcoin has become too mainstream and popular, resulting in higher fees.

"The meteoric rise in popularity of Bitcoin among household users, speculators, and institutional investors around the world since mid-2017 has placed an enormous load on the blockchain network, resulting in larger payment fees," the report states. "As a result, Bitcoin payments have become economically infeasible, because the subsequent cost of transaction increased ten-fold, sometimes as much as 30 percent of the smaller payment amounts."

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	02/08 Tenn. hospital hit by mining malware
SOURCE	http://www.darkreading.com/attacks-breaches/tennessee-hospital-hit-with-cryptocurrency-mining-malware/d/d-id/1331014
GIST	<p>Decatur County General Hospital (DCGH) in Parsons, Tennessee, recently discovered cryptocurrency mining malware on its Electronic Medical Record (EMR) server. The hospital began informing 24,000 patients of the attack on January 26.</p> <p>On November 27, 2017, the hospital received a security incident report from its EMR system vendor, which said unauthorized software, designed to mine cryptocurrency, had been installed on the server supported by the vendor. An ongoing investigation has indicated an unauthorized attacker accessed the server with the EMR system and injected the software.</p> <p>The hospital's EMR server contained data including patient names, addresses, birthdates, and social security numbers, as well as diagnosis and treatment data. There is no evidence either type of data was taken or viewed, and so far it doesn't seem data theft was the attacker's goal. However, the hospital cannot definitively prove data was not compromised and is therefore notifying patients.</p> <p>DCGH has not named the EMR system vendor and is offering patients the myTrueIdentity online credit monitoring service for one year.</p>
	Return to Top

HEADLINE	02/08 New POS malware designed to steal
SOURCE	http://www.darkreading.com/vulnerabilities---threats/new-pos-malware--steals-data-via-dns-traffic/d/d-id/1331022
GIST	<p>Researchers at Forcepoint have discovered new point-of-sale (POS) malware disguised as a LogMeIn service pack that is designed to steal data from the magnetic stripe on the back of payment cards.</p>

	<p>The malware, which Forcepoint is calling UDPoS, is somewhat different from the usual POS tools in that it uses UDP-based DNS traffic to sneak stolen credit and debit card data past firewalls and other security controls. It is also one of the few new POS malware tools to surface in some time, according to the company.</p> <p>In recent years, the US, like many other countries, has switched from magnetic cards to chip and PIN cards based on the Europay, Mastercard, and Visa (EMV) standard. The transition has made it harder for criminals to steal payment card data using POS malware—like they did with the massive theft at Target in 2013.</p> <p>However, malware like UDPoS suggests that criminals still see an opportunity to steal data from POS systems. For instance, Trend Micro last year reported on MajikPOS, a POS malware family that was used to steal data on more than 23,300 payment cards. Retailer Forever 21, which is investigating a data breach first reported last November, recently disclosed finding malware on some of its POS systems.</p> <p>Luke Somerville, head of special investigations at Forcepoint, says there's no evidence to show that UDPoS is currently being used to steal credit or debit card data. But Forcepoint's tests have shown that the malware is indeed capable of doing so successfully.</p>
<p>Return to Top</p>	

HEADLINE	02/08 Firefighter lieutenant charged w/sexting
SOURCE	http://mynorthwest.com/895373/washington-state-firefighter-accused-of-sexting-with-minor/
GIST	<p>PORT ORCHARD, Wash. (AP) — A South Kitsap Fire and Rescue lieutenant is accused of sending sexually-charged texts to a 15-year-old girl.</p> <p>The Kitsap Sun reports that 49-year-old Richard Dean Christenson was charged on Tuesday with communication with a minor for immoral purposes.</p> <p>The allegations were reported Monday to Kitsap County Sheriff’s investigators after the girl’s mother told a deputy she took her daughter’s cell phone because the teen was “acting oddly” and texting while at the dinner table.</p> <p>South Kitsap Fire and Rescue Deputy Chief Guy Dalrymple said Christenson has been placed on administrative leave and the district is conducting an internal investigation. Christenson did not answer a call to his cell phone Thursday and a message said his voicemail inbox was full.</p>
<p>Return to Top</p>	

HEADLINE	02/08 Seattle pushes Facebook on political ads
SOURCE	http://mynorthwest.com/894681/seattle-facebook-political-ads/
GIST	<p>Once again, tech companies are finding themselves in a gray area of regulation. This time, Seattle is pushing Facebook to reveal who paid for political ads during 2016 campaigns.</p> <p>“Seattle’s law requires that the media keep books and records showing who paid for ads running on their radio and TV stations...” Former Washington Attorney General Rob KcKenna told KIRO Radio’s Dave Ross. “... you can see who paid for the ads they’ve been seeing and hearing.”</p> <p>Seattle’s election law dates back to 1977, long before the internet and online advertising was a daily fact of life. But now, Seattle’s Ethic’s and Elections Commission is demanding Facebook provide similar information that other media is required to do. It wants Facebook to document and reveal who pays for political ads. Facebook could face fines of up to \$5,000 for each advertisement. Reuters notes that it’s the first such attempt to regulate political ads on social media.</p>

Facebook has also recently come under scrutiny for political ads purchased by Russian agents during the 2016 campaign. The problem with Seattle's current request is that it's in that gray area of regulation. Where does a social media company like Facebook fall when it comes to political advertising?

"It's never been thought that (this law) applies to online advertising," McKenna said. "That's not really surprising, even though online advertising has been around for a while and use of online ads has been growing dramatically by political campaigns ... it's not surprising no one ever thought of it before because online advertising has been treated very differently than conventional newspaper, radio, and TV advertising."

Political ads on Facebook

While TV and radio ads fall under the purview of the FCC, the internet does not. Beyond that, there is the Communications Decency Act, McKenna notes, which states websites cannot be held liable for advertising content on their pages. This is because online advertising is often provided by third parties and not the websites themselves. Facebook could be different, however, in that people directly place the ads onto the social media site.

McKenna knows people who work for Facebook. He's actually signed the wall at the company. So he reached out to find out what they plan to do about challenges like Seattle's.

"One thing they told me is that they are looking beyond what they legally have to do, to what they think they should do," McKenna said. "They predict that if it's not them, some other company that hosts online political advertising will argue that federal law shields them from having to disclose who is paying for the ads."

"But they're not saying they are going to do that; they are looking at their options beyond the legal requirements," he said. "I think that is the right position for them to take. Even though I wouldn't be surprised if they immediately said 'Hey, Communications Decency Act; you cannot touch us; we are not regulated by the FCC' and so forth."

McKenna doesn't know Facebook's official plan, but he said that the company could be considering making political advertising more transparent.

"The best solution is sunshine," he said. "As Slade Gorton once said to me, 'Money in politics is like water on a sidewalk. It always finds the cracks.'"

[Return to](#)

[Top](#)

HEADLINE	02/08 Social media 'influencer marketing'
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/social-media-influencers-brand-advertising/
GIST	<p>Picture this: You're scrolling through your feed on Instagram and notice what appears to be an endorsed advertisement for a new workout supplement. The post has received hundreds of thousands of likes and dozens of comments.</p> <p>Bewilderment overcomes you as you try to figure out why the Instagram user looks familiar. But at the same time, you feel intrigued to learn more about the product based on the amount of attention the post has received. And that glowing review, which acts as the photo caption, makes you feel inclined to purchase the supplement.</p> <p>Don't fret, this isn't a scam. In fact, thousands of companies have been using this relatively new concept. It's simply a modern form of advertising called "influencer marketing," which allows for so-called influencers -- users who have a large following on social media platforms like Facebook (FB), Instagram, YouTube (GOOG), Twitter (TWTR) and Snapchat (SNAP) -- to partner with brands that are in sync with</p>

their lifestyles.

In recent years, traditional celebrity endorsements have taken a back seat to brands' influencer-created content. So stars like Paris Hilton and Kim Kardashian have been replaced by that familiar, yet unfamiliar face that popped up in your feed moments ago.

And as long as Instagram and other platforms continue as go-to places for many shoppers, influencers will keep racking in thousands of dollars as quickly as their posts acquire likes.

What does it mean to be a social media influencer?

Influencers can be fitness gurus, gaming addicts, beauty bloggers, fashionistas, foodies, travel experts, etc. They offer an authentic presence on social media based on their copious numbers of followers and level of engagement. Generally speaking, each influencer maintains an audience of at least 10,000 followers on one platform, if not more.

But it takes more than having an attractive physique and a coveted blue "verified" badge to acquire digital celebrity status.

Influencers use social media platforms to connect with their audience on a personal level. They brand themselves within a specific industry by promoting content that coincides with their values and interests. For example, someone who correlates with fashion would be more inclined to promote a clothing company's T-shirt as opposed to a travel agency's sale on a vacation package to an exotic destination.

Brands hire influencers and pay them to endorse their product(s) or service(s) within photos and videos, which essentially act as word-of-mouth opinions similar to what you might seek from a close friend. Many consumers value the opinions of influencers, which subsequently makes them more inclined to purchase the product that's being advertised.

Last year, Forbes released a comprehensive list of the world's top influencers. The going rate for influencer-created content ranges anywhere from \$500 to upwards of \$20,000, or more, for each sponsored post.

Does influencer marketing work?

Influencer marketing -- sometimes described as the "Wild West" for its lack of strategic guidance -- has gained a competitive edge in the industry due to its tendency to form viral conversations about brands online. Over the years, companies have developed applications to help brands determine which influencers are best suited for their digital campaigns.

Still, the big question remains: Does influencer marketing actually work? Most would agree that it does, because influencers can reach a larger audience than what a traditional ad may target.

As the power of social media continues to grow, it's arguably fair to say influencers will continue to have a stronger impact on consumer brand awareness. In turn, brands will be required to shift their strategies, conforming to this new norm as influencer-follower relationships expand.

[Return to](#)

[Top](#)

HEADLINE	02/08 Spokane BBB: reports of mysterious text
SOURCE	http://www.khq.com/story/37464378/people-receiving-mysterious-text-from-an-email-address-they-dont-know
GIST	SPOKANE, Wash. - Have you gotten a text that looks like this? Well, you're not alone. Multiple people in the Spokane area have received the same thing.

	<p>While the BBB hasn't heard about this particular case and it's unclear what's going on with it, they say it's always important to be careful.</p> <p>If someone responded to that text, it looks like an attachment is sent over. Don't click on it. The BBB says you don't know what it is and it could be some malicious content. Again, with this particular case, it's unclear what this text is.</p>
<p>Return to Top</p>	

HEADLINE	02/08 Russian trolls posed as black activists?
SOURCE	http://www.homelandsecuritynewswire.com/dr20180208-russian-tumblr-trolls-posed-as-black-activists-to-stoke-racial-resentment-ahead-of-2016-u-s-election
GIST	<p>Internet trolls working for the Russian government posed as black activists on Tumblr to share political messages before the 2016 U.S. presidential election, BuzzFeed reports.</p> <p>As was the case with the fake accounts created by Russian government operatives on other social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, the fake Tumblr accounts aimed to help Donald Trump win the 2016 election by spreading messages which stoked racial and ethnic resentment and intensified political polarization.</p> <p>The Russian accounts on Tumblr disseminated content on issues such as police violence against young African-Americans.</p> <p>Buzzfeed says that a digital forensic analysis tied the fake Tumblr accounts to the St. Petersburg-based Internet Research Agency (IRA), a hacking and disinformation organization employed by the Kremlin to disseminate fake news and commentary on social media as part of the broad Kremlin campaign to weaken Western democracies and undermine organizations such as NATO and the EU.</p> <p>A researcher at the University of Oxford told BuzzFeed that there were “parallels” with Russian activity on Facebook.</p> <p>Jonathan Albright of the Tow Centre for Digital Journalism, who worked with Buzzfeed on the Tumblr investigation, said the accounts seemed to be part of an “ongoing campaign” which began in early 2015.</p> <p>Buzzfeed notes that the more popular Russian posts on Tumblr criticized Hillary Clinton, supported independent Senator Bernie Sanders during the Democratic primaries, and highlighted police violence against black communities.</p> <p>In one message, the account 4mysquad shared gifs supposedly showing a black girl being sexually assaulted by a police officer. The officer was falsely identified as a member of the NYPD.</p> <p>Twitter's official blog notes that the Tumblr accounts often used the same names as some of the 3,814 IRA-backed Twitter accounts identified by Twitter in its report to Congress.</p> <p>Facebook and Twitter have been asked to testify before the Senate Intelligence Committee on Russian interference in the U.S. election, but, until now, Tumblr had not been linked to Russian misinformation campaigns.</p> <p>Lisa-Maria Neudert, a researcher at the Computational Propaganda Project at the Oxford Internet Institute, said that there were “a lot of parallels” between the trolls' strategy on Tumblr and other social media sites.</p> <p>“It's not about promoting one candidate or message, but about sowing political distrust and confusion, and feeding into fears that society is already having,” she told the BBC.</p> <p>“Tumblr is really popular among teens, who are very vulnerable and very susceptible to political messages</p>

	because they haven't formed political identities yet.”
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	02/08 Official: pot tracking system hacked
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/marijuana/washington-marijuana-traceability-system-dogged-with-problems-was-hacked-state-says/
GIST	<p>The state's new pot-tracking system was hacked last weekend, and an "intruder" stole route information associated with four days of marijuana deliveries, as well as other information.</p> <p>"It was a breach of the system and indications show they downloaded a copy of the traceability database," said Brian Smith, a spokesman for the Liquor and Cannabis Board (LCB). "It did something in the system — I'm not at liberty to talk about — that affected the transfer and manifest data — that was, in part, responsible for the issues this week."</p> <p>The state on Feb. 1 transitioned to a new marijuana-traceability system, Leaf Data Systems, which has been dogged by problems since its launch. The technology issues have kept marijuana growers and sellers scrambling to keep their businesses running. Some have worried about keeping marijuana on increasingly sparse store shelves.</p> <p>Problems associated with the hack were discovered Saturday by MJ Freeway, the company providing the data service and pot-tracking software. On Monday, the company identified the problem as a "possible security incident" and notified the LCB, according to a message that went out to all marijuana licensees Thursday. At that point, the LCB contacted the Washington State Office of CyberSecurity, which is investigating the hack. Smith said marijuana businesses were not notified of the attack until Thursday because of that agency's protocol.</p> <p>The security flaw was resolved on Monday, Smith said. The state agency plans to continue using MJ Freeway as a vendor.</p> <p>"No online presence is 100 percent safe," he said. "There are steps that MJ Freeway has taken to ensure that it's secure and meets modern standards. ... We're sticking with MJ Freeway."</p> <p>In addition to transportation manifests, delivery-vehicle information like type, license-plate number and VIN number were also taken. That information is available through public-record requests, Smith said.</p> <p>MJ Freeway has had products hacked several times before, and source code for some of its software was posted online last year, according to Marijuana Business Daily, an industry publication.</p> <p>Pot proprietors Thursday questioned the LCB's selection of MJ Freeway, considering its previous breaches.</p> <p>"It's been a pretty well-known fear: MJ Freeway was not Fort Knox. Boy, was everybody right straight out of the gate," said Steve Lee, who owns two marijuana businesses and is a Kennewick city councilman.</p> <p>Marijuana-traceability systems were designed, in part, to help regulators satisfy Obama-era federal guidelines about marijuana diversion. If pot could be tracked, the theory went, then federal officials would have more assurances it wasn't crossing state lines or going into the black market.</p> <p>Lee said the hack has eroded the traceability system's integrity, and will have him sleeping less easy about federal involvement in the state's legal marijuana market.</p> <p>"It's a catastrophic failure at the state level, and it leaves us all worrying about our futures," he said.</p> <p>What the hacker(s) were after is not immediately clear, but pot proprietors worried that data could be</p>

	manipulated.
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	02/08 Hackers head start on Winter Olympics
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2018/02/08/technology/winter-olympics-hackers.html
GIST	<p>The Department of Homeland Security is warning Americans planning to attend the 2018 Winter Olympic Games in Pyeongchang that cybercriminals are likely to be targeting the Games.</p> <p>Officials in South Korea are facing a double threat. At the Olympic Committee’s Security Command Center in an unmarked facility in Pyeongchang, security experts from around the world are monitoring threats from North Korean hackers who have been probing the computer networks that manage South Korean finance, media and critical infrastructure systems for years.</p> <p>And while some people believe that diplomatic efforts may have eased the North Korean threat to the Games, others are bracing for the impact of a hacking campaign by Russian groups retaliating for a ban on Russian athletes. Security companies said these groups had successfully targeted the computer systems of Olympic-related organizations months ago.</p> <p>Just how those hacks could lead to broader attacks is not clear. But cybersecurity researchers said the Olympic Games — more digitized than ever — are ripe targets for hackers searching for embarrassing information on everyone from athletes to organizers or simply looking to cause trouble by manipulating scoring or lighting systems.</p> <p>More than 300 Olympics-related computer systems have already been hit, with many of them compromised, the security company McAfee said last month, in what its investigators described as a preliminary hacking campaign. On Friday, the second stage of that attack appeared to be underway, as assailants siphoned data from victims’ machines back to their own computers systems, McAfee’s researchers said.</p> <p>Who was doing it and why they were doing it could take several months to figure out. Ryan Sherstobitoff, a senior analyst at McAfee, said the hacks had appeared to be well organized and backed by substantial resources, with “the hallmarks of a nation state.” What that nation state planned to do with the stolen data and its foothold in victims’ machines, Mr. Sherstobitoff said, was still anyone’s guess.</p> <p>A spokesman for the International Olympic Committee declined to comment on how the organization was addressing the heightened threats.</p> <p>Security researchers often discuss risks with a level of informed paranoia. Some of their warnings are based on what is possible but has not actually occurred in the real world. On other occasions, their warnings are based on what has already happened, and where those incidents could lead.</p> <p>But cyberattacks on international events have become common. The 2015 nuclear negotiations in Geneva and the 2009 climate talks in Copenhagen, for example, were plagued by hackers from various nation states. The Olympics are another alluring target — but with wall-to-wall television coverage.</p> <p>“The Olympics involve so many countries, and so many sports, many of which have their own infrastructure, that it has become a rich target environment for many adversaries,” said John Hultquist, director of threat intelligence at the security firm FireEye.</p> <p>He has been tracking the activities of Russian hackers and other groups as they lay the groundwork for attacks on Olympic organizations. In the past few months, Mr. Hultquist said, his team at FireEye has seen several examples of Russian groups tampering with the computers of Olympic-related organizations. The activity is “obviously meant to drag Olympics-related organizations through the mud and discredit them,” he said.</p>

The Russian cyberespionage group known as Fancy Bear, which has been tied to the 2016 hack of the Democratic National Committee and has links to Russia's main military intelligence unit, has already started posting hacked emails intended to highlight discord among global sports officials and investigators who exposed systemic Russian doping.

Last month, the group posted emails and other documents online from the International Luge Federation, claiming they demonstrated violations of antidoping rules. And earlier in January, the group released hacked emails and documents from the International Olympic Committee, which it advertised as proof "the Europeans and the Anglo-Saxons are fighting for power and cash in the sports world."

Trend Micro, the Tokyo-based security company, said its researchers had also witnessed Fancy Bear attacks on the International Ice Hockey Federation, the International Ski Federation, the International Biathlon Union, and the International Bobsleigh and Skeleton Federation in the final months of 2017. The attacks occurred while an International Olympic Committee disciplinary panel was preparing bans for dozens of Russian athletes caught doping in the 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi, Russia.

"The Kremlin has its fingerprints on cyberattacks that were retribution for exposing the Russians' Sochi games doping scheme, which was a fraud on the purity of sport," said Doug DePeppe, a founder of Sports ISAO, a nonprofit cybersecurity organization in Colorado Springs. The group is trying to help sports associations, including Olympic organizations, combat threats.

"Their goal is to say, 'No one is following the rules, and Russia shouldn't be singled out,'" Mr. DePeppe said.

FireEye, McAfee and other security companies said that over the past few months they had seen attack groups from Russia, and others of unknown origin, dispatch hundreds of "spearphishing" emails, laced with malicious links and attachments, to target Olympic-related groups.

They also have seen the groups set up computer servers under the names of some of their targets and seemingly innocuous organizations like the South Korean Ministry of Forestry. They warn that those activities could be a prelude for a broader Russian campaign.

To protect the Olympics, South Korea has mobilized tens of thousands of security personnel, including cybersecurity analysts and 50,000 soldiers, in what has been described as one of the most militarized security forces in Olympic history.

Over the past few weeks, the United States State Department has set up a temporary security monitoring operation on one floor of its embassy in Seoul. Analysts from the State Department, the intelligence community and the Department of Homeland Security are scheduled to arrive there this week.

But an official who was briefed on the State Department-led operation, and who was not allowed to discuss it publicly, worried that the operation was too focused on combating traditional threats like physical attacks on venues.

The State Department did not reply to a request for comment.

Elsewhere in Pyeongchang, an alliance of security personnel from South Korea, various Olympic sponsors, technology suppliers and cybersecurity sleuths from around the world are monitoring computer screens and potential threats at the unmarked Security Command Center.

While cybersecurity experts believe the North Korean threat was lessened by the last-minute addition of a North Korean delegation to the Games, they have not ruled out that North Korea may be looking to embarrass its southern neighbor.

Terror Conditions

[Top of page](#)

HEADLINE	02/08 Ex-Marine pleads guilty in terror sting
SOURCE	http://www.sun-sentinel.com/local/broward/fl-reg-terrorism-sting-guilty-palm-beach-20180207-story.html
GIST	<p>A former U.S. Marine and sculptor is facing a dozen years in federal prison after he pleaded guilty on Thursday to being part of a conspiracy to help the terrorist group ISIS.</p> <p>Gregory Hubbard, 54, was arrested in a controversial FBI terrorism sting in 2016 in Palm Beach County.</p> <p>Under the terms of the plea agreement, the prosecution and defense will recommend that the judge sentences Hubbard to 12 years in federal prison. That's significantly less than the 20-year maximum penalty the offense carries and the 30 or more years he had been facing if convicted of all three charges that were filed against him.</p> <p>The case ran into problems last year when it became public that the main undercover informant in the case, Mohammed Agbareia, had defrauded more than \$300,000 from victims — while he was working undercover for the FBI and heavily involved in the terrorism sting.</p> <p>Handcuffed, shackled and dressed in dark blue jail scrubs in court on Thursday, Hubbard told the judge he was pleading guilty because he had committed the offense.</p> <p>Hubbard was arrested July 21, 2016 at Miami International Airport. He thought he and an undercover informant were flying to Germany and would then take a train and other transportation to Syria, where Hubbard planned to fight alongside the terrorist group.</p> <p>Before he left, Hubbard gave much of his artwork to one of the informants for safekeeping, placed most of his other possessions in a storage unit in Georgia and saved \$6,000 he was bringing with him to fight in Syria. He also said he might never return from Syria.</p> <p>Hubbard was diagnosed with depression and anxiety several years ago and was receiving therapy and prescription medication at a local Veterans Affairs hospital before his arrest, his attorneys Assistant Federal Public Defenders Anthony Natale and Vanessa Chen said in court.</p> <p>“Depression lingers over me pretty consistently ... But, depressed? I am,” Hubbard told the judge.</p> <p>Two other local men, Dayne Antani Christian and Darren Arness Jackson, who were also arrested in the sting, previously pleaded guilty to related offenses.</p> <p>All three men were secretly recorded talking about their support for the terrorist group and one of its leaders.</p> <p>“They shared links for ISIS propaganda videos and websites, including ISIS beheading videos, and lectures by Anwar al-Awlaki espousing jihad,” according to the plea agreement.</p> <p>Under the terms of the plea agreement, prosecutors Karen Gilbert and Ed Nucci said they will dismiss the two other charges filed against Hubbard – attempting to provide material support to a terrorist group and providing ammunition to a convicted felon – when Hubbard is sentenced in April.</p> <p>Christian and Jackson will also be sentenced later this year.</p> <p>The main informant who worked on the case, Agbareia, 52, pleaded guilty to a federal fraud charge in October and is serving a two-year federal prison term. The Palestinian man is expected to be deported to Israel after he serves his sentence.</p>

[Return to](#)

[Top](#)

HEADLINE	02/09 Egypt: massive anti-terror operation
SOURCE	http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-02/09/c_136962332.htm
GIST	<p>CAIRO, Feb. 9 (Xinhua) -- Egypt announced on Friday the launch of a major operation across the country to eradicate terrorism, the army said in a statement.</p> <p>Egyptian troops and the police have been put on "maximum alert" ahead of a comprehensive military operation against terrorism "at all strategic fronts," said Tamer el Refai, an army spokesperson, in the statement.</p> <p>The major operation will target all areas plagued by extremism to uproot terrorism, it said.</p> <p>The law enforcement forces started in the morning implementing the comprehensive plan against the terrorist and criminal elements and organizations in north and central Sinai along with other desert areas in western Delta, Refai said.</p> <p>He added that the operation is launched as part of the efforts to reach the three-month deadline set by President Abdel-Fattah al-Sisi to eliminate terrorism after the mosque attack that killed more than 300 people in the northern Sinai city of Arish in November, 2017.</p> <p>Meanwhile, strict security measures have been adopted near the vital institutions, national projects, religious houses, electricity and water plants, and major important tourist areas, an official security source was quoted by the state news agency MENA as saying.</p>
Return to	
Top	

HEADLINE	02/08 Left to join ISIS; many abandon fight
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/post-nation/wp/2018/02/08/young-men-left-america-to-join-isis-they-fled-when-it-didnt-live-up-to-their-expectations/?utm_term=.a486610a7057
GIST	<p>When Mohamad Khweis fled his home in the United States in 2015 and headed to Islamic State territory in Syria and Iraq, he was "curious" about life in the group's self-declared caliphate, he later recalled.</p> <p>"I would see . . . people from all around the world leaving their countries and going to live in this state," Khweis said when he testified last summer during his federal trial on terrorism charges. "It was kind of interesting."</p> <p>What he found did not live up to the hype. Khweis was tasked with running errands such as grocery shopping, taking out the trash at his Islamic State house and caring for wounded fighters. He eventually became "frustrated with waiting" for military training, according to an FBI special agent who testified during Khweis's trial. He ended up fleeing and was captured in Iraq.</p> <p>Khweis, who was found guilty of supporting terrorism and sentenced to 20 years in prison, was not alone in feeling disillusioned by what he encountered. Many of the Americans who traveled to Syria and Iraq to join the group wound up coming back because "life in jihadist-held territory did not live up to their expectations," according to a new study from George Washington University's Program on Extremism that provides a sweeping look at their experiences.</p> <p>These Americans had seen "an idealized version of reality" in online propaganda they consumed, but that contrasted unfavorably with the harsh living conditions, infighting and menial assignments that greeted them, the report found. For Americans like Khweis — who later insisted he was not part of the group and only wanted to see the situation in Syria for himself — household chores could lead to their decisions to abandon the fight.</p>

“Many of the Americans had little to no combat experience and were assigned duties such as cleaning safe houses, cooking, and caring for the sick and injured,” the report states. “This was hardly the glamorous experience they anticipated, and some sought a way back to the comforts of home.”

The Americans who went overseas tended to be male, with an average age of 27, according to the report. They were like thousands of others drawn by the Islamic State — also known as ISIS or ISIL — as the terrorist group seized territory in Syria and Iraq, creating its own society on the ground. The Islamic State’s physical territory has since dwindled following punishing military losses, but its online propaganda machine continues to churn out material as part of a “virtual caliphate” rallying its followers.

More than 150 Americans were arrested on Islamic State-related charges between 2011 and 2017, and about a third of them were people who sought to travel abroad but were stopped, according to the report, which notes that attempts to travel to Iraq or Syria have steadily fallen since 2015. Dozens of people in the United States already have been convicted on federal charges relating to the group. (Far more people left Europe to join the Islamic State — estimates range from 5,000 to 6,000, the report says — though that flow of volunteers also plummeted as the group lost territory.)

The report’s authors examined 64 people — described as “travelers” — who left the United States to join Islamist militant groups in Syria and Iraq since 2011, the year protests began against the Syrian regime. Most of them were associated with the Islamic State, either at the outset or joining up with the group as it expanded, according to the report. Just a handful — four — reached leadership positions in the Islamist militant groups they joined.

Most of the travelers were described as “networked,” meaning they had some connection with Islamist militant supporters in the United States or others traveling with them, according to the study, which is based on interviews with law enforcement officials, reviews of legal documents and interviews with some Americans who went to Islamic State territory and returned. Khweis was in the smaller category of “loners,” those who apparently traveled without any personal connections to the fight and still made it to Syria or Iraq.

Relatively few of the travelers returned to the United States, the study found. Just a dozen of them are known to have come back, and nine of them were arrested and faced terror charges. One of that dozen returned intending to carry out an attack, the report said, but was taken into custody early in the planning stages; he was sentenced last month to 22 years in prison. About one-third of the travelers examined in the report are believed to have died overseas.

The report states that returning travelers do pose a risk, because they can help with recruiting other Islamist militants or provide knowledge about travel or conducting attacks. While the Trump administration has repeatedly argued that stronger immigration restrictions are needed to keep terrorists out of the United States, the report notes that most of the 64 travelers were U.S. citizens or legal permanent residents.

“The traveler phenomenon, like the domestic terrorist threat, is primarily homegrown,” the authors wrote.

The report concludes that people who never left the United States pose a greater danger than those who went overseas and came back, noting that none of the terrorist attacks in the United States in recent years have been carried out by people who traveled to Syria or Iraq first. In high-profile case after high-profile case, U.S. officials have determined that attackers were radicalized in the United States after consuming online propaganda.

“The risk that ‘homegrown’ extremists will commit attacks on U.S. soil outweighs the risk of attacks from returning travelers,” the authors wrote.

[Return to](#)

[Top](#)

HEADLINE	02/08 Resurgence of al-Shabaab
SOURCE	https://jamestown.org/program/resurgence-al-shabaab/
GIST	<p>As al-Shabaab continues to lose leaders to U.S. airstrikes and territory to troops with the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), analysts have contemplated the possible defeat of the Somalia-based militant group. Indeed, Somali President Mohammed Abdullahi Farmajo stressed this possibility at a conference in London last May, saying that with international support and better military equipment, the terrorist group could be defeated in just two years (Jamhuri News, May 11, 2017).</p> <p>In October, however, a massive bomb blast in the Somali capital of Mogadishu killed more than 300 people (The Star, October 16, 2017). Meanwhile, the group has carried out a series of smaller attacks, terrorizing civilians and assassinating public figures, in an attempt to undermine the UN-backed government, even as the better armed U.S.-backed AMISOM troops' pound its strongholds.</p> <p>In neighboring Kenya, the al-Qaeda affiliate has also stepped up its operations, forcing Nairobi to redoubled efforts to tackle militants in the Boni Forest, the thick expanse of coastal forest in Lamu, by the border with Somalia. The resurgence pours cold water on predictions of al-Shabaab's possible defeat, prompting security experts to call for new strategies to combat the militant group (Daily Nation, January 23).</p> <p>Increase in Attacks</p> <p>In January, the militants bombed a telecommunications tower in the town of Elwak, in Mandera County, on the Kenyan border. The downing of the tower, owned by Somalia's Hormuud Telecom, disrupted communications within the town and the surrounding area. Local residents said the destruction was intended to cut off communications between local people and the Kenyan and Somalia security forces. The militants reportedly suspected locals were spying for AMISOM troops, who were gathering information and planned to build a medical camp in the area (Daily Nation, January 20).</p> <p>Ahead of the attack, increased militant activity had been reported in the area. On January 6, the militants destroyed a telecommunications tower belonging to Safaricom, Kenya's leading mobile phone service provider, in Katulo area in Wajir. The militants used Rocket Propelled Grenades (RPGs) to down the tower, before engaging security officers at a facility nearby (The Star, January 7; The Standard, January 7).</p> <p>Days earlier, five security officers were killed in the area while on patrol along the Elwak- Katulo Road. In the attack, a lorry belonging to the paramilitary General Service Unit (GSU) was set on fire (Mediamax, January 3).</p> <p>In December 2017, the militants destroyed an important water well that had been drilled by the Kenyan army in Lafey town, Mandera County, leaving hundreds of resident without water (Kulan Post, January 25).</p> <p>Resurgence in Boni Forest</p> <p>In another significant development, analysts fear the militants have regained a foothold in Boni Forest in Kenya. The militants have been building their presence on the Kenyan side of the forest since 2012, according to intelligence sources. It is from these bases they are believed to be executing the current attacks on the Kenyan military, the police and local villagers.</p> <p>In mid-January, heavily armed militants attacked and briefly occupied Ishakani police station, before fleeing to Somalia (The Standard, January 15). Earlier, the militants had rounded up villagers and forced them into a mosque, where they popularized their ideology. Local people said the militants had informed them that their target was the security agencies, and that civilians would not be harmed.</p> <p>Terrorist activity in Lamu is being orchestrated by Jaysh al-Ayman, a faction within al-Shabaab named after its top leader Maalim Ayman (a.k.a. Abdiiaziz Dobow Ali). Its fighters are largely Kenyans from the</p>

coastal region and some international jihadists. Ayman, who is thought to be a Kenyan Somali, founded the group in 2009.

The group began by carrying out small grenade and Improved Explosive Devices (IED) attacks in Kenyan towns and villages in Lamu, and staged its first major attack in June 2015, when nearly 50 heavily armed militants targeted Mpeketoni town, killing 60 people. Since then, the faction has continued to carry out attacks in the Kenyan coastal region (Daily Nation, January 23).

The same year as the Mpeketoni attack, the Kenyan government launched Operation Linda Boni, a multi-security agency operation aimed at countering militants' operation in the forest. More than two years since the launch of the operation, however, militants continue to carry out attacks across the coastal region (The Star, July 12, 2017).

While clashes with the military have resulted in casualties on both sides, the security forces have yet to capture any al-Shabaab fighters or their leaders, raising concerns that local residents may be helping hide the militants and offering them support (Daily Nation, January 23).

Joseph Kanyiri, the Operation Linda Boni commander, made that plain in comments on January 22, accusing local residents of helping fighters avoid capture. The security agencies are also reportedly investigating whether local dispensaries and health centers are treating injured al-Shabaab fighters or providing them with medicine (Intelligence Brief, January 22).

A 'Faceless' Enemy

Although al-Shabaab is weakened militarily, financially and politically in Boni, it has been acting to boost its forces through the conscription and recruitment of locals, including children.

The group is allegedly using women as spies, who gather intelligence even from the security forces (Daily Nation, December 18, 2017). Kenyan security forces deployed to the area complain they are dealing with unknown fifth columnists, unlike Somalia where they can be more certain about the identity of their enemies.

A further development, one that began in mid-2017, has been the aggressive recruitment of child soldiers. Reports in January told of forcible child abductions and of reprisals against communities that refuse to hand their children over to militants (Daily Nation, January 27).

In late September, al-Shabaab commanders ordered elders, teachers in Islamic schools and communities in rural areas to hand over hundreds of young children or face attack. The groups have also warned parents against sending their children to secular schools, demanding they attend Islamic ones that the group controls (Somali Press Online, April 21, 2017).

In the past decade, al-Shabaab has recruited thousands of children for indoctrination and as frontline fighters (KassFM, January 15). Since 2015, the group has opened large Islamic schools teaching its own curriculum in areas under its control, strengthening indoctrination and facilitating recruitment.

Potential for Larger Attack

Reports last year that al-Shabaab was on the back foot, while pleasing government officials and Somalia's international backers, appear to have been premature. Forecasts of the group's defeat may need to be tempered by the fact it has proven its resilience time and again.

Kenyan analysts warn that the increased rate of small attacks in Lamu may be an attempt to divert the attention of security forces from Somalia, where the militants have been forced out of their bases and need time to regroup. They warn too that this increase maybe intended as a diversion while the militants plan a potentially much larger attack (The Standard, January 15).

HEADLINE	02/08 Iran-backed militias warn US forces
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2018/feb/8/top-iranian-backed-militias-threaten-attacks-us-fo/
GIST	<p>The two main Iranian-backed Shia militias in Iraq warn that U.S. forces in the country face possible attack by their forces, should Washington not carry out a full withdrawal of American troops from the country.</p> <p>Members of Shia-led Kata'ib Hezbollah, Badr Organization and other Iranian-linked paramilitaries under the Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF) banner stood ready to battle back against the American "occupation force" inside Iraq, said Kata'ib Hezbollah spokesman Jafar al-Hussaini.</p> <p>"Iraq will not see stability with America's presence. The Americans have not entered Iraq based on the Iraqi government's consent," Mr. al-Hussaini said in an interview with Lebanese news outlets.</p> <p>"Our combatants have limited weapons but a confrontation with the American forces may begin at any moment. Unlike in the past, the Americans this time will not benefit from any mediation," he added. Leaders from the Badr Organization say a continued U.S. military footprint in Iraq would only increase the chances of extremist movements to sprout up, in the wake of Islamic State's defeat in the country.</p> <p>There are now an estimated 140,000 registered fighters under the PMF banner in Iraq according to military officials in Baghdad, which constitutes nearly half of the Iraqi army and a quarter of the security forces under the Interior Ministry.</p> <p>Washington and Baghdad "should co-ordinate to ensure a full withdrawal," Badr Organization spokesman Kareem Nuri said. "A U.S. presence will be cause for internal polarization and a magnet for terrorists," he added.</p> <p>American and coalition forces have already begun to pull back air assets and manpower from northern Iraq, following the liberation of Islamic State's Iraqi capital of Mosul in last year. Iraqi officials within the government of Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi say nearly 60 percent of the over 8,000 U.S. troops in Iraq would be pulled out, recent reports claim.</p> <p>However, command officials reiterate the U.S. would retain a military presence in the country, despite the defeat of the Islamic State, or ISIS.</p> <p>"Continued coalition presence in Iraq will be conditions-based, proportional to the need and in coordination with the government of Iraq," coalition spokesman Col. Ryan Dillon said in a statement earlier this week.</p> <p>Should that timeline hold, U.S. troops will likely still be in country during national elections slated for later this year.</p> <p>Leaders from the Badr Organization, Kata'ib Hezbollah, Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq — also known as the Khazali Network — and other Shia militias that battled Islamic State have banded together to form a Shia political movement designed specifically to take on the ruling party during the upcoming elections.</p> <p>Dubbed the Mujahedeen Coalition, the new coalition seeks to leverage the militia's battlefield victories against ISIS over the last three years into political clout within the Iraqi parliament.</p> <p>A successful bid by the Mujahedeen Coalition to secure seats in the country's legislature could fracture Mr. Abadi's delicate balance of power inside Iraq, while potentially expanding Iran's influence in the country.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	02/08 Rare US strikes on pro-regime forces
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/02/08/middleeast/syrian-us-airstrikes-analysis-intl/index.html
GIST	<p>(CNN)The United States' air artillery strikes in northeastern Syria overnight Wednesday were a forceful response to attempts by pro-regime forces to push into areas held by the coalition's allies. The US has drawn a line in the sand -- indicating that any attempt by Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's regime to recover territory east of the Euphrates River will be met with powerful retaliation.</p> <p>US officials estimate that more than 100 of approximately 500 pro-regime troops involved were killed. The remainder retreated across the Euphrates. The official Syrian state news agency SANA reported that the overnight attack had hit "tribal fighters."</p> <p>The Euphrates has become a de facto border between regime-held areas and the 23% of Syrian territory held by the US-backed Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) -- a mix of Kurdish and Arab militia. They hold ground all the way from oil-rich Deir Ezzor in the east to Raqqa and up to the Turkish border.</p> <p>The US strikes followed what the coalition said was an "unprovoked attack" by forces allied with Assad against a SDF headquarters where coalition advisers were located. The headquarters was at Khusham, almost five miles east of the Euphrates and adjacent to important oil and gas fields. The area was taken from ISIS by the SDF last September, when a rapid advance south supported by coalition air power brought much of the oil-rich countryside east of the Euphrates under SDF control.</p> <p>The US military assesses that Russian contractors, that are believed to be funded by the Russian government, participated in the assault on US and SDF forces on Wednesday, according to two US defense officials. One official says the assessment comes from monitoring of communications in the area and from drone surveillance.</p> <p>Col. Thomas F. Veale said Wednesday's attack by pro-regime forces was large-scale, involving battle tanks, rocket launchers and artillery. It was more than a probing operation. A US official said that "20 to 30 artillery and tank rounds landed within 500 meters" of the SDF headquarters. A statement from the US coalition said that "Syrian pro-regime forces moved in an approximately battalion-sized dismounted formation."</p> <p>US attacks on pro-regime forces in Syria are rare, and the size of this action was unprecedented. Last year, US airstrikes took out small militia columns advancing within a "de-confliction" zone toward a coalition-backed base at al-Tanf on the border with Iraq.</p> <p>And a US fighter shot down a Syrian plane that had attacked SDF forces near Raqqa last June.</p> <p>With the defeat of much of the ISIS presence in eastern Syria, it was perhaps only a matter of time before the regime and its allies focused on recovering land to the east of the Euphrates. However, the US has made it clear that it does not intend to leave the area. US officials say that the continued presence of coalition advisers in support of the SDF is essential to prevent the re-emergence of ISIS, and that there may be two or three months more fighting against ISIS remnants in remote areas close to the border with Iraq.</p> <p>The larger picture is that for the US and pro-western groups such as the Kurdish YPG, those parts of northern Syria beyond the regime's control are a powerful negotiating tool when the future of Syria comes to be discussed, not least because they contain much of Syria's oil. Kurdish politicians have spoken of a confederation that would give them autonomy in northern Syria, but so far they have been excluded from peace talks at Turkey's insistence.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	02/08 Syria slams US strike as 'war crime'
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SOURCE	https://www.upi.com/Top_News/World-News/2018/02/08/Syria-slams-deadly-US-strike-as-war-crime/2791518115557/?utm_source=fp&utm_campaign=ts_tn_int&utm_medium=6
GIST	<p>Feb. 8 (UPI) -- Syria's foreign ministry appealed to the United Nations Security Council Thursday to condemn a U.S. assault that killed more than 100 government troops.</p> <p>The U.S. military said the overnight airstrike in Deir el-Zour was retaliation for an "unprovoked attack" against the U.S.-led coalition occupying Syria.</p> <p>The Syrian government, though, called the act a "barbaric aggression" and said the real purpose of the "so-called international coalition" was to support the Islamic State terror network.</p> <p>Syria's foreign ministry wrote a letter to the Security Council Thursday calling for international condemnation.</p> <p>"This new aggression, which represents a war crime and a crime against humanity and a direct support to terrorism, affirms the nature of the low U.S. intentions against the sovereignty of Syria, the unity of its land and people and the U.S. exploitation of the pretext of fighting terrorism to establish illegal bases on the Syrian territory," the letter states.</p> <p>"The government of the Syrian Arab Republic calls on the UNSC to condemn the massacre and hold the international coalition responsible for the killing and wounding of thousands of civilians, including children, women and elderly and to pay compensation to the families of the victims."</p> <p>The letter also said the Syrian government wants the "illegal" U.S.-led coalition dissolved, as it is "a force of protection and support to terrorism."</p> <p>"The Syrian institutions and forces will continue to carry out their responsibilities regardless of the sacrifices in order to prevent the U.S. coalition from achieving its declared terrorist objectives," it said.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	02/09 Endgame for US in Syria gets murky
SOURCE	http://www.foxnews.com/us/2018/02/09/as-is-shrinks-end-game-for-us-in-syria-gets-murky.html
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON – The closer the U.S. gets to its original goal in Syria of defeating the Islamic State group, the murkier its end game. The battlefield is shifting as demonstrated by a deadly barrage of American air and artillery strikes on a shadowy attacker.</p> <p>The Pentagon insists it is keeping its focus on defeating IS, but Defense Secretary Jim Mattis said Thursday U.S.-backed fighters in eastern Syria faced a "perplexing" overnight assault by about 300 pro-Syrian government fighters whose nationalities, motives and makeup he could not identify.</p> <p>A number of U.S. military advisers were present alongside local allied forces, and the Americans led a punishing response that other officials said killed about 100 of the assailants.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	02/09 Security alert Trinidad, Tobago Carnival
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/02/09/americas/trinidad-tobago-carnival-terror-threat/index.html
GIST	<p>(CNN)Days before the Carnival on the islands of Trinidad and Tobago, multiple US officials tell CNN they are aware of a terror-related threat to the popular annual event.</p> <p>This year's Carnival will be held Monday and Tuesday.</p> <p>The US Embassy in Port of Spain, capital of the two-island Caribbean nation, issued a security alert</p>

	<p>Thursday night, saying a plot had been thwarted but advising US government personnel "to exercise additional caution and increased situational awareness if they participate in Carnival events."</p> <p>The United Kingdom also issued a "Foreign Travel Advice" for the West Indies country on Thursday.</p> <p>"Terrorists are very likely to try to carry out attacks in Trinidad and Tobago. Attacks could be indiscriminate, including in crowded spaces and places visited by foreigners," the advisory said, adding authorities in that country have made arrests.</p> <p>The US military and intelligence have long considered Trinidad and Tobago a home to ISIS sympathizers. Individuals who have left Trinidad and Tobago have been involved in terrorist acts and committed killings in Syria, Adm. Kurt Tidd, head of US Southern Command, said in April 2017.</p> <p>In a news conference Thursday, a Trinidad and Tobago police official, Michael Jackman, said the disruptions were in the form of "criminal activities." He did not elaborate on whether the threat was terror-related.</p> <p>Police uncovered a threat to disrupt the Carnival activities and detained "several persons of interest," Jackman said in video provided by CNN affiliate CNC3 Television.</p>
<p>Return to Top</p>	

HEADLINE	02/08 DOJ: strip terror group leader citizenship
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/doj-leader-terrorist-group-lose-citizenship-52936137?
GIST	<p>The Department of Justice is seeking to revoke the citizenship of the former leader of a Missouri-based organization that illegally funneled money to Iraq.</p> <p>The federal agency filed a complaint Wednesday in U.S. District Court in Kansas City, seeking to revoke the naturalization of Mubarak Hamed, once the director of the Islamic American Relief Agency, which posed as a charity that assisted famine victims in Africa. The organization collected \$1 million to \$3 million in contributions each year from 1991 to 2003.</p> <p>According to the complaint, Hamed regularly transferred funds from the organization to an account in Jordan controlled by a man who transferred the money, or goods bought with the funds, to Iraq, which violated U.S. sanctions against that country.</p> <p>IARA, based in Columbia, Missouri, was the U.S. office of the Sudan-based Islamic Relief Agency. It secretly funneled a total of about \$1.4 million to Iraq, the department said.</p> <p>The U.S. group was dissolved in 2004, after the government deemed it a terrorist organization. At the time, the organization was ordered to transfer more than \$800,000 in assets to a charity that assists farmers and drought victims in East Africa.</p> <p>Hamed, a native of Sudan, pleaded guilty to conspiracy, lying to federal agents and misusing the tax-exempt status given to charities. He served nearly five years in prison before being released in August 2016.</p> <p>It wasn't immediately clear where Hamed has been living since his release from prison. Charles Swift, the attorney who represented Hamed during his criminal case, did not reply to a phone message.</p> <p>If he loses his citizenship, he would revert back to permanent resident status and the Department of Homeland Security would begin removal proceedings.</p>
<p>Return to Top</p>	

HEADLINE	02/09 Extremists flourish in Indonesia prisons
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/study-extremists-flourishing-indonesias-prisons-52952345?
GIST	<p>Indonesia's overcrowded prisons are ill-equipped to deal with Islamic militant inmates, hampering efforts to prevent the spread of violent radicalism in institutions that have become known as jihadist breeding grounds, a study has found.</p> <p>The research by University of Indonesia psychologists, which adds to years of warnings by experts, found that prison staff lack the ability to identify "high-risk" prisoners who could recruit other inmates because they're given limited information and little specialist training.</p> <p>Indonesia, the world's most populous Muslim-majority nation, has arrested and imprisoned hundreds of Islamic militants in a crackdown that followed a terror attack on the island of Bali in 2002. Yet many remained committed to violent extremism — both during and after their incarceration — and used their time in prison to radicalize others, who went on to commit acts of terror.</p> <p>The eight-month study at the four largest Indonesian prisons found prison staff who have close contact with inmates don't know how to limit the influence of hard-line ideologues or identify the less ideologically committed who could be disentangled with simple interventions, said Faisal Magrie, coordinator of the research, which was released Thursday.</p> <p>The problems in the prison system are often defeating efforts to turn convicted militants away from radicalism, he said.</p> <p>The challenges are exacerbated by poor coordination among government agencies and non-government organizations, which leads to duplicated efforts and unclear de-radicalization programs, Magrie said.</p> <p>"As a result, inmates are confused by the program, bored, and eventually refuse to participate," he said.</p> <p>Irfan Idris, director of de-radicalization at National Counter-Terrorism Agency, said the radicalization of ordinary criminals by militants who support the Islamic State group continues to be nightmare for police and prison officials.</p> <p>He said at least 18 former prisoners have been involved in extremist cases in Indonesia since 2010, and most were radicalized in prison.</p> <p>Efforts have since been made to isolate high-profile militant leaders to prevent the spread of violent ideology.</p> <p>Overpopulated prisons are the main reason de-radicalization efforts are struggling, said Bahrul Wijaksana, a senior program manager of Search for Common Ground, a nongovernment organization based in Washington that works with Indonesia's Directorate-General of Corrections.</p> <p>Currently, he said, the 477 prisons in Indonesia, which were built to accommodate 115,000 inmates, are holding about 254,000 prisoners. In big cities, prisons are four to five times overcapacity. Jakarta's Cipinang Prison, built to hold 900 inmates, has nearly 4,000 prisoners.</p> <p>Meanwhile, at current staffing levels in prison, there is one officer to every 55 inmates, making it difficult if not impossible to closely monitor all prisoner activities.</p> <p>"The deradicalization program is not going to be effective unless some of these issues are addressed," said Wijaksana.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	02/09 Turkey resumes strikes on Kurd enclave
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/turkish-jets-resume-airstrikes-syrian-kurdish-enclave-52953866?
GIST	<p>Turkish jets have resumed airstrikes in the Syrian Kurdish-run enclave of Afrin after a brief lull, the military and media reports said Friday.</p> <p>The state-run Anadolu Agency said F-16 jets resumed their aerial bombing campaign late Thursday, striking the northwestern enclave's Mount Bafilun, the villages of Sheik Huruz and Kefer Jenne and the regions of Sheran, Jinderes and Raju, among other targets.</p> <p>Turkey's military issued a brief statement Friday saying its jets bombed a total of 19 targets, including shelters, ammunition depots and gun positions belonging to "terror" organizations. All planes returned to base safely, the statement added.</p> <p>Unconfirmed Turkish media reports had said that Turkey halted flights after Russia, which effectively controls the skies over the region, had closed the airspace over Afrin after militants shot down a Russian Su-25 fighter in northern Idlib province on Feb. 3.</p> <p>Turkey launched an offensive into the enclave three weeks ago to rout Syrian Kurdish fighters whom Ankara considers to be a security threat because of their links to outlawed rebels in Turkey.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	02/08 Military targets Chinese Uighur militants
SOURCE	https://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/u-s-targets-chinese-uighur-militants-well-taliban-fighters-afghanistan-n845876
GIST	<p>The U.S. military says it carried out a series of punishing bombings last weekend of Taliban militant camps that also support a separatist Chinese terror group.</p> <p>A bombing raid Sunday on a region bordering China and Tajikistan set a record for the number of precision-guided munitions launched at one time from a B-52 bomber, according to Air Force Maj. Gen. James Hecker, who spoke to reporters at the Pentagon in a video teleconference from Kabul on Wednesday. The B-52 — a Cold War workhorse — had recently been modified to carry more munitions, the military said in a statement.</p> <p>The camps in remote Badakhshan Province supported Taliban operations within Afghanistan and by the East Turkestan Islamic Movement — set up by members of China's minority Uighur community — on the border region with China and Tajikistan, the military said.</p> <p>"There will be no safe haven for any terrorist group," Gen. John Nicholson, the head of U.S. Forces in Afghanistan, said in a statement Thursday. "We continue to hunt them across the country."</p> <p>Hecker said the strikes "support Afghanistan in reassuring its neighbors that it is not a safe sanctuary for terrorists who want to carry out cross border operations."</p> <p>Hecker added that the destruction of the training facilities would prevent "terrorists from planning any acts near the border with China and Tajikistan."</p> <p>China blames violence in its far-western Xinjiang region, home to some 10 million Uighurs, a Turkic-speaking Muslim minority, on Islamist extremists and separatists, some of whom it has long said have links to groups outside the country. Rights groups and Uighur exiles counter that unrest is due more to Uighur frustration at Chinese controls on their culture and religion. China denies any repression.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	02/08 Last 2 ISIS 'Beatles' captured in Syria
SOURCE	https://www.nbcnews.com/storyline/isis-uncovered/last-2-british-isis-beatles-have-been-captured-syria-n846011
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON — Two ISIS fighters notorious for imprisoning and murdering Western hostages were captured on the battlefield in Syria in January, according to three U.S. officials.</p> <p>The men were part of a group of four jihadis dubbed the Beatles by observers because of their British accents, and were caught by the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), a Kurdish and Arab militia fighting both ISIS and the Assad regime. Their capture was first reported by The New York Times.</p> <p>Officials identified the two as Alexandar Amon Kotey and El Shafee Elsheikh, and they were the last of the four Beatles on the battlefield. The best-known member of the group, Mohammed Emwazi, aka Jihadi John, who was seen and heard on videos beheading prisoners, was killed in an airstrike in Raqqa, Syria, in November 2015. The fourth member, Aine Davis, is in Turkish custody. All four men were from West London.</p> <p>The four men tortured their hostages, according to U.S. officials, and are linked to more than two dozen beheadings. Emwazi was suspected of killing Americans James Foley and Steven Sotloff.</p> <p>According to the Times, U.S. officials were told in mid-January that the militia might be holding Kotey and Elsheikh, and U.S. forces used biometric data to confirm their identities.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	02/08 US strike hit Russian mercenaries
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/forces-hit-by-u-s-in-syria-included-russian-mercenaries-official-says/
GIST	<p>"Pro-regime" forces that attacked a Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) headquarters in northeastern Syria -- and were hit in return by U.S. airstrikes -- included Russian mercenaries, according to a Pentagon official. If Russians are among those who were killed, this would mark the first time a U.S. airstrike has killed Russians in Syria, CBS News' David Martin reports.</p> <p>American advisers were present at the SDF headquarters. Pentagon officials, however, do not believe the Russians were after the Americans. Officials believe they were trying to seize a nearby oil field.</p> <p>The U.S.-backed SDF, aided by coalition support, is battling Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) militants east of the Euphrates River.</p> <p>The U.S. airstrikes on Syrian government-backed troops Wednesday was a rare strike against forces that support Syrian President Bashar Assad's regime. Syrian government forces are active on the other side of the river around the city of Deir el-Zour.</p> <p>The U.S. coalition said in a statement that it launched the strikes in self-defense after as many as 500 attackers began what appeared to be a coordinated assault on an SDF headquarters, where Turkish forces are accompanied by U.S. troops.</p> <p>U.S. officials said no Americans were injured or killed in the attack by the pro-regime forces. They spoke on condition of anonymity as details were still emerging on the attack.</p> <p>Syrian state media said the U.S.-led coalition bombing left dozens killed and wounded.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	02/08 Uruguay extends aid ex-Gitmo inmates
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/uruguay-extend-aide-guantanamo-inmates-year-52940871?
GIST	<p>Uruguay's government has decided to extend for another year the economic aid that it has given six former Guantanamo Bay prisoners who resettled in the country in 2014.</p> <p>The government liaison with the ex-Guantanamo inmates said Thursday that they will receive a minimum salary of about \$450 until January 2019. Christian Mirza said the government will also pay their rent and might give them extra money to learn a trade, seek psychological therapy and study Spanish.</p> <p>The financial support was expected to end in January 2018. But the former inmates have struggled to adjust in Uruguay.</p> <p>Mirza said that two of them work at a low-paying parking garage. Another teaches English and Arabic, and a fourth is selling Middle Eastern food. The others are unemployed.</p>
	<p>Return to</p> <p>Top</p>

Suspicious, Unusual

[Top of page](#)

HEADLINE	02/08 Drones size, numbers can overwhelm
SOURCE	https://www.economist.com/news/science-and-technology/21736498-their-small-size-and-large-numbers-can-overwhelm-defences-home-made-drones-now
GIST	<p>AN ATTACK on Russian forces in Syria on January 5th by 13 home-made drones is a good example of “asymmetric” warfare. On one side, exquisite high-tech weapons. On the other, cheap-as-chips disposable robot aircraft. Ten of the drones involved attacked a Russian airbase at Khmeimim. The other three went for a nearby naval base at Tartus. Rather than being quadcopters, the most popular design for commercial drones, the craft involved in these attacks (some of which are pictured above) resembled hobbyists’ model aircraft. They had three-metre wingspans, were built crudely of wood and plastic, and were powered by lawnmower engines. Each carried ten home-made shrapnel grenades under its wings.</p> <p>According to the Russian Ministry of Defence, which has so far refused to say who it thinks was responsible for the attack, the drones were guided by GPS and had a range of 100km. The electronics involved were off-the-shelf components, and the total cost of each drone was perhaps a couple of thousand dollars. The airframes bore a resemblance to those of Russian Orlan-10 drones, several of which have been shot down by rebel forces in Syria. The craft may thus have been a cheap, garage-built copy of captured kit.</p> <p>These particular drones, the Russians claim, were intercepted before they could cause any damage. However, several Russian aircraft were apparently damaged in an attack in Syria four days earlier, which was also, according to some accounts, carried out by drones. And there will certainly be other assaults of this sort. Guerrillas have been using commercial drones since 2015. Islamic State (IS), one of the groups active in Syria, makes extensive use of quadcopters to drop grenades. In 2017 alone the group posted videos of over 200 attacks. IS has also deployed fixed-wing aircraft based on the popular Skywalker X8 hobby drone. These have longer ranges than quadcopters and can carry bigger payloads. Other groups in Syria, and in Iraq as well, employ similar devices. Their use has spread, too, to non-politically-motivated criminals. In October, four Mexicans allegedly linked to a drug cartel were arrested with a bomb-carrying drone.</p> <p>Cheap shots</p> <p>Compared with military hardware, drone technology is both readily available and cheap. In 2014 a team at MITRE, a security think-tank based in Virginia, made a military-grade drone using commercial</p>

electronics, a 3D-printed airframe and open-source software. It cost \$2,000. A whole squadron of such craft could thus be assembled for less than the cost of a single shoulder-fired missile, let alone a modern combat aircraft. America's F-22 fighter, for example, costs over \$300m. A B-2 bomber is even more expensive.

Even a lone drone can do plenty of damage. In Ukraine last year, drones operated by Russian separatists (or perhaps by Russian special forces) attacked several ammunition dumps with incendiary grenades. They destroyed a number of these dumps, in one case setting off explosions which blew up a staggering 70,000 tonnes of munitions.

A growing appreciation of the threat from small drones has led to a rush for protection. Lieutenant-General Stephen Townsend, a former commander of Operation Inherent Resolve, America's anti-IS campaign, has called weaponised drones "the number one threat facing soldiers fighting IS". An American navy budget document describes the navy as "scrambling to improve defences against the rapidly evolving capabilities of remote-controlled devices". Existing defences are not geared up to cope with small drones, which are difficult to spot, identify and track, and which may be too numerous to stop. Jamming might be thought an obvious solution. Breaking the radio links between the operator and the drone, or confusing its GPS navigation, would make a drone crash or send it off course. Many jammers, with names like Dedrone, DroneDefender and DroneShield, have already been employed by various countries. Six of the drones in the Syrian attack were brought down by such jammers, the others by guns and missiles.

Drones are, however, becoming increasingly autonomous. This means there is no operator link to jam. The Syrian drones were vulnerable to jamming because they relied on GPS and so crashed when their link to it was blocked. But new technologies such as optical navigation (which permits a drone to compare its surroundings with an on-board electronic map, and thus to know where it is) will make even GPS jammers useless. Hence the need for "kinetic solutions", to shoot drones down.

Small drones are surprisingly hard targets, however. Iraqi forces in Mosul used to joke that trying to deal with an IS drone attack was like being at a wedding celebration: everyone fired their Kalashnikovs into the air with no effect. A recent American army manual describes small drones as "very difficult to defeat using direct fire weapons". A single rifle bullet is likely to miss. A shotgun would work, but only at close range, and would mean that squaddies had to carry around an extra weapon all the time on the off chance of a drone attack. Also, since drones are not of standard sizes, the range to one is hard to estimate. The manual therefore suggests that rather than aiming directly at a drone, the entire squad should fire their weapons at a fixed point ahead of it, hoping to bring the craft down with a curtain of fire. The manual also advises commanders that the best course of action may be "immediate relocation of the unit to a safer location".

A numbers game

Among other projects, the American army is hurriedly upgrading its shoulder-launched Stinger missiles, which are used to attack low-flying aeroplanes and helicopters. Stingers were not designed to hit small drones, though, so the upgrade adds a proximity fuse which detonates when the missile is close enough to destroy a drone without actually having to make contact with it. Up to 600 "Manoeuvre Short Range Air Defence" teams equipped with these upgraded missiles will join American infantry units around the world. But the upgrades cost about \$55,000 each (on top of the basic \$120,000 cost of a Stinger), so only 1,147 are being purchased—about two per team, which is hardly enough to tackle a swarm of drones.

Another approach being tried out by the American army is a system called BLADE (Ballistic Low-Altitude Drone Engagement). This fits armoured vehicles' existing machine-gun turrets with radar guidance and computer control. That should provide some protection, but may still be impotent against a mass attack.

A similar problem applies at sea, where billion-dollar ships might have their defences overwhelmed by squadrons of cheap, jerry-built drones. The mainstay of American naval air defence is Aegis, an orchestrated arrangement of radars, computers, missiles and cannons. The short-range element of Aegis is

a Dalek-like, rapid-fire cannon called Phalanx, which spits out 75 rounds a second and can shoot down incoming cruise missiles. This will not cope well with lots of small drones, though. The navy is now upgrading Aegis's software to handle multiple simultaneous incoming targets by scheduling bursts of fire to destroy as many members of a swarm as possible. It is doubtful, however, whether one gun could account for more than a handful of attackers coming in from all directions at once. An unclassified study suggests that it could be overwhelmed by as few as eight.

Developers of drone-countering measures hope to overcome that by using laser weapons. Lasers hit their targets at the speed of light, have an unlimited supply of ammunition and cost less than a dollar a shot. Though such weapons have yet to achieve their designers' intentions of being able to shoot down crewed aircraft, they have been tested extensively and successfully against target drones. A variety of specifically anti-drone laser systems are now being developed, including Lockheed Martin's Athena, Raytheon's dune-buggy-mounted anti-drone laser, and LaWS, a creation of the American navy itself.

The crucial question is how rapidly such a laser system can spot, track and aim at its target, and how long the beam must play on the target in order to destroy it. The whole process is likely to take several seconds, and until it is complete, the laser cannot move on to repeat the procedure on another target. As with Phalanx, a simple calculation suggests individual anti-drone lasers would be able to deal with only a small number of attackers. If even one drone got through, the laser would probably be the priority target—for destroying it would leave the way open for a subsequent, unchallenged attack.

An American army document from 2016 thus emphasises the importance of stopping drones "left of launch"—that is, before they can take off. IS drone workshops and operators have been attacked to stop the drone threat. The Russians say they destroyed the unnamed group responsible for the mass drone attack in January, along with their drone-assembly and storage facility in Idlib, using laser-guided artillery. But when there are no runways or hangars, and drones can be operated from houses and garages, finding bases to attack is far from easy. Until adequate defences are in place, then, guerrilla drone swarms will be a real danger.

[Return to](#)

[Top](#)

HEADLINE	02/08 NKorea sends clear message w/parade
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/02/07/asia/north-korea-military-parade-intl/index.html
GIST	<p>(CNN)North Korea staged a highly anticipated military parade through the capital Pyongyang Thursday, a diplomatic source told CNN, an event that has so far been hidden from the rest of the world.</p> <p>International media was not invited to cover the parade, which was to feature "hundreds" of rockets and missiles, diplomatic sources said last month.</p> <p>South Korean news agency Yonhap reported that as many as 50,000 people gathered in Kim Il Sung square to watch the event, which included around 13,000 soldiers.</p> <p>The parade began at 10:00 a.m. Pyongyang time, a diplomatic source with deep knowledge of North Korea's activities told CNN. It's possible that North Korean state television will air video of the event during its afternoon broadcast.</p> <p>The parade was held around the same time as a welcoming ceremony for hundreds of North Koreans who are in South Korea for the 2018 Winter Olympics.</p> <p>For North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, the parade is an opportunity to stoke patriotic fervor and to remind the world of his country's rapid progress on its nuclear program.</p> <p>For South Korea, it's a poke in the eye after efforts by President Moon Jae-in to present a united front as the two Koreas compete under the same flag.</p>

"The North Koreans tend to act out like this even during periods of quiet to demonstrate their independence and to try to convince us that their nuclear arsenal is beyond limits," said Adam Mount, a senior fellow at the Federation of American Scientists.

"It's a clear sign of defiance, and they intend it to be."

[Return to](#)

[Top](#)

HEADLINE	02/08 Mysterious death Border Patrol agent
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/02/08/us/border-patrol-agent-death-what-we-know/index.html
GIST	<p>(CNN)The mystery surrounding the death of US Border Patrol agent Rogelio "Roger" Martinez is nowhere close to being solved.</p> <p>In the more than two months since Martinez's patrolled the West Texas desert for the last time, the FBI interviewed hundreds of people, combed through cellular data and analyzed DNA from the scene.</p> <p>Yet, authorities are still trying to determine how Martinez got injured and eventually died. Here is what we know about the mysterious death and the investigation.</p> <p>What happened? Martinez, 36, died late on the evening of November 18. He was patrolling alone near Interstate 10 when he stopped his vehicle about 12 miles east of Van Horn, Texas.</p> <p>About 11:20 p.m. Martinez and another agent, Stephen "Michael" Garland, were found injured near a concrete-lined culvert -- a tunnel used for water drainage.</p> <p>The agents were patrolling in separate vehicles and it's unclear why both ended up at the culvert, according to the Border Patrol.</p> <p>Martinez had severe head injuries and other wounds such as broken bones. He was flown to a hospital in El Paso that night and died a few hours later, the FBI said.</p> <p>Garland was also injured but he survived. He told investigators he doesn't remember anything about what happened.</p> <p>They called for help The FBI says Garland spoke to a Border Patrol dispatcher on the phone. He was disoriented and unsure of his location, but he told the dispatcher he and Martinez were hurt.</p> <p>"The second Border Patrol agent also made a statement to the effect of, 'We ran into a culvert,' 'I ran into a culvert,' or 'I think I ran into a culvert,'" the FBI said.</p> <p>The Border Patrol dispatch told Garland to go to his vehicle and activate his emergency lights so that first responders could find them, the FBI said.</p> <p>Authorities were also alerted by Garland's wife, who called the Van Horn Border Patrol station saying she'd received a cell phone call in which her husband seemed confused and disoriented, according to an agent who spoke with her.</p> <p>No evidence of murder Authorities appear ready to rule out the possibility that Martinez and his partner were attacked or ambushed.</p> <p>The agents did not suffer "defensive wounds" and investigators did not find "third-party blood or DNA evidence" in the scene or the agents' clothing, according to an internal memo, from acting US Customs and</p>

Border Protection Commissioner Kevin McAleenan, which was obtained by CNN.

In the memo, McAleenan also indicated that no evidence suggested other people other than the agents were at the scene the night of the incident.

"None of the more than 650 interviews completed, locations searched, or evidence collected and analyzed have produced evidence that would support the existence of a scuffle, altercation, or attack," the FBI said in a statement released Wednesday.

In December, agents were chasing a tip that two undocumented brothers, suspected drug smugglers, had attacked the agents, according to a search warrant filed unsealed in New Mexico. But they are not connected to Martinez's death, or his partner's injuries, the FBI said Wednesday.

No other suspects have been linked to the incident.

The FBI has considered other theories, such as an accident or an altercation between the two agents, a Department of Justice official with knowledge of the investigation had said.

Emmerson Buie Jr., the special agent in charge of the FBI's El Paso division, said investigators have not "conclusively determined" how the two agents ended up at the bottom of the culvert.

A Customs and Border Protection spokesperson declined to comment on the case.

Autopsy results are inconclusive

A medical examiner in Texas said Martinez died from blunt injuries to his head, but the manner of his death is "undetermined," according to an autopsy report released Tuesday.

Martinez had fractures to his skull, right jaw, upper ribs and his right collarbone, the report by the El Paso County Medical Examiner's Office says.

The agent had cuts in his scalp, the report says, and a large bruise on his right shoulder. There was also a purple discoloration behind his right ear.

A toxicological test found a small amount of the barbiturate butalbital in Martinez's blood. The drug is often combined with aspirin or acetaminophen to treat headaches and pain.

Some believe it was an attack

Despite the FBI's conclusion that there's no evidence of an attack, the Border Patrol union still believes the agent's injuries were the result of an attack.

"Our view hasn't changed. Our view is he was attacked," Chris Cabrera, a spokesman for the National Border Patrol Council told CNN referring to the FBI's investigation. "It seems to me that they don't have any leads."

The union was quick to say the agents were attacked after the incident. The assertion has been echoed by Texas politicians such as Gov. Greg Abbott, Sen. Ted Cruz and others.

On Twitter, President Donald Trump said the injured agent had been "brutally beaten" and called again for the construction of a wall between the United States and Mexico.

Culberson County Sheriff Oscar Carrillo, who responded that night, said it didn't look like an attack to him.

Agent's family finds it hard to believe

Martinez's fiancée, Angela Ochoa, and his family have said they don't understand how the agent suffered such severe injuries.

	<p>"I find it hard (to believe) that a fall could have caused all the damage that he had," she said. "And as far as him being sideswept, that couldn't have happened because he was not off the freeway, he was on the side road. From the damage to his face, there's no way -- there's no way," she said.</p> <p>She believes the answers may lie with surviving agent Garland.</p> <p>"I mean, I know he saw something," Ochoa told CNN in December. "I know he knows. But what he knows, I can't tell you. I don't know."</p> <p>Neither she nor the Martinez family had heard from Garland since the agent's death, she said.</p>
<p>Return to Top</p>	

HEADLINE	02/08 Skagit County: stop stealing trees
SOURCE	http://komonews.com/news/local/skagit-county-stop-stealing-our-trees
GIST	<p>ROCKPORT, Wash. - Skagit County wants to know who's been stealing dozens of trees from a popular park.</p> <p>The County tweeted a message Thursday saying, "Stop stealing our trees."</p> <p>It said they've lost dozens of trees to theft at Sauk Park and along the Cascade Trail.</p> <p>The County said it looked like the trees are being cut down then hauled offsite and illegally sold as firewood.</p> <p>The County said it's now working with the sheriff's office in the hopes of finding the suspects.</p> <p>They urged park goers and hikers to call 911 if they see anything suspicious.</p>
<p>Return to Top</p>	

HEADLINE	02/08 Mysterious wind blows down big trees
SOURCE	https://www.seattlepi.com/local/weather/article/Mysterious-wind-blows-down-big-trees-in-W-12562651.php
GIST	<p>What in the world could possibly blow down more than 100 trees in the middle of a national park when no other major weather event was recorded in the area?</p> <p>That's a good question, and one that could be explained either simply — it was a downdraft wind — or through a Sherlock Holmes-style breakdown of events, courtesy local weather guru Cliff Mass.</p> <p>To wit: In the wee morning hours of Jan. 27, 2018, some kind of significant wind event managed to blow down 110 trees across a large swath of forest on the north shore of Lake Quinault, on Washington's Olympic Peninsula.</p> <p>Such wind was not recorded at nearby weather stations, nor did radar records from the time show anything more than some high and low pressure systems meeting, according to Mass.</p> <p>The explanation espoused by The Daily World was that the wind came from a "microburst," a rare wind event that creates a downward wind in a localized area.</p> <p>But a National Weather Service meteorologist told Mass it would've taken winds of 70 to 80 mph to snap trees off in the way it happened that night, so Mass dismissed that possibility.</p>

National Park Service reports to Mass indicated that the wind event likely came from the north — a northerly wind — and records showed a seismic record of the event. In other words, it was such a force of trees falling that it looked like a small earthquake.

That's some wind.

But surface wind records from around the time of the incident didn't show any major winds, and those that were recorded were blowing in the wrong direction.

No convective system that would created a "microburst," either, according to Mass.

The only thing that could, possibly, have created the wind to down the trees was this: "a frontal zone was approaching, with warm air and southerly flow surging in aloft, while cooler easterly flow dominated near the surface."

Mass noted that the front was linked with a low pressure system that did produce some strong winds around Western Washington later that day, but still, at the time, no major winds recorded nearby.

So what caused 110 trees to blow down in the middle of a forest?

That mystery remains unsolved.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	02/09 Racism rises in Italy electoral campaign
SOURCE	http://www.foxnews.com/world/2018/02/09/rising-racism-taints-italian-electoral-campaign.html
GIST	<p>VERONA, Italy – When hundreds of hardcore fans of Italy's Hellas Verona Seria A soccer club chanted "Adolf Hitler is my friend" and sang that their team embraced the swastika, at a festive gathering in the summer, Italian Jewish communities complained — and waited.</p> <p>Local officials initially dismissed the video as a "prank," and condemnation only came several months later, after another video from the same event, profaning Christian objects, also began circulating on social media.</p> <p>"These episodes should absolutely not be dismissed," said Bruno Carmi, the head of Verona's tiny Jewish community of about 100, speaking in an interview at the Verona synagogue, which is flanked by two armed police patrols. "In my opinion, whoever draws a simple swastika on the wall knows what it means. And we know very well where that swastika brought us."</p> <p>Racist and anti-Semitic expressions have been growing more bold, widespread and violent in Italy. Anti-migrant rhetoric is playing an unprecedented role in shaping the campaign for the March 4 national elections, which many says is worsening tensions and even encouraging violence.</p> <p>Hate crimes motivated by racial or religious bias in Italy rose more than 10-fold, from 71 incidents in 2012 to 803 in 2016, according to police statistics. The five-year period corresponded with an explosion in migrant arrivals.</p> <p>On Saturday, a right-wing extremist shot and wounded six African immigrants in the small central Italian city of Macerata. Police say the suspect claims to have been acting out of revenge after a Nigerian immigrant was accused of dismembering an 18-year-old teen whose remains were found three days earlier. The shooting drew widespread, but not universal, condemnation.</p> <p>The attack also had a political taint. The alleged gunman, Luca Traini, was a failed candidate for the right-wing, anti-migrant Northern League last year and had previously flirted with more extreme neo-fascist movements. Police seized Nazi and white supremacist propaganda from his bedroom.</p>

The night before the shooting, Northern League leader Matteo Salvini had cited the teen's murder in a campaign appearance in Verona, pledging to send home 150,000 migrants if elected. He only dug in further after the attack.

Former Premier Silvio Berlusconi, who is competing with Salvini for leadership of the center-right coalition, significantly upped the political ante after the shooting. He claimed that 600,000 migrants were in Italy illegally, calling them "a social bomb ready to explode because they are ready to commit crimes," and threatened to deport many.

"The facts of Macerata in some ways show that in recent years there has been a process of cultural, social and political legitimization of racism that is creating enormous damage, most of all at the expense of people's lives," said Grazia Naletto, president of Lunaria, a Rome-based non-governmental agency that compiles a database of racist incidents in Italy.

Lunaria counts 84 cases of racist violence against individuals in the last three years, including 11 racially motivated murders, a statistic that Naletto called unprecedented in Italy.

A report on hate for the Italian parliament last summer reported that 40 percent of Italians believe other religions pose a threat, especially the Muslim faith. It also said anti-Semitism is shared by one in five Italians. The IPSOS MORI polling company found that Italy is the least informed country in the world regarding immigration, with most people overestimating by more than three times the number of immigrants living in Italy.

Findings by the swg research institute based in Trieste published in January said the demographic most vulnerable to neo-Nazi ideals are those aged 25-34, and that among Italians overall, 55 percent of those in the lowest income range either indulge in or oppose combating neo-Nazi and neo-fascist ideals.

Experts cite many reasons for the spread of extremism and racist expressions that until recently were mostly relegated to the margins of society. They include a superficial understanding of history, as well as an economy weakened by a long crisis that sidelined many ordinary workers and barred many young people from entering the work force.

More recently, there is the added pressure of migrants arriving from across the Mediterranean, with arrivals nearing 120,000 last year and topping 180,000 the year before.

The head of the immigration office at the Verona diocese concedes that many Italians have not accepted that theirs has become a multicultural society, despite the fact that about 9 percent of the nation's residents are foreigners. The diocese where he works hosts 11 foreign Christian communities, but resistance to integration is entrenched, he said.

"Romanian youths have less trouble integrating than ones from Ghana or Sri Lanka," the Rev. Giuseppe Mirandola said. "That is to say, we still have difficulty with the color of the skin."

He said even Pope Francis' calls to welcome migrants in this predominantly Roman Catholic nation have fallen on some deaf ears.

[Return to](#)

[Top](#)

HEADLINE	02/08 Official: NYPD ignored all ICE requests
SOURCE	http://www.foxnews.com/us/2018/02/08/nypd-ignored-more-than-1500-federal-requests-to-detain-immigrants-last-year-official-says.html
GIST	New York City police ignored all 1,526 requests from federal Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) to detain undocumented immigrants for up to 48 hours last year, a top NYPD official said Wednesday.

	<p>The Daily News reported that Oleg Chernyavsky, the NYPD's legislative affairs director, revealed the numbers at a City Council meeting.</p> <p>The number of requests for 2017 was nearly 20 times higher than the 80 the department received over the previous year. Chernyavsky said the department responded to just two of ICE's 2016 requests because those immigrants had federal arrest warrants.</p> <p>Under New York City law, prisoners can only be handed over to ICE if they've been convicted of one of 170 crimes and federal officials present a warrant.</p> <p>Chernyavsky said the police response to ICE requests "speaks volumes to our intent as a city. ... It's important for victims of crimes, irrespective of their immigration status, to trust their police and to come forward and inform their police."</p>
<p>Return to Top</p>	

HEADLINE	02/08 Study: alarming find on ibuprofen use
SOURCE	https://www.aol.com/article/news/2018/02/08/many-people-take-dangerously-high-amounts-of-ibuprofen/23356829/
GIST	<p>(Reuters Health) - Many adults who use ibuprofen and other so-called nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory (NSAID) drugs take too much, increasing their risk of serious side effects like internal bleeding and heart attacks, a U.S. study suggests.</p> <p>About 15 percent of adults taking ibuprofen (Motrin, Advil) or other NSAIDs like aspirin, naproxen (Aleve), celecoxib (Celebrex), meloxicam (Mobic) and diclofenac (Voltaren) exceeded the maximum recommended daily dose for these drugs, the study found.</p> <p>"NSAIDs are among the most commonly used medicines in the U.S. and worldwide," said lead study author Dr. David Kaufman of Boston University.</p> <p>"These drugs can have serious side effects, including gastrointestinal bleeding and heart attacks, and are often taken without medical oversight because many products are available over-the-counter," Kaufman said by email. "The attitude that users can choose their own dose regardless of label directions, along with poor knowledge of dosing limits, is associated with exceeding the daily limit."</p> <p>One limitation of the study is that researchers only focused on recent and current ibuprofen users, which may not reflect what doses might be typical for sporadic or new users, the authors note.</p> <p>Even so, the findings highlight a potential downside of making NSAIDs widely available without a prescription, said Dr. Gunnar Gislason, director of research for the Danish Heart Foundation in Copenhagen.</p>
<p>Return to Top</p>	

Crime, Criminals

[Top of page](#)

HEADLINE	02/09 Expert: Sinaloa cartel moved to fentanyl
SOURCE	http://www.bostonherald.com/news/local_coverage/2018/02/expert_sinaloa_cartel_moved_to_fentanyl_to_meet_demand
GIST	<p>The Sinaloa cartel is involved in fentanyl now because they realize it's extraordinarily profitable. The cost is very low, but the scary thing is it's being shipped in powder form. The easiest way to die is to inhale it.</p>

It's synthetic so all you need is a chemist. It's a no-brainer for them. They don't need to wait for a harvest. The business dictates that fentanyl now replaces heroin. They can even package it and make it look like pills.

This is the latest permutation in the drug organization. It was started by hillbillies literally firing guns in the air. Those days are gone.

The Sinaloa cartel is morphing like any capitalist business. And they understand distribution like FedEx does.

They are very, very brutal in Mexico, but like to keep a low profile in the States. They've learned their lessons from the Bloods, Crips and Colombians who taught them don't make a big mess.

But like all the cartels in Mexico, they have become savage, medieval. They have no mercy for adversaries. The local papers in Mexico run monthly totals of beheadings.

It's a free-for-all in Mexico now since El Chapo's arrest over who will run the Sinaloa cartel.

These guys as a state and a culture begins in the 1970s. Sinaloa is a Mexican state along the Pacific coast with the resort city of Mazatlan the capital.

The region is known for its tomatoes, melons and cucumbers. But there was never any money for the poorest of the poor. Then they began growing marijuana.

Then they helped the Colombians traffic cocaine across the border and ultimately took that business over, too.

The cartel never really cared about heroin, it was too scuzzy. But America's culture of pain pills led to addiction and had those folks switching to heroin. The cartel saw it would be a big market.

Fentanyl is now showing up because our demand is so high we've just used up all the heroin.

[Return to](#)

[Top](#)

HEADLINE	02/09 Los Zetas cartel faction leader captured
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/article/us-mexico-violence/mexican-authorities-capture-los-zetas-drug-cartel-faction-leader-idUSKBN1FT0RX
GIST	<p>MEXICO CITY (Reuters) - Mexican authorities have captured Los Zetas drug cartel member and faction leader Jose Maria Guizar, also known as "Z43", two security sources said on Thursday.</p> <p>The U.S. State Department had offered a reward of up to \$5 million for information that would lead to his capture. On its website it describes Guizar as the commander of his own faction of the violent Los Zetas in the south of Mexico.</p> <p>"Guizar is responsible for the importation of thousands of kilograms of cocaine and methamphetamine to the United States on a yearly basis," the website says.</p> <p>Guizar, an American citizen, has been charged in drug trafficking indictments in Texas and Virginia.</p>
Return to	
Top	

HEADLINE	02/08 Judge: neo-Nazi must reveal location
SOURCE	https://www.thedailybeast.com/neo-nazi-andrew-anglin-must-come-out-of-hiding-judge-rules-anglins-lawyer-says-he-lives-in-cambodia-now?ref=home

GIST	<p>Vanished neo-Nazi Andrew Anglin must give up his whereabouts, a federal court in Montana ordered Wednesday.</p> <p>Anglin, who runs the white supremacist website Daily Stormer, has been on the lam for a year, fleeing a lawsuit by a Jewish woman whose address Anglin posted online. The woman, Tanya Gersh, is suing Anglin for intimidation and emotional distress after Anglin encouraged his anti-Semitic following to call her family members or “stop by” her Montana home. Anglin’s attorneys have attempted to dodge the lawsuit by claiming he lives outside the country, and that he worries for his personal safety if he reveals his location.</p> <p>A federal court isn’t buying it.</p> <p>Anglin has until February 16 to tell the court where he’s living, ruled U.S. Magistrate Judge Jeremiah Lynch.</p> <p>The lawsuit against him originated in the Montana hometown of fellow white supremacist Richard Spencer.</p> <p>Spencer, who has called for ethnic cleansing and shouted “hail Trump” to a crowd of followers throwing Nazi salutes, is from Whitefish, Montana. After Spencer’s profile as a white supremacist rose in 2016, Spencer’s mother became involved in a dispute with Gersh, a local real-estate agent. Gersh said she had simply decided not to work with Spencer’s mother.</p> <p>But Spencer’s mother (or Spencer himself, Gersh’s lawyers claim) wrote a blog post accusing Gersh of harassment. Anglin quickly took up the story on the Daily Stormer. “Jews Targeting Richard Spencer’s Mother for Harassment and Extortion,” Anglin wrote. “TAKE ACTION!”</p> <p>Anglin posted Gersh’s phone number, address, and contact information for her family.</p> <p>“Please call her and tell her what you think. And hey—if you’re in the area, maybe you should stop by and tell her in person what you think of her actions,” he wrote, adding homophobic and anti-Semitic slurs about Gersh’s 12-year-old son.</p> <p>The subsequent “troll army” bombarded Gersh with threatening phone calls, emails, and text messages. In April 2017, she partnered with the Southern Poverty Law Center to sue Anglin for distress and intimidation.</p> <p>The neo-Nazi hasn’t been seen since.</p> <p>Anglin’s lawyer Marc Randazza claims Anglin can’t face the lawsuit because he does not belong to any U.S. state. Randazza said Anglin fears for his physical safety if his address was revealed, even if it’s in court documents and not in a blog post, like Anglin did to Gersh.</p>
<p>Return to Top</p>	

HEADLINE	02/09 ICC probes Philippines, Venezuela
SOURCE	http://time.com/5141039/icc-hague-venezuela-philippines/?xid=homepage
GIST	<p>(THE HAGUE, Netherlands) — The prosecutor of the International Criminal Court announced Thursday that she is opening preliminary probes into alleged crimes by police and security forces in the Philippines and Venezuela.</p> <p>Prosecutor Fatou Bensouda said that the probe on Venezuela will look at allegations that since April 2017 government forces “frequently used excessive force to disperse and put down demonstrations,” and abused some opposition members in detention.</p>

The Philippines probe will focus on allegations since July 2016 that thousands of people have been killed in the government's war on drugs.

"While some of such killings have reportedly occurred in the context of clashes between or within gangs, it is alleged that many of the reported incidents involved extra-judicial killings in the course of police anti-drug operations," Bensouda said.

A Filipino lawyer last year presented documents to the court which he said contained evidence of the alleged involvement of President Rodrigo Duterte in the killings of suspected drug dealers and other crime suspects.

"It is a case for crimes against humanity against President Rodrigo Duterte and senior officials in his government," lawyer Jude Sabio told The Associated Press outside the court after presenting to prosecutors a 77-page file outlining the allegations.

Bensouda said in 2016 she was deeply concerned about the reports of the killings, and that statements by "high officials" in the Philippines "seem to condone such killings."

In the Philippines, Duterte's spokesman, Harry Roque Jr., told reporters Thursday that the government had been notified that the ICC was to start a preliminary examination. He said Duterte welcomed the development because it gives him a chance to clear his name.

Regarding the probe on Venezuela, Bensouda said some protesters had also resorted to violence that left members of the security forces dead or injured. The so-called "preliminary examinations" are a first step toward possible full-blown investigations that could lead to indictments by the global court.

The ICC is a court of last resort that takes on cases when national authorities cannot or will not launch domestic prosecutions. Both the Philippines and Venezuela are members of the court, meaning that crimes there could fall under its jurisdiction.

[Return to](#)

[Top](#)

HEADLINE	02/08 Fatal road-rage shooting on I-5 near Fife
SOURCE	http://mynorthwest.com/895035/road-rage-shooting-fife/
GIST	<p>Traffic snarled on southbound I-5 in near Federal Way Thursday night after a fatal road-rage incident involving gunfire.</p> <p>The Washington State Patrol says a woman on a motorcycle and a passenger car pulled over to the left lane of the freeway not far from the King-Pierce County border. A physical altercation ensued shortly before 5 p.m. between the female motorcyclist and a male driver.</p> <p>Troopers say the woman shot the male driver, then called 911 and waited for police to arrive.</p> <p>Two left lanes were blocked near the Fife curve on I-5 during the Thursday evening commute as authorities investigated the scene.</p>
Return to	
Top	

HEADLINE	02/08 'Far-reaching' Mass. wiretap in drug sting
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/fentanyl-drug-bust-operation-high-hopes-boston-massachusetts-wiretap-investigation/
GIST	<p>State and federal law enforcement officials announced Thursday they seized some 77 pounds of various illicit drugs in the Boston area -- including more than 30 pounds of fentanyl -- as the result of "Operation High Hopes," according to a press release by the Suffolk County District Attorney's office. They say it's</p>

"one of the longest, most far-reaching, and most successful state wiretap investigations in Massachusetts history."

Suffolk County District Attorney Daniel Conley says the investigation led to more than a dozen arrests and dismantled two Boston-area drug trafficking organizations. About \$300,000 in alleged drug money was also seized. He added that fentanyl, heroin, cocaine and opiate tablets are believed to have originated from Mexico's Sinaloa Cartel.

Fentanyl is so powerful, Conley says, that mere milligrams can be lethal.

"The number of overdoses it could have caused is truly staggering," Conley wrote in the press release. "Individuals who buy and sell at this level aren't users. They're not small time dealers, either. They're certainly not selling to support a habit. They're trafficking in addictive substances that claim more lives in Massachusetts than all homicides, all suicides and all car crashes, statewide, combined."

Boston Police Commissioner William B. Evans heralded the successful sting in the written statement: "These arrests and seizures will have a tremendous impact on the quality of life in Boston and many other Massachusetts cities and towns," Evans said. "I commend the work of my detectives and all our law enforcement partners who worked tirelessly over the past six months of Operation High Hopes."

The DEA Special Agent in Charge Michael J. Ferguson echoed that sentiment: "Those responsible for distributing lethal drugs like fentanyl to the citizens of Massachusetts need to be held accountable for their actions. DEA's top priority is combating the opioid epidemic by working with our local, county and state law enforcement partners to bring to justice those that distribute this poison."

Edward Soto-Perez, 43, of Roxbury, Nelson Catala-Otero, 37, of Brockton and Julio Cuello, 52, of Dorchester were arraigned in November on multiple drug trafficking charges after the execution of wiretap-based search warrants, according to the press release. They were held on bails ranging from \$100,000 to \$250,000 and will return to court Feb. 13.

Robert Contreras, 42, of Roxbury, is their alleged supplier and was one of more than a dozen people arrested Thursday. He's being held on \$1 million bail and will return to court Feb. 28.

The investigation began in July 2017 as authorities were closing in on Soto-Perez's operation using cooperating witnesses, controlled purchases, physical surveillance and other means -- but he was smart in concealing where he stored his supply or who his supplier was.

"In the months that followed, the court extended the wiretap 11 times and approved interceptions on more than two dozen phones. Investigators doubled as codebreakers to reveal the criminal enterprise as it unfolded ... Ironically, the wiretap that Soto-Perez's precautions made necessary revealed facts and evidence we might never have obtained otherwise.

[Return to](#)

[Top](#)

HEADLINE	02/08 Mexico officials bust corrupt police ring
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/mexico-arrests-police-kidnapping-man-52933253?
GIST	<p>Authorities in Mexico's Gulf coast state of Veracruz announced charges Thursday of "forced disappearance" against 19 current or former state police officials and officers, saying they kidnapped and killed 15 innocent civilians.</p> <p>Veracruz Gov. Miguel Angel Yunes said the victims included two women and two minors, and the alleged perpetrators reached to very top of the police structure.</p> <p>Veracruz has been the scene of grisly police kidnap-killings before but in the cases announced Thursday, state police officials and their subordinate officers were apparently working for gangs or drug cartels,</p>

	<p>Yunes said. The crimes occurred during the 2010-2016 administration of former Gov. Javier Duarte, who himself is in prison facing corruption charges, and his predecessor.</p> <p>Yunes said the state's former Public Safety Secretary — in effect the top police commander — and his directors of special forces, prisons and state police headed a ring that abducted, tortured, interrogated, raped and killed private citizens.</p> <p>"These corrupt police, like the regime they served, placed themselves at the service of the criminals," Yunes said. Two of the high-ranking officials were already under arrest on other charges, one is a fugitive, and the rest were placed under arrest.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	02/09 Indonesia foils artifact smuggling
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/skulls-mail-indonesia-foils-artifact-smuggling-52953286?
GIST	<p>Customs officials on the Indonesian tourist island of Bali said Friday that they've foiled an attempt to mail 24 elaborately decorated human skulls to the Netherlands.</p> <p>The Customs Department said that cartons containing the skulls were intercepted on two separate dates in January. The skulls are believed to be culturally-significant artifacts from other parts of Indonesia.</p> <p>They were labeled as manufactured from synthetic materials but found to be human after being examined by experts from the Balinese Cultural Heritage Conservation Center.</p> <p>Customs official Ni Aniek said the skulls are probably from Papua, a Melanesian region that makes up easternmost Indonesia, and Kalimantan on the island of Borneo, home to indigenous Dayak peoples.</p> <p>No one has been arrested.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	02/08 Seattle to clear minor pot convictions
SOURCE	http://www.king5.com/article/news/seattle-to-vacate-misdemeanor-marijuana-convictions-cases/281-516039875
GIST	<p>The City of Seattle will move to vacate misdemeanor marijuana possession convictions prosecuted by the city before it was legalized in Washington state.</p> <p>During a press conference Thursday morning, Seattle Mayor Jenny Durkan and City Attorney Pete Holmes announced plans to ask Seattle's municipal court to dismiss charges and vacate convictions for misdemeanor marijuana convictions before I-502 was passed in 2012.</p> <p>Holmes and Mayor Durkan made the announcement Thursday at the Rainier Community Center.</p> <p>The measure will help "bring restorative justice for the communities who have been disproportionately targeted by the criminal justice system and furthers the City's commitment to eliminate racial disparities," according to a press release.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	02/08 Texas: 13 cases biker shooting dropped
SOURCE	http://www.foxnews.com/us/2018/02/08/texas-prosecutor-dismisses-13-cases-tied-to-biker-shooting.html

GIST	<p>FORT WORTH, Texas – A Texas prosecutor on Thursday dismissed 13 cases stemming from a 2015 shootout in Waco involving bikers and police and recused himself from two others, placing into doubt the criminal prosecution of the more than 130 bikers still awaiting trial.</p> <p>The actions came hours before a scheduled hearing for Jorge Salinas, whose case was among those dismissed. Current and former staff had been due to speak at the hearing about corruption allegations against District Attorney Abel Reyna, who faces a Republican primary election in March. The hearing was canceled.</p> <p>According to a motion filed Thursday, the prosecutor dismissed Salinas' case "in order to focus its efforts and resources on co-defendants with a higher level of culpability."</p> <p>The May 2015 shootout outside a Twin Peaks restaurant left nine bikers dead and 20 injured. Local police arrested 177 bikers after the mayhem, and more than 150 people were eventually indicted on felony charges of engaging in organized criminal activity resulting in the deaths and injuries. Ballistics evidence showed that police bullets struck four bikers, killing at least two of them. The three officers involved in the shooting were no-billed by a grand jury after being cleared by an internal investigation.</p> <p>Nearly three years later, only one biker, Dallas locomotive driver Christopher "Jake" Carrizal, has been tried. Carrizal's November trial resulted in a mistrial when jurors were unable to reach a unanimous verdict. The second biker set for trial rejected a plea deal in December.</p> <p>"The way people were arrested was fairly indiscriminate, it was predictable that some of these cases would be dropped," said Sandra Guerra Thompson, a University of Houston law professor, adding, "I wouldn't doubt if we see more."</p> <p>More than 100 bikers, including 11 whose cases were dismissed Thursday, have civil suits pending against the district attorney's office and the Waco police department claiming that they were wrongfully arrested.</p> <p>A federal judge in Austin had stayed the cases pending the outcome of their criminal cases. Dallas attorney Don Tittle, whose firm is representing 122 bikers' civil cases, said he hopes the dismissals mean "that there's no longer any impediment" to proceeding in civil court.</p>
	<p>Return to</p> <p>Top</p>

HEADLINE	02/08 Suburban mom takes down drug ring
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/suburban-mom-takes-down-synthetic-marijuana-drug-ring-she-says-killed-her-son/
GIST	<p>A suburban mom has taken down a drug ring she says killed her son, CBS Chicago reports. "I always felt like he was by my side helping me," said Karen Dobner of her 19-year-old son, Max Dobner.</p> <p>In 2011, he suffered hallucinations and a panic attack after taking a form of synthetic marijuana sold as "potpourri" and drove 100 mph into a house, accidentally killing himself.</p> <p>Karen Dobner partly blames Ruby Moshin, who sold Max and his friend a product called iAroma — a type of synthetic marijuana made of mushroom leaves sprayed with chemicals. The teens bought it in 2011 at a store Moshin owned at a mall in Aurora, a Chicago suburb.</p> <p>"I don't know what kind of mother sells drugs in the mall to kids," Dobner said.</p> <p>Moshin did not comment as she entered the federal courthouse to be sentenced for her role in selling iAroma, Evidence showed she bought more than 1,000 packets of iAroma to sell out of the store, calling it potpourri.</p> <p>"Nobody buys potpourri by the gram ... \$20 a gram," said Dobner.</p>

After her son's death, she wanted justice. For seven years, she fought to take down everyone involved in the manufacturing, distribution and sale of iAroma to her son.

Dobner credits CBS2 Chicago with helping her cause.

"The CBS investigation started everything rolling," said Dobner.

The station's investigative team went undercover and showed that months after Max Dobner's death, Moshin was still selling the product. Police also made undercover buys.

"She continued to sell, and that's why she's going to prison," Dobner said.

Dobner also hired Attorney Shawn Collins, who filed suit against those involved with the iAroma that led to Max Dobner's crash.

"Through our investigation, we learned that there was literally a nationwide distribution network — North Carolina, Iowa, Texas, Louisiana," Collins said.

Four people involved in Max's death have been indicted, said Dobner. Three people, including Moshin, pleaded guilty to conspiracy to distribute synthetic drugs. A fourth, a wholesaler, pleaded guilty to intentionally distributing drugs in Illinois, North Carolina and Louisiana.

Dobner said she won for her son, but would trade everything to have him back. She has been working for years to warn people about the dangers of synthetic marijuana, which can be 800 times stronger than real marijuana and especially dangerous because consumers don't know what ingredients are used.

Moshin will serve two years in federal prison.

[Return to](#)

[Top](#)

HEADLINE	02/08 Toronto police: serial killer probe
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SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/02/08/americas/toronto-landscaper-killings-charges/index.html
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GIST	<p>(CNN)Toronto police have recovered the remains of at least six people on a property linked to accused serial killer Bruce McArthur, Detective Sgt. Hank Idsinga said Thursday.</p> <p>At least some of the remains have been identified as belonging to Andrew Kinsman, who was last seen in June 2017 and who is one of five missing men McArthur is charged with killing, Idsinga said.</p> <p>Authorities have not identified the five other sets of remains.</p> <p>Idsinga said McArthur, 66, stored landscaping equipment at the property and the remains were found in potted plants.</p> <p>Police have identified more than 30 properties where McArthur worked. They urged his past clients to come forward.</p> <p>McArthur is due in Toronto provincial criminal court on February 14.</p>
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[Return to](#)

[Top](#)

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[Return to Top](#)