



	International	National	Regional and Local
Events, Opportunities Go to articles	05/23 Israel strikes Hamas sites in Gaza 05/23 Australia, China relationship turmoil 05/23 India, Pakistan tensions soar Kashmir 05/23 Remittances big business in Venezuela 05/23 France orders Paris migrant camp close 05/23 Powerful cyclone churns in Arabian Sea 05/22 US widens Iran sanctions 05/22 Venezuela expels top US diplomat 05/22 Israel: first combat use F-35 fighter 05/22 USAID warns Africa nations on China 05/22 Canada rejecting more refugee claims 05/22 Congo: Ebola vaccination, more cases 05/22 India copper plant protest turns violent 05/22 MH370 investigators reject latest theory 05/22 Anger: tourists swarm vacation hot spots	05/23 Las Vegas casino workers vote to strike 05/23 Puerto Rico: 1% still without power 05/22 States w/largest teacher pay gap 05/22 US sanction power reaching limit? 05/22 Houston starts anew in flood plain 05/22 Gas prices impacting travel plans? 05/22 Gas prices nationwide continue rising 05/22 Hawaii eruption driving away tourism 05/22 More children drowning in open water 05/22 Study: role of race in kids' suicide risk 05/22 Uncertainty surrounds NKorea summit 05/22 Pentagon: nukes central NKorea strategy 05/22 FDA cracks down on kratom distributors 05/22 Parents, children in 'anguish' at the border 05/22 Officials: 450 migrants from caravan in US 05/22 Alabama lunch counter protesters cleared	05/22 Summer: warmer, drier than normal 05/22 Seattle cruise industry to get larger 05/22 Seattle 'mega-project' costs up \$147M 05/22 Fight to stop mega-fires in Washington 05/22 Seattle homeless strategy: PR campaign 05/22 Enticing Seattle businesses w/tax credits
Cyber Awareness Go to articles	05/22 Hackers find BMW cars' vulnerabilities 05/22 TIDAL streaming service reveals breach 05/22 Turla cyberespionage group new tactics 05/22 Fined for forgetting webserver for 12yrs 05/22 New variants found in Spectre, Meltdown 05/21 Malicious PHP scripts infect 5,000 sites	05/23 Wyoming lures latest tech craze 05/23 Facebook chief tells EU lawmakers 'sorry' 05/23 FBI inflated encryption case figures 05/22 Cybercriminals battle against banks 05/22 FBI mum on encryption investigations 05/22 Microsoft will block Flash in Office 365 05/22 LifeBridge Health patient data exposed 05/22 Study: legitimate apps used for stalking 05/22 L.A. County 211 service records exposed 05/22 Pet tracker flaws expose pets and owners 05/22 Amazon facial recognition tools for police 05/22 Official: most of Atlanta is up and running	05/22 Mount Rainier to get cell phone service
Terror Conditions Go to articles	05/23 ISIS claims deadly bombing in Libya 05/23 Attacks on Afghan security forces kill 5 05/23 Philippines still struggle w/post-Marawi 05/22 B.C. man facing deportation claims PTSD 05/22 Indonesia: terror suspects killed in raids 05/22 Blasts rock Afghan city Kandahar	05/23 Syria rejects US demand Iran withdrawal 05/22 Report: baby powder helps fund ISIS	
Suspicious, Unusual Go to articles	05/23 Nicaragua use of force during protests 05/22 Russia denies nuke missiles crashed 05/22 Malaysia: MH370 search to end next week	05/23 Drought on tap to intensify in Southwest 05/22 Study: most Americans work on vacation 05/22 Fentanyl creating new era drug kingpins 05/22 Military is running out of bombs	05/22 'Cancer house'? Seattle Fire Station 31 05/22 Hazmat response to suspicious letters 05/22 Conspiracy theorist claims WSFC files
Crime, Criminals Go to articles	05/23 Group: Rohingya insurgents killed Hindus 05/23 Red Cross: 1,200 attacks on health care 05/23 Indonesia's prison system is broken 05/22 Saudi activists held 'incommunicado'	05/22 Experts: warning signs potential shooter 05/22 Police: confronted school shooter 4min. 05/22 Fla. police: suspect in shootout is dead 05/22 Claim: man confessed deadly hoax call 05/22 Teen arrested in Maryland cop slaying 05/22 Brooklyn: fake pot overdoses rise	05/22 Arson attack at youth jail construction site 05/22 Renton fights street racing; closes roads 05/22 Feds seize \$25K carved ivory at SEA

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Event Calendar

[Top of page](#)

Date	Event	Location/Time	Other Information
Return to Top	**indicates new event/new information added during reporting week		

Events, Opportunities

[Top of page](#)

HEADLINE	05/22 Houston starts anew in flood plain
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/national/fresh-from-hurricane-harveys-flooding-houston-starts-to-build-anew--in-the-flood-plain/2018/05/22/2c5ccab8-53b6-11e8-a551-5b648abe29ef_story.html?utm_term=.8f328f401a73
GIST	<p>HOUSTON — There was a golf course across from the house on Kemp Forest Drive that Andrew Taylor recently bought with his girlfriend. Hilly and dotted with ponds, Pine Crest Country Club was shabby around the edges, but in this city of floods and footloose building rules, it was a welcome sponge for the seasonal rains.</p> <p>Now Taylor is watching work crews cement over the former fairways for homes — 900 of them — marking the first new residential development to rise in a flood plain since Hurricane Harvey swept through this city late last summer. Along with the construction comes anxiety, not only along Kemp Forest Drive, but also across the nation’s fourth-largest city, a flat expanse of tree-lined neighborhoods and towering urban enclaves that is always one major storm away from inundation.</p> <p>“We had some questions about how we would fare flood-wise,” said Taylor, who is 32 and works in an escape room, a real-life game in which groups solve puzzles to leave the locked space. “But this has never really flooded before, so we feel pretty safe. And we’re hopeful it might raise our property values.” Houston is building again, gingerly.</p> <p>A city chastened by disastrous flooding just months ago is trying to balance the need for new construction in a region short of housing with the civic fear that Houston is returning to its freewheeling ways.</p> <p>The construction in northwest Houston, which serves as something of a post-Harvey starting gun, is being built to new, stricter standards. Planners say those rules reflect both the local government’s commitment to avoid repeating mistakes and new federal weather predictions that anticipate even more severe periods of rain here for decades to come. In the short term, forecasters say this year’s hurricane season, which begins June 1, could be even worse than last year’s.</p> <p>As planners take the new cautious spirit and future weather into account, Houston officials are seeking more flexibility from the federal government over how billions of dollars in emergency funds can be used to empty out or retool residential areas that have flooded repeatedly.</p> <p>“What are we going to do in these neighborhoods that people just don’t want to leave?” said Stephen Costello, Houston’s chief resilience officer, whose task is to balance development and flood protection as the city recovers.</p> <p>Despite its size, Houston has never had zoning regulations and, despite its flood-prone topography, it added flood-protection standards to building codes just a little more than two decades ago.</p> <p>The need to build even in flood-susceptible areas is the result of the region’s projected growth rate. Under even modest population forecasts, the Houston metro area is expecting to add 4 million residents — a two-thirds increase — in the next three decades. The housing stock, even before the storm, was struggling to keep up.</p> <p>In late August, when slow-moving Hurricane Harvey dumped more than four feet of rain across much of Southeast Texas, all 22 of the Bayou City’s bayous flooded. The waters left more than 65 people dead and caused an estimated \$120 billion in damage.</p> <p>“Harvey was a wake-up call,” Mayor Sylvester Turner (D) told a packed downtown ballroom of Houston’s business, political and civic leaders during his annual State of the City address this month. “And we’re still</p>

not where we need to be.”

Turner has been the driving force behind new building regulations that take into effect the revised weather predictions, which come as little surprise to people here. As the mayor told his audience of mostly longtime Houstonians, “We have had three 500-year storms in the last three years.”

A 500-year storm is one that has a 0.2 percent chance of occurring in any given year. That something is shifting in Houston’s weather has been obvious to those paid to think about how the city should redevelop and grow in Harvey’s aftermath.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration signaled recently that it is revising the rainfall totals for Houston that once defined a 100-year storm, one that has a 1 percent chance of occurring in any given year. In a draft analysis that takes into account Houston’s rainfall in recent decades, NOAA has added three to five inches of rain to what constitutes a 100-year storm, meaning that daily rainfall in such cases would equal 15 to 18 inches.

That revision, still to receive final approval, extends the threat of major flooding to many more neighborhoods.

“So much of Houston was built before we knew what we know today,” said Carol Ellinger Haddock, Houston’s director of public works. “And the weather is changing.”

Haddock has been with the department for 13 years and, at this moment in her career, has subscribed to the “challenge provides opportunity” ethos as she helps chart what the city will look like decades from now. She highlighted one local characteristic that makes rethinking the city even more complex, a trait she calls the desire “to age in place.”

“I don’t know if this is a Houston thing or a Texas thing, but people here want to live out their lives in the house they grew up in,” said Haddock, who lives in a 50-year-old home she has no intention of leaving.

But many of these old family homes are particularly prone to flooding, even those built to the pre-Harvey regulations that required houses to sit one foot above the 100-year flood level. City planners would like to ensure that, as those homes are renovated after flood damage, they meet stricter standards. Or, barring that, that they are not lived in again.

To achieve those goals, Houston officials are seeking changes to federal emergency funding rules. About 2 percent of Houston’s housing stock sits in areas that flood repeatedly, and city planners would like to use federal money to buy out, tear down and rebuild those homes as part of their “resiliency” program.

As the regulations stand, any home bought out with federal money cannot be rebuilt. The lot must remain green space. The problem for city planners, not to mention neighbors, is that the policy creates checkerboard neighborhoods where houses stand next to vacant lots along once well-planned streets. Property values for those who remain tend to plummet, as does the tax base.

Haddock and Costello are working with federal and state agencies to have that rule waived. They instead would like to allow the federal money to be used to tear down and rebuild houses — perhaps as many as 10,000 in Houston — to new standards.

Within days of adopting the new building regulations, the same council voted unanimously to endorse the development known as Spring Brook Village on the nearly 200-acre Pine Crest Country Club grounds. New building on an open tract of land in the flood plain is the kind of development that environmentalists here had never wanted to see again.

“The vote reflected the old way of thinking,” said Jim Blackburn, an environmental lawyer and founder of the Bayou City Initiative, formed after Harvey to help influence decisions about the city’s growth. “It did not take into consideration the lessons we have come to learn about flood-prone areas.”

But city planners defend the decision. For one, the development had been approved in principle before Harvey, which put any new construction on hold. To restart it, the developers had to agree to build the homes to the new, stricter standards.

[Return to](#)

[Top](#)

HEADLINE 05/22 US widens Iran sanctions for missiles

SOURCE <https://www.wsj.com/articles/u-s-sanctions-iran-for-supplying-missiles-to-yemens-houthis-1527006421>

GIST

WASHINGTON—The Trump administration imposed sanctions on five Iranian officials it said are responsible for providing Yemeni rebels with long-range missiles being used to target Saudi Arabia.

The U.S. action on Tuesday is part of a broader White House strategy to isolate Iran and rein in Tehran’s support for proxies involved in conflicts across the Middle East.

The U.S. Treasury Department added five officials linked to the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps’ Al-Ghadir Missile Command and related programs, including Mahmud Bagheri Kazemabad, the missile unit’s commander. The IRGC, Iran’s elite military unit, already is under U.S. sanctions.

“Their actions have enabled the Houthis to launch missiles at Saudi cities and oil infrastructure,” Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin said. “They have also disrupted humanitarian aid efforts in Yemen and threatened freedom of navigation in key regional waterways.”

U.S. and United Nations officials say Iran provided the Houthi rebels in Yemen with the Qiam-1 ballistic missile, an Iranian long-range surface-to-surface guided missile. The Houthis have fired such weapons at Saudi targets over the past several months, including major oil facilities critical to global crude supplies.

“These designations expose the extent of Iranian support to the Yemeni missile program,” said Behnam Ben Taleblu, an Iran expert at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies, a think tank that has long called on Washington to impose more aggressive penalties against Tehran.

Although the Houthis don’t have nuclear weapons, the Qiam-1 missile is capable of carrying a nuclear warhead, Mr. Taleblu said, adding to Western officials’ worries about regional proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

By imposing sanctions on the Iranian officials allegedly involved in proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, the U.S. is also trying to increase the pressure on allies to take a harder line on Tehran.

The Houthis have fired more than 100 missiles at Saudi Arabia since the conflict between the rebel group and the Saudi-led coalition began in 2015, according to the coalition. Almost all were intercepted or landed harmlessly in uninhabited areas.

As the war progressed, the range of the Houthis’ missiles has increased, leading arms experts to posit that the group could have modified Soviet and North Korean Scud missiles in Yemen’s existing arsenal to travel further, or may be getting help from Iran.

In parallel with longer-range attacks on Riyadh, the Yemeni rebels have stepped up short-range targeting of Saudi oil facilities across the border between the countries in recent months.

The Houthis’ unveiling of the new short-range Badr-1 missile in March was followed by a wave of attacks on the facilities of Saudi Aramco, Saudi Arabia’s main state oil company. The attacks don’t appear to have disrupted Aramco’s operations.

[Return to](#)

[Top](#)

HEADLINE	05/22 Seattle 'mega-project' costs spike \$147M
SOURCE	https://crosscut.com/2018/05/seattle-mega-project-balloons-extra-147m
GIST	<p>A massive wastewater tunnel project that will stretch between Ballard and Wallingford will be \$147 million more expensive than originally thought, Seattle officials said Tuesday. Where the Ship Canal Water Quality Project was once believed to cost around \$423 million, it will now cost \$570 million.</p> <p>The project is a joint effort between King County and the City of Seattle and is the first “mega-project” Seattle Public Utilities has ever undertaken. Seattle will be on the hook for about \$95 million of the cost increase, with the County picking up the rest.</p> <p>In 2014, officials estimated it would cost the city and county \$423 million, with Seattle absorbing 65 percent of the costs and the county paying for the rest. From the beginning, the project has driven up customer bills, which are slated to go up next year by about 8 percent for single family homes and nearly 9 percent for apartments. But in an interview Tuesday, Project Executive Keith Ward with Seattle Public Utilities said the higher project cost will not push utility bills higher.</p> <p>Seattle has long struggled with nasty overflows into the ship canal, Lake Union and Lake Washington. The current tunnels combine rainwater and sewage, diverting the two at a fork in the pipe. The system works fine in dry conditions, but in the wet months, the tunnels are less effective, leading to overruns.</p> <p>It all came to a head with a 2013 consent decree between the city, the state and the federal government to dramatically reduce sewage and wastewater runoff into Seattle area waters.</p> <p>Last year the city had more than 130 overruns along the ship canal, spilling about 90 million gallons of a sewage and rainwater sludge into the city’s waters. From Lake Union to the Ballard locks in particular, testing showed significantly higher e-coli levels immediately after a runoff.</p> <p>Under the agreement with the federal government, by 2025 the city and county must reduce that number near the ship canal to just six runoffs per year, down to 8.5 million gallons. The more expensive Ship Canal Water Quality Project, a nearly 19 foot wide tunnel that will run along the ship canal, is by far the largest piece to reducing spills.</p> <p>Part of the department’s explanation for the cost increase should sound familiar: \$39 million is the result of increased property values and labor costs. Utility and transportation departments across the region are struggling with similar challenges in the booming economy. Sound Transit recently blamed a \$500 million increase to its Lynnwood line on higher property prices.</p> <p>But the department also increased the diameter of the tunnel by nearly 5 feet last year, in anticipation of heavy rainfall that could come as a result of climate change. That increased volume added another \$25 million to the price tag. Ward said there was no way past teams could have controlled for increased rainfall. “Climate change science is changing,” he said.</p> <p>But Ward also said early teams were more confident in their estimates than they should have been. In 2014, the project was still very early in its design plans, which makes predicting final cost very difficult.</p> <p>SPU’s current director, Mami Hara, took over the department in 2016. When she noticed ballooning costs, she ordered a 9-month pause on the project between summer 2016 and May 2017. In the meantime, she brought in outside experts to do a more thorough cost analysis.</p> <p>Madeline Goddard, Deputy Director of the SPU’s Drainage and Wastewater Branch, said the changes were necessary and appreciated. “There was a reason we had a change in leadership. I’m going to say we’re human. We have a really capable team. The project was driven more toward getting the project done without looking at the impact it had to the rates.”</p> <p>Officials gave themselves some cushion at the start, budgeting enough to avoid more customer rate</p>

	increases even if the project exceeded its original \$423 million estimate. The newest number exceeds what was budgeted originally, but Ward said he believes the department can cover the gap — around \$30 million — via state grants and favorable interest rates to avoid more rate hikes.
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	05/22 FDA cracks down on kratom distributors
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2018/may/22/fda-cracks-down-kratom-distributors-saying-claims-/
GIST	<p>The Food and Drug Administration announced Tuesday it had issued warning letters to three companies to stop the illegal sale and market of kratom powder, an herbal supplement celebrated for its pain-relieving properties but cautioned by authorities as an addictive drug.</p> <p>The notices follow ongoing action by the agency to stem a salmonella outbreak linked to the herbal powder. As of April 5, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found 132 salmonella cases linked to kratom across 38 states, with 38 hospitalizations.</p> <p>The FDA, calling kratom sales “health fraud scams,” said that the drug — while not federally illegal — is making unproven claims about various diseases.</p> <p>“Despite our warnings that no kratom product is safe, we continue to find companies selling kratom and doing so with deceptive medical claims for which there’s no reliable scientific proof to support their use,” FDA Commissioner Dr. Scott Gottlieb said in a statement. “As we work to combat the opioid epidemic, we cannot allow unscrupulous vendors to take advantage of consumers by selling products with unsubstantiated claims that they can treat opioid addiction.”</p> <p>The three companies include Front Range Kratom of Aurora, Colorado; Kratom Spot of Irvine, California and Revibe Inc., of Kansas City, Missouri.</p> <p>The FDA said there is little to no rigorous scientific evidence that supports health claims posted by the companies on their websites and social media, which include that the drug can help with opioid addiction, that it lowers blood pressure, relieves pain, boosts metabolism, increases sexual energy, improves the immune system, prevents diabetes, eases anxiety, eliminates stress and induces healthy sleep.</p> <p>Native to southeast Asia, kratom is made from the leaves of the tree <i>Mitragyna speciosa</i>. Dried and ground to a fine powder, the product is shipped into the U.S. and sold either in powder form or divided into tiny capsules. Users can dissolve the powder in water and drink it as a tea or take the substance dry.</p> <p>Passionate advocates say it is an all-natural remedy providing energy and pain relief, a needed substance for America’s ongoing opioid epidemic.</p> <p>Yet federal health officials are wary of the drug, which is known to activate opioid receptors. The FDA has earlier said it is aware of 44 deaths in which kratom was present in the dead persons’ bodies.</p> <p>It is the first time the agency has sent letters of warning to kratom suppliers. Last month, the FDA issued its first ever mandatory recall, telling kratom supplier Triangle Pharmedicals LLC of Las Vegas, to warn its customers and take back products suspected of salmonella contamination.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	05/22 Anger: tourists swarm vacation hotspots
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/anger-over-tourists-swarming-vacation-hot-spots-sparks-global-backlash-1527000130
GIST	QUEENSTOWN, New Zealand—Towering mountain ranges, forests and glacier-fed rivers made New

Zealand the perfect stand-in for Middle Earth in “The Lord of the Rings” movie series and a cinematic billboard for the country’s natural beauty.

Today, jet boats rip down rivers seeking the mythical Isengard, where the wizard Gandalf was imprisoned. “Freedom campers” in rented vans leave trails of waste. Tens of thousands of helicopter trips annually deposit visitors, some in flip-flops, on New Zealand glaciers that were once the realm of expert climbers.

One tour group had to be rescued after trying to walk barefoot to Mount Ngauruhoe, in apparent homage to J.R.R. Tolkien’s Mount Doom.

Elected officials are weighing measures from new tourist taxes to tighter camper-van restrictions. One town is considering shutting Wi-Fi at night to deter campers. Queenstown, whose mayor says it has 120 visitors a year for every taxpayer, is weighing whether to restrict Airbnb rentals.

On Waiheke Island off Auckland, protests broke out last year after double-decker tour buses appeared, clogging two-lane roads. One man in shorts stood down a bus until the tourists disembarked. A resident elsewhere became so annoyed with jet boats in a river near his property he hired a digger to divert the water; officials threatened legal action if he persisted.

Tourism, which many countries once considered a business niche that could yield easy revenue, has become a mega-industry. And those millions of tourists who descend each year on small towns, once-lonely beaches and historic sites are generating a global backlash.

International tourist arrivals globally grew to 1.3 billion in 2017, the United Nations’ World Tourism Organization says. That is up from 674 million in 2000 and 278 million in 1980, propelled by the rise of budget air travel, social media, an emerging Chinese middle class and technologies that make distant places easy to navigate.

A wave of antitourism demonstrations took place in popular European destinations last summer, including Venice, Mallorca and San Sebastián, Spain. In Barcelona, youth groups were filmed slashing rental-bicycle tires, and officials banned tour groups from parts of the city.

Fodor’s in 2016 began publishing a “No Go” list reflecting concerns that tourism was destroying the world’s best places. Featured this year: the Galápagos Islands and parts of Thailand, and a designation for “Places That Don’t Want You to Visit” because their governments are trying to combat overcrowding.

Tourism remains a crucial and welcome economic driver in many places, especially developing countries such as Cambodia and parts of Africa where visitors’ spending has lifted many out of poverty. A number of countries with well-established attractions, such as Egypt, have been hurt in some recent years as tourism fell off during periods of unrest.

In New Zealand, “we’re hoping for a good debate about this and no knee-jerk reaction,” says Chris Roberts, chief executive of Tourism Industry Aotearoa, an association representing hoteliers and tourist operators. “Tourists are a massive economic benefit.”

Many top tourist destinations, including U.S. national parks, have long worked to strike a balance between luring tourist money and controlling crowds.

The latest surge is different, say experts such as Simon Milne, who has researched tourism around the world, and says frustrations have been boiling at an unprecedented level, especially the past 18 months. “We can’t ignore the fact that tourists don’t have a good rap in many places,” said Mr. Milne, director of the New Zealand Tourism Research Institute at Auckland University of Technology.

Since last summer’s Europe protests, the industry has made “overtourism” a focus. More than 60 tourism ministers and private-sector leaders gathered in November to discuss the issue at a summit on the topic co-organized by the U.N. Overtourism was also a theme in March at ITB Berlin, a major industry convention.

Thailand said in March it would close Maya Bay on Koh Phi Phi Leh, an island where Leonardo DiCaprio's "The Beach" was filmed, from June to September because overtourism was damaging the marine environment. The Philippines in April announced that Boracay, an island once known for crystal-clear waters, would close to tourists for six months over concerns about pollution.

China's emergence as a tourist source is adding to crowds. Outbound Chinese tourists rose to more than 60 million last year from fewer than 20 million a decade earlier, according to Chinese data.

The Chinese spent \$261 billion vacationing abroad in 2016, more than travelers from any other country, and China has accounted for roughly 80% of the growth in global tourism in dollar terms since 2008, according to the U.N. New Zealand's former prime minister, Bill English, last year declared during a visit by Chinese Premier Li Keqiang that 2019 would be the "China-New Zealand Year of Tourism."

Yet the boom in Chinese visitors has added to traffic at some tourist hot spots, such as the white-sand tropical beaches and coral reefs of Southeast Asia, that were already under strain from throngs of visitors.

New Zealanders once thought of tourism as a green alternative to industries such as mining or timber. Advances in aviation in the 1990s helped make the country more accessible, and government officials moved to capitalize, developing a global-tourism campaign.

In ads after the first "Lord of the Rings" film in 2001, the slogan "100% Pure New Zealand" began morphing into "100% Middle-earth." The Department of Conservation formed a commercial-business unit to find more ways to generate income from protected areas, providing GPS coordinates of "Rings" locations.

Tourism became a top New Zealand export, along with dairy. "The landscape is so beautiful it looks fake," says Amy Blitzer, a 34-year-old project manager from New York who took a helicopter flight to a glacier recently.

Locals complain traffic has become a problem, and residents who can't afford homes feel squeezed out. Jason Medina, an events manager, says he moved to Queenstown in 2004 and found a sleepy mountain town where houses rented for about \$1,000 a month. Now, he says people are lucky to get single rooms for that.

Queenstown, gateway to numerous 'Rings' sites, boomed. Property prices soared too, putting them out of reach of some locals. A tourism-industry survey last fall found 40% of the country worried tourism was putting too much pressure on New Zealand, up from 18% two years earlier.

Much backlash revolves around Fiordland, a wilderness area near Queenstown. One of its 14 fiords, Milford Sound, is accessible by a narrow, winding road including a one-lane tunnel. Nearly 800,000 tourists visit it each year, many on buses running such tight schedules that some drivers have only a 30-minute buffer to complete the return journey while complying with official limits that let them drive again the next day. Accidents involving overseas drivers are common.

Dozens of tour boats circled the fiord on a recent day, taking turns idling by pods of dolphins and nosing up to waterfalls.

The 87-year-old Federated Mountain Clubs, one of New Zealand's leading conservation groups, has filed dozens of complaints to the country's conservation department over the past five years, many related to Fiordland. A petition it circulated against a proposed monorail line and new tunnel into the park received nearly 10,000 signatures. Both proposals were ultimately blocked.

[Return to](#)

[Top](#)

HEADLINE 05/22 Hawaii eruption driving away tourism

SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/article/us-hawaii-volcano-tourism/hawaii-volcano-eruption-driving-away-millions-in-tourism-dollars-idUSKCN1IN04Y
GIST	<p>HONOLULU, Hawaii (Reuters) - Cruise ships have canceled stops on Hawaii's Big Island. Hotel rooms will sit vacant this summer despite price cuts.</p> <p>And guest house owners and tour guides that depend on the 2 million visitors each year to Hawaii Volcanoes National Park are wondering how long their families will go without any income.</p> <p>Tourism authorities say summer bookings for hotels on Hawaii's Big Island have fallen almost 50 percent since the volcano began spewing lava and toxic gases on May 3.</p> <p>The closure of the park, the state's top tourist destination, alone is costing the island \$166 million, the National Park Service said on Monday.</p> <p>The lost revenue rises to \$222 million when some 2,000 jobs indirectly impacted by park tourists are included, according to a park service report.</p> <p>Tourism is the Big Island's largest industry, and by far, biggest employer, providing more than 30 percent of private sector jobs in 2017, according to the Hawaii Visitors Bureau.</p> <p>The volcano, however, shows no sign of quieting down. Geologists say the current cycle of eruption is among the worst events in a century from one of the world's most active volcanoes. A series of Kilauea eruptions in 1955 lasted 88 days.</p> <p>Potential visitors to the Big Island have been spooked by images of lava torching homes, soldiers wearing gas masks and now deadly white clouds of acid and glass shards as molten rock streams into the Pacific.</p>
	<p>Return to</p> <p>Top</p>

HEADLINE	05/22 MH370 investigators reject latest theory
SOURCE	https://www.upi.com/Top_News/World-News/2018/05/22/MH370-investigators-reject-theory-plane-was-deliberately-crashed/1681526990307/?utm_source=fp&utm_campaign=ts_tn_int&utm_medium=6
GIST	<p>May 22 (UPI) -- Australian investigators told lawmakers Tuesday it's unlikely the pilot of Malaysian Airlines Flight 370 was conscious and deliberately crashed the plane four years ago, as has been claimed by experts recently.</p> <p>A group of international experts concluded last week the pilot of the missing Boeing 777 probably made a deliberate descent into the Indian Ocean in March 2014 during a flight from Beijing to Kuala Lumpur.</p> <p>Canadian air crash investigator Larry Vance said MH370 Capt. Zaharie Ahmad Shah made a intentional decision to crash the aircraft.</p> <p>"He was killing himself; unfortunately, he was killing everybody else on board, and he did it deliberately," Vance said.</p> <p>The experts added that Shah probably cut off oxygen to the passengers and used his emergency air supply to continue flying the jetliner.</p> <p>Greg Hood and Peter Foley of the Australian Transport Safety Bureau, though, told a Senate hearing Tuesday it's likely Shah still would have been incapacitated by decompression sickness -- particularly in view of how long the plane continued to fly after dropping off radar.</p> <p>"Most of the people out there are speculating about a long period of depressurization after the transponder went off," Foley said.</p>

"What they fail to understand is that while you don an oxygen mask and prevent the worst of the hypoxia situation, you are flying an aircraft at 40,000 feet. ... You'll get decompression sickness too."

Foley told lawmakers the plane probably crashed into the ocean because it was out of fuel.

"There's no earthly reason why someone in control of an aircraft would exhaust its fuel and then attempt to glide it when they have the option of ditching," Foley added, saying the ATSB has "a lot of evidence" to support that the pilot had "no control in the end."

Foley added that Shah was overweight and roughly the same age as another pilot who became incapacitated by decompression sickness in a similar 1994 plane crash.

"The pilot in this particular aircraft was 51 and overweight," Foley said of the 1994 crash. "The pilot in command of MH370 was 53 and overweight. I'm not saying that happened and I hate to speculate, but that is one plausible scenario."

Searchers looked for years for the missing Boeing 777 but have never found the crash site. Pieces of debris that are believed to have come from MH370 have washed up on African shores, though. All 240 passengers and crew are presumed dead.

[Return to](#)

[Top](#)

HEADLINE	05/22 Gas prices impacting travel plans?
SOURCE	https://www.upi.com/Energy-News/2018/05/22/Gas-prices-could-be-impacting-US-travel-plans/8721526986541/?utm_source=fp&utm_campaign=ls&utm_medium=3
GIST	<p>May 22 (UPI) -- Gas prices this coming Memorial Day weekend will be the highest in four years and likely start to dent the summer travel season, industry experts said.</p> <p>Motor club AAA reported a national average retail price of \$2.93 for a gallon of regular unleaded gasoline on Tuesday, up 17.5 cents from one month ago. By AAA's account, the average price leading up to the long holiday weekend is almost 50 cents more than the average for the last three Memorial Day weekends.</p> <p>"Trends are indicating that this summer is likely to bring the national average to at least \$3 per gallon," AAA spokeswoman Jeanette Casselano said in a statement.</p> <p>Gas prices usually follow the price for crude oil. With a political standoff underway between the United States and Iran, a member of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries, oil prices have moved sharply higher since the beginning of the month.</p> <p>Since May 1, the price for Brent crude oil is up about 5 percent. Federal data show consumers, meanwhile, are seeing inflation at the gas pump more than many other goods.</p> <p>Patrick DeHaan, the senior petroleum analyst at GasBuddy, said he was expecting summer travel plans will take a backseat as consumers face tough choices about their spending.</p> <p>"High gas prices are starting to eat away at the travel plans of many, and the number will likely rise as gasoline prices appear poised to continue moving higher in the weeks ahead," he said in a separate statement.</p> <p>AAA, however, said it expects nearly 37 million travelers will hit the road for the long holiday weekend, compared with the 34 million forecast for the same weekend last year. The national average price for a gallon of gas at this time last year was \$2.35.</p> <p>By region, the West Coast is the most expensive market in the country, with all of the states in the region</p>

posting an average price above \$3 per gallon. Arizona, which up until now was below the psychological threshold, is now in the top 10 when it comes to the largest year-on-year increase with 70 cents per gallon.

Gasoline inventories in the region are higher than last year.

The Great Lakes market, meanwhile, is the most volatile, with most states reporting spikes of around 9 cents per gallon. Illinois is close behind Arizona with a price jump of 65 cents per gallon compared to last year.

Gasoline inventories in this region have been on the decline for the last two months.

Summer prices at the pump are higher than during the winter in part because the type of gasoline made for warmer months is more expensive to make.

[Return to](#)

[Top](#)

HEADLINE 05/22 Parents, children in 'anguish' at the border

SOURCE <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/latino/anguish-southwest-border-more-immigrant-children-are-separated-parents-n874821>

GIST McALLEN, Texas — Facing dozens of migrants shackled at their waist and ankles, public defender Miguel "Andy" Nogueras asked a question that he had rarely asked before last week: Have you been separated from your children?

Last Thursday, a Central American woman was among several in the McAllen, Texas courthouse who said yes.

Nogueras asked how old her child is so that he could refer her to one of his attorneys, and the answer haunted him through the rest of the day.

"Five years old," Nogueras told NBC News. "What kind of scars are we creating? The child has to be asking, where's my mom? And that kid has to be scared. I can't even fathom."

Earlier this month, Attorney General Jeff Sessions announced a goal to criminally prosecute 100 percent of people crossing the border illegally — including families with children. Those who are charged with improper entry — a misdemeanor on the first infraction — are jailed and separated from their children. Previously, most parents had been allowed to remain with their children in family shelters while awaiting asylum cases or deportation proceedings.

The Trump administration's willingness to take children from their parents has raised concerns about how far authorities should go to stem unauthorized border crossings and what human cost is acceptable in the name of border security and immigration control.

"There is something terrible happening here that Americans would not support if they understood it," said F. Scott McCown, director of the Children's Rights Clinic at the University of Texas at Austin School of Law.

Between October 2017 and mid-April, before the new prosecution strategy officially went into effect, more than 700 children were reportedly separated from their parents at the border. The federal government has not released figures from May, but those who work on immigration cases have observed a large increase in the number of children affected. Nogueras said he previously saw only one or two such cases a week in the McAllen courtroom in the Southern District of Texas; last week, he saw about 33 cases.

Nogueras repeatedly used a single word when he described how those parents have responded: "anguish."

"Wouldn't you feel anguish if they took your kids? I'd be going crazy. It's inhumane," he said.

Other attorneys and advocates have reported similar torment among immigrant parents.

“One of my lawyers came back from meeting his new client at the jail — and this is a very experienced criminal defense lawyer — who was shaken by the experience of talking to a parent whose child was literally ripped from their arms,” said Maureen Franco, a federal public defender for the Western District of Texas.

“The human cost of this will be great,” Franco said.

WHAT HAPPENS TO THE CHILDREN?

When Border Patrol locked her up in a holding cell for five days, Karen Hernandez had one big fear.

“I was afraid they’d come and take my children. They had said the laws are going to change and they are going to separate the mothers from their children,” said Hernandez, who crossed from Mexico into South Texas via a navigable section of the Rio Grande with her son, Jaero, 13, and daughter Susan, 8.

Hernandez, though, was lucky. She was caught before the new zero-tolerance policy fully went into effect, and so she was released May 10 with an electronic bracelet clamped to her ankle and her children at her side. Along with dozens of other migrants, she was taken to the Catholic Charities Rio Grande Valley Respite Center, where families can get a hot meal and clothing. Earlier this month, the center was filled with the noise of children who played together in a corner of the room with their parents nearby.

The scene was a stark contrast to what most families will face under the new criminal enforcement policy.

When parents are held for prosecution, their children are turned over to the Office of Refugee Resettlement, part of the Department of Health and Human Services. The children are then designated as “unaccompanied minors,” and the government tries to connect them to family members who are already in the U.S. Until then, children wait in shelters or are sent to federally contracted foster homes, often without parents being told exactly where they are, immigration advocates said.

It may soon become even more difficult to place children with relatives. The Department of Homeland Security is proposing immigration checks be done on all people in a household who may take in these “unaccompanied” children, which means relatives who are undocumented may be less likely to come forward.

In the meantime, space in shelters and foster homes is limited; the Washington Post reported the administration plans to open facilities at military bases to house some of the separated children.

DHS DEFENDS THE PROSECUTIONS THAT SPLIT FAMILIES

DHS tested its new policy for 26 days last October by prosecuting all adults who crossed into the U.S. illegally in the El Paso sector of the border.

There was a brief drop in the number of arrests of people crossing the border in that area during and immediately after the test, but numbers began rising again in February.

Trump administration officials have said the purpose of the new zero-tolerance policy is not explicitly to dissuade families with children from crossing into the U.S. illegally, but rather to protect children from kidnapping and smuggling and to more strictly enforce existing laws.

“We don’t want to separate families, but we don’t want families to come to the border illegally and attempt to enter into this country improperly,” Sessions said earlier this month in announcing the policy.

“I want to be clear,” added Thomas Homan, deputy director of Immigration and Customs Enforcement, at the same announcement event. “DHS does not have a blanket policy on separating families as a deterrent.”

The new policy is a marked departure from the way parents and children were treated previously. In 2014, the Obama administration saw a surge of families and unaccompanied minors at the border and generally kept children with at least one parent at emergency shelters and family facilities. The Obama administration also initiated a program designed to allow families more freedom while awaiting deportation hearings. The Trump administration ended the program last summer.

Advocates and attorneys said the administration is forcing migrants fleeing perilous situations into a "Sophie's choice" over what's best for their children.

"They are saying either you take your kid back and live in danger and don't try to save your kid's life by claiming your right to asylum, or insist on applying for asylum where we are going to separate you from your child and endanger your child," said Michelle Brané, director of immigration policy at the Women's Refugee Commission.

Franco, the public defender in west Texas, said the policy could encourage parents to plead guilty to improper entry just to get their children back.

"This has some constitutional ramifications. How voluntary could a plea be if someone feels they have to plead guilty to be reunited with their children?" Franco asked.

'IT HAS SUCH A CRUEL FEEL TO IT'

The American Civil Liberties Union has sued over the family separations and sought an injunction to stop them and is awaiting a ruling. The lawsuit doesn't challenge the prosecution of the parents, just the family separations.

"This is as bad a practice as I've seen in my career," said Lee Gelernt, deputy director of the ACLU's Immigrants' Rights Project, who has worked for the ACLU for more than 25 years. "It has such a cruel feel to it."

In affidavits filed with the lawsuit, parents tell of months-long separations without knowing where their kids are or how they're faring.

A woman identified as Ms. G said in an April 23 affidavit that she was separated from her blind 6-year-old daughter and 4-year-old son after crossing at Nogales, Arizona, where the family requested asylum. Her children are living in a shelter more than an hour away from where she's being held.

"I worry about them constantly and I don't know when I'll see them," she said.

Gelernt has seen cases in which parents are separated from their children even if they cross into the U.S. through an official port of entry, which authorities have said should protect families from being split up.

A man identified as Mr. U from Kyrgyzstan said in an affidavit he and his 13-year old son were separated when they sought asylum at the San Ysidro Port of entry. Mr. U was held in California; his son was sent to Chicago.

"All I can remember is how much my son and I were both crying when they took him away," Mr. U said.

Several immigrant rights groups and asylum seekers sued DHS and Customs and Border Protection for turning away asylum seekers at ports of entry last year. The suit is pending.

Few migrants who were at the Catholic Charities Rio Grande Valley Respite Center earlier this month knew about the family separations. But when told about them, several parents said they wouldn't take the risk of losing their children.

Hernandez, the mother of two, said that back in Honduras, she and her husband had it all — a home, a business and family. But after her husband refused to help drug traffickers, they were threatened and an

	<p>employee of their car wash business was killed, she said. They tried moving and starting another business but were tracked down. They pulled the children out of school and came to the U.S.</p> <p>Still, she doesn't think she would have crossed into the U.S. if she'd known about the new zero-tolerance policy.</p> <p>“If that was the law, I wouldn’t come,” she said. “I wouldn’t want to be separated from my children because that’s why we come.”</p>
<p>Return to Top</p>	

HEADLINE	05/22 Canada rejecting more refugee claims
SOURCE	<p>https://www.reuters.com/article/us-canada-immigration-border/canada-granting-refugee-status-to-fewer-illegal-border-crossers-idUSKCN1IN1CO</p>
GIST	<p>TORONTO (Reuters) - Canada is rejecting more refugee claims from people who crossed the border illegally as Prime Minister Justin Trudeau’s government seeks to dissuade, block and turn back thousands more, according to new data obtained by Reuters.</p> <p>Forty percent of such border crossers whose claims were finalized in the first three months of this year were granted refugee status, down from 53 percent for all of 2017, according to data provided by Canada’s Immigration and Refugee Board. There were no claims finalized in the first three months of 2017.</p> <p>The wave of illegal border crossings started up in January 2017 and ramped up over the summer as many Haitian immigrants in the United States who were at risk of losing their temporary legal status streamed into Canada on expectations that they could find a safe haven. In the months since, thousands of Nigerians have made the same crossing.</p> <p>More than 27,000 asylum seekers have walked across the Canada-U.S. border since President Donald Trump took office, some of whom have told Reuters they left the United States because of Trump’s policies and rhetoric toward immigrants.</p> <p>The influx has strained Canada’s backlogged system for assisting people seeking refugee status, leaving aid agencies scrambling to meet growing demand for housing and social services.</p> <p>A U.S.-Canadian border pact that turns back asylum seekers at border crossings allows immigrants who cross illegally into Canada outside of an official border crossing to apply for refugee status.</p> <p>Trudeau’s government has sought to stem the influx by sending officials to the United States to dissuade Haitians, Salvadorans and others from illegally entering into Canada to seek refugee status. It has asked the United States to amend an agreement between the two nations to make it easier to turn back thousands of illegal border crossers.</p> <p>Like Haitians, thousands of immigrants from El Salvador in the United States have been told that they will lose their temporary legal status.</p> <p>Canada has also sent its immigration and refugee minister to Nigeria, asking the Nigerian government to help discourage its citizens from crossing illegally into Canada to claim refugee status and asking the United States to not grant visas to people who might then go to Canada.</p> <p>Immigration and Refugee Board data shows that while only a small number of border-crosser claims have been processed, acceptance rates are down for all groups seeking refugee status. The success rate is especially low for two of the biggest groups of asylum seekers to enter the country illegally: Haitians and Nigerians, with overall acceptance rates of 9 percent and 33.5 percent, respectively.</p>
<p>Return to Top</p>	

HEADLINE	05/22 Israel: first combat use of F-35 fighter
SOURCE	https://www.jpost.com/Israel-News/IAF-commander-Israel-first-to-use-F-35-jet-in-combat-558030
GIST	<p>Israel has struck targets in the Middle East with the F-35 Adir stealth fighter jet twice, Israel Air Force Commander Maj.-Gen. Amikam Norkin said Tuesday, becoming the first country to use the US-made jet in combat.</p> <p>“We are flying the F-35 all over the Middle East. It had become part of our operational capabilities. We are the first to attack using the F-35 in the Middle East and have already attacked twice on different fronts,” he said during the IAF Senior Air Force Conference in Herzilya.</p> <p>Norkin made the comments while showing a picture of one Israeli F-35 flying over the Lebanese capital of Beirut during the day. He did not mention when the picture was taken.</p> <p>Israel declared initial operational capability of the world’s most advanced jet in December after receiving nine F-35s. The Air Force is expected to receive a total of 50 planes to make two full squadrons by 2024.</p> <p>With an extremely low radar signature, the F-35 is able to operate undetected deep inside enemy territory such as Iran as well as evade advanced missile defense systems like the advanced Russian-made S-300 missile defense system which Tehran announced in March had become operational.</p> <p>Israel is also said to be still considering acquiring F-35B Lightning II short takeoff/vertical landing jets. According to Lockheed Martin, the B variant “is designed to operate from austere bases and a range of air-capable ships near frontline combat zones. It can also take off and land conventionally from longer runways on major bases.”</p> <p>This could be crucial in times of war when air force bases - and particularly runways - run the risk of being targeted by enemy missiles and rockets.</p> <p>Current US Department of Defense plans state that Washington will acquire a total of 2,456 F-35s from the United States Air Force, Marine Corps and Navy. According to Lockheed Martin, over 280 F-35 aircraft have been delivered and are operating from 15 bases around the globe with over 580 pilots and 5,600 maintainers who have been trained on the aircraft whose fleet has surpassed more than 130,000 cumulative flight hours.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	05/22 Seattle cruise industry to get bigger
SOURCE	http://komonews.com/news/local/seattles-cruise-industry-about-to-grow-even-larger-as-bigger-ships-to-call-port-home
GIST	<p>SEATTLE - It might be hard to believe it's only been about 20 years since cruise ships started to call Seattle home, but these days the Port of Seattle is gearing up to welcome more than a million passengers. That's half the size of King County, and that number is only going up from here.</p> <p>"Exciting times," said Michal McLaughlin with the Port of Seattle. "The next 5-10 years it's going to be a great period for the cruise industry in Seattle and the Northwest.</p> <p>It all kicks off with Norwegian Cruise Line's brand new Norwegian Bliss -- the largest ship to ever homeport on the West Coast. She arrives at the end of this month.</p> <p>"We're putting our best ship out here -- one of our best ships that's custom built for this itinerary -- because we see it as an opportunity to create future cruisers and future passengers for the cruise industry," said Sandra Weir with Norwegian Cruise Line.</p> <p>The cruise industry has come a long way. In 1999, the Norwegian Sky pulled into port and back then, the</p>

ship was considered huge. Today, the Bliss is almost triple the size and carries about 4,000 passengers, which means a lot more cash coming into the city. Every time a ship docks in Seattle, roughly \$2 million comes along with it.

"We've got a great future with tourism," said Tom Norwalk with Visit Seattle. "Certainly cruise plays a big part of that, and we can grow it."

It will indeed be growing in a big way next year. Norwegian isn't the only one tapping into the Seattle market. Royal Caribbean is bringing an even bigger ship to town. The Ovation of the Seas is complete with a built-in crane for sightseeing, iFly skydiving and countless other features onboard.

"We're so excited to bring Ovation of the Seas to Seattle," said Cody Phillips with Royal Caribbean. "Everything you can do is weather-friendly onboard. Perfect ship for Alaska."

If you would stand the Ovation up, it's twice as tall as the Space Needle and carries close to 5,000 people.

It's not just the megaships setting their eyes on Western Washington. The Azamara Quest, which holds about 700 passengers, is also coming here next year. And they're shaking things up in a different kind of way.

"Azamara will offer guests a late-night stay in the destination," says Larry Pimental, CEO of Azamara Club Cruises. "With the Azamara Quest docked until 9 p.m., guests will be able to stay longer in port and experience Seattle at night -- one of the best ways to take in the city is an evening stroll along the scenic waterfront."

[Return to](#)

[Top](#)

HEADLINE	05/22 Seattle homeless strategy: PR campaign
SOURCE	https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/city-tries-pr-campaign-as-part-of-encampment-sweeps/754860194
GIST	<p>SEATTLE - Seattle has a new strategy to convince taxpayers they're making a dent in the homeless population.</p> <p>The number of cleared encampments was mentioned during a presentation to the Seattle City Council's Civil Rights Committee as part of a PR campaign so that the public can see how the city is spending millions of dollars to combat homelessness.</p> <p>KIRO 7 looked into the 69 encampments Seattle has shut down during the first four months of 2018.</p> <p>That number includes encampments like the one under Yesler Bridge which have been shut down numerous times. The Yesler Bridge encampment has been swept four times since January. The most recent sweep was Tuesday.</p> <p>The Seattle City Council's Civil Rights Committee held a briefing on a 2017 encampment monitoring report.</p> <p>It included data on nearly 70 encampment sweeps this year, many of them repeats. Committee chair Lisa Herbold said the city will soon release figures that show 30 percent more people got housing last year than the year before.</p> <p>"There have been about 5,000 exits from homelessness to permanent housing," she said. "But yet we still see so much visible homelessness. That's because more people every day are becoming homeless."</p> <p>A visit to homeless encampments provided evidence of that. But there were also homeless people coming to Seattle from someplace else.</p>

The man inside a tent across from the Union Gospel Mission says he moved from Auburn three weeks ago.

When he was asked why he came to Seattle, he said, "I couldn't afford my apartment."

The 2017 count showed more than 11,000 people experiencing homelessness in King County. More than 2,600 people were in transitional housing and nearly 3,500 in emergency shelters. The lion's share -- nearly 5,500 people -- were unsheltered.

The public is told most of the homeless are from King County.

"I used to have a home, five acres," said Tina Frank. She says that was back in Montana. But she said she didn't come to Seattle from Montana.

"No," she said, "I came here from Las Vegas."

Nevertheless, Frank said she has deep ties to the Puget Sound region. She said she is trying to get into the Downtown Emergency Services Center.

Herbold confirms the city is planning to hire a point person to oversee the Homeless Navigation Team and "establish a stronger connection with the broader long-term system of homelessness response."

The search for the new hire hasn't begun yet.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	05/22 Fight to stop mega-fires in Washington
SOURCE	https://www.king5.com/article/tech/science/environment/the-fight-to-stop-megafires-in-washington/281-557308231
GIST	<p>Firefighters worry this wildfire season could be especially volatile. More than 2.7 million acres in Eastern Washington are at high risk and we're only six weeks into the summer wildfire season.</p> <p>The plan is to reduce that risk by burning off or cutting away dead, flammable debris on the forest floor.</p> <p>Forest managers do what's called prescribed burning, usually in the spring and the fall, where the debris on the forest floor is burned off in a controlled fashion, without burning the bigger trees.</p> <p>Flammable material is also removed mechanically, with the help of chainsaws and grinders. All this dead and downed debris is fuel for forest fires. When it dries out over the summer, it becomes like gasoline in the forest.</p> <p>Burning it off used to happen naturally for millions of years. Wildfire was considered a natural part of the western landscape. Native Americans had long-known this and also deliberately burned thousands of acres to create a more open forest with more grasses and much less brush and low hanging and dead branches. Today, the debris and low-hanging branches often result in fires that can destroy even the strongest and oldest trees.</p> <p>"Because our fire season is getting longer and larger," said Hilary Franz, Washington's Commissioner for Public Lands. "It's going to take all of us, it's going to take every agency."</p> <p>Under what's called the 20-Year Forest Health Strategic Plan, there is more joint training and cooperation between wildfire agencies. The plan started four years ago under Franz's predecessor Peter Goldmark, when record fires burned hundreds of homes in Eastern Washington.</p> <p>Our worst fires are called megafires, burning 100,000 acres or more. The 238,000-acre Yacolt Burn of</p>

1902 in southwest Washington held the title as the state's largest recorded wildfire for 112 years. Then in 2014, the Carlton Complex fire took the title for worst wildfire. But the 2014 record fell the following year with the Okanogan Complex Fire, a collection of connected fires which grew together and killed three firefighters.

"It's not newsworthy that they get big," said Paul Hessburg, a landscape ecologist with the U.S. Forest Service in Wenatchee. "What's newsworthy is that they're increasing in frequency."

The 20-Year Forest Health Plan calls for treating 1.2 million acres with prescribed burning and thinning over the next 20 years, about 70,000 acres a year. But Hessburg says we need to do more.

"It's a drop in the bucket. Right now, the thinning and burning treatments can be marvelously useful. What's needed is the social license to be able to do those treatments on a scale that matters."

For Hessburg, that means living with the smoke from controlled fires, in order to avoid the massive amounts of smoke coming from the uncontrolled fires.

Franz says the plan to treat 1.2 million acres is an effective step. The legislature allocated \$13 million through July of 2019 to get it started.

[Return to](#)

[Top](#)

HEADLINE	05/22 States with largest teacher pay gap
SOURCE	http://q13fox.com/2018/05/22/states-with-the-largest-teacher-pay-gap/
GIST	<p>In recent months, teachers in multiple states, including West Virginia, Kentucky, Arizona, and Colorado, have gone on strike to protest low wages and insufficient resources in public schools. With many states cutting school funding, teachers are experiencing economic pressure inside and outside of the classroom and are voicing their need for change.</p> <p>According to the National Center for Education Statistics, the average annual salary of teachers in U.S. public elementary and secondary schools is \$58,950. Although teachers' salaries have risen nominally over the past 50 years, when analyzed in "constant dollars" based on the consumer price index, salaries have actually been decreasing since 2009. For comparison, the average annual earnings for workers over the age of 18 who hold a bachelor's degree or higher in the U.S. is \$77,526, resulting in a national teacher pay gap of -24%.</p> <p>With this in mind, Credit Sesame wanted to see how the pay gap varied from state to state. Its researchers calculated the Teacher pay gap as the percent difference between the Average annual salary for teachers in each state (taken from the National Education Association, Estimates of School Statistics, 2016-17) and the Average annual earnings for all college graduates (calculated for each state using the U.S. Census Bureau, 2016 American Community Survey 1-year Public Use Microdata Samples). Then each state and the District of Columbia was ranked from the highest teacher pay gap to the lowest.</p> <p>Based on the analysis, the teacher pay gap is in the teachers' favor in only two states: Vermont and Alaska. The states with the highest teacher salaries are in the populous, heavily urban states of New York, California, Massachusetts, District of Columbia, and Connecticut, while the states with the lowest teacher salaries are in the mostly rural states of Colorado, West Virginia, Oklahoma, Mississippi, and South Dakota. States with lowest teacher salaries also tended to have higher teacher pay gaps.</p> <p>Here are the states with the largest teacher pay gap:</p> <p>25. Idaho</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Teacher pay gap: -23.5% •Average annual salary for teachers: \$47,504 •Average annual earnings for all college graduates: \$62,060

•Teacher salary change 1999-00 to 2016-17: -6.8%

24. New Mexico

- Teacher pay gap: -24.1%
- Average annual salary for teachers: \$47,500
- Average annual earnings for all college graduates: \$62,615
- Teacher salary change 1999-00 to 2016-17: 1.8%

23. Kentucky

- Teacher pay gap: -25.1%
- Average annual salary for teachers: \$52,339
- Average annual earnings for all college graduates: \$69,885
- Teacher salary change 1999-00 to 2016-17: 0.4%

22. West Virginia

- Teacher pay gap: -25.1%
- Average annual salary for teachers: \$45,701
- Average annual earnings for all college graduates: \$61,008
- Teacher salary change 1999-00 to 2016-17: -8.9%

21. New Jersey

- Teacher pay gap: -25.3%
- Average annual salary for teachers: \$69,623
- Average annual earnings for all college graduates: \$93,161
- Teacher salary change 1999-00 to 2016-17: -6.6%

20. Connecticut

- Teacher pay gap: -25.9%
- Average annual salary for teachers: \$72,561
- Average annual earnings for all college graduates: \$97,986
- Teacher salary change 1999-00 to 2016-17: -2.2%

19. Arkansas

- Teacher pay gap: -25.9%
- Average annual salary for teachers: \$48,616
- Average annual earnings for all college graduates: \$65,575
- Teacher salary change 1999-00 to 2016-17: 1.6%

18. Louisiana

- Teacher pay gap: -26.2%
- Average annual salary for teachers: \$50,000
- Average annual earnings for all college graduates: \$67,767
- Teacher salary change 1999-00 to 2016-17: 5.4%

17. Kansas

- Teacher pay gap: -26.4%
- Average annual salary for teachers: \$47,984
- Average annual earnings for all college graduates: \$65,198
- Teacher salary change 1999-00 to 2016-17: -4.3%

16. South Carolina

- Teacher pay gap: -26.8%
- Average annual salary for teachers: \$48,598
- Average annual earnings for all college graduates: \$66,430
- Teacher salary change 1999-00 to 2016-17: -6.0%

15. Missouri

- Teacher pay gap: -27.6%
- Average annual salary for teachers: \$48,293
- Average annual earnings for all college graduates: \$66,714
- Teacher salary change 1999-00 to 2016-17: -5.5%

14. Georgia

- Teacher pay gap: -27.7%
- Average annual salary for teachers: \$54,602
- Average annual earnings for all college graduates: \$75,515
- Teacher salary change 1999-00 to 2016-17: -7.1%

13. Alabama

- Teacher pay gap: -28.4%
- Average annual salary for teachers: \$48,868
- Average annual earnings for all college graduates: \$68,241
- Teacher salary change 1999-00 to 2016-17: -7.1%

12. Mississippi

- Teacher pay gap: -28.4%
- Average annual salary for teachers: \$42,925
- Average annual earnings for all college graduates: \$59,918
- Teacher salary change 1999-00 to 2016-17: -6.0%

11. South Dakota

- Teacher pay gap: -28.4%
- Average annual salary for teachers: \$42,668
- Average annual earnings for all college graduates: \$59,577
- Teacher salary change 1999-00 to 2016-17: 2.4%

10. North Carolina

- Teacher pay gap: -29.9%
- Average annual salary for teachers: \$49,837
- Average annual earnings for all college graduates: \$71,098
- Teacher salary change 1999-00 to 2016-17: -11.8%

9. Tennessee

- Teacher pay gap: -30.4%
- Average annual salary for teachers: \$48,456
- Average annual earnings for all college graduates: \$69,636
- Teacher salary change 1999-00 to 2016-17: -6.9%

8. Utah

- Teacher pay gap: -31.1%
- Average annual salary for teachers: \$47,244
- Average annual earnings for all college graduates: \$68,547
- Teacher salary change 1999-00 to 2016-17: -5.7%

7. Oklahoma

- Teacher pay gap: -31.1%
- Average annual salary for teachers: \$45,245
- Average annual earnings for all college graduates: \$65,660
- Teacher salary change 1999-00 to 2016-17: 0.9%

6. Washington

- Teacher pay gap: -31.8%

- Average annual salary for teachers: \$54,147
- Average annual earnings for all college graduates: \$79,418
- Teacher salary change 1999-00 to 2016-17: -8.0%

5. Florida

- Teacher pay gap: -32.1%
- Average annual salary for teachers: \$49,407
- Average annual earnings for all college graduates: \$72,804
- Teacher salary change 1999-00 to 2016-17: -6.1%

4. Texas

- Teacher pay gap: -34.5%
- Average annual salary for teachers: \$52,575
- Average annual earnings for all college graduates: \$80,261
- Teacher salary change 1999-00 to 2016-17: -2.4%

3. Arizona

- Teacher pay gap: -34.7%
- Average annual salary for teachers: \$47,403
- Average annual earnings for all college graduates: \$72,636
- Teacher salary change 1999-00 to 2016-17: -10.4%

2. Colorado

- Teacher pay gap: -37.1%
- Average annual salary for teachers: \$46,506
- Average annual earnings for all college graduates: \$73,992
- Teacher salary change 1999-00 to 2016-17: -15.0%

1. Virginia

- Teacher pay gap: -40.2%
- Average annual salary for teachers: \$51,049
- Average annual earnings for all college graduates: \$85,432
- Teacher salary change 1999-00 to 2016-17: -8.1%

[Return to](#)

[Top](#)

HEADLINE	05/22 Summer: warmer, drier than normal
SOURCE	http://q13fox.com/2018/05/22/seattles-summer-predicted-to-be-warmer-and-drier-than-normal/
GIST	<p>SEATTLE — We're definitely experiencing "summer in May," but what does the REAL summer look like? Warm!</p> <p>According to the National Weather Service's Climate Prediction Center, June through September will be warmer and drier than normal.</p> <p>What does that exactly mean?</p> <p>Q13 News Meteorologist M.J. McDermott says, "right now it's impossible to know how far above normal our temperatures will be."</p> <p>In order for that prediction to come true, the summer months just have to be 1 degree warmer and .10 inches drier.</p> <p>"A normal summer in terms of temperatures would average 74 for the high," Q13 News Chief Meteorologist Walter Kelley says. "So this summer expect more days above 74 degrees."</p>

Last year, we had seven days at 90 degrees or above and the hottest day was August 3rd when it hit 94.

The hottest day ever at SeaTac Airport was July 29, 2009, when it hit 103. SeaTac had only hit the triple digits once before that, topping out at 100 on July 20, 1994.

“There’s no way to know how many 90-degree days we will get this summer, or if we’ll hit 100 again,” McDermott explains. “But it looks like days in the 80s are pretty likely.”

As of May 22, SeaTac Airport reported 20 days with highs above average. That trend is expected to continue at least for Thursday and maybe even Friday.

Rain?

Last year, Seattle experienced the driest summer ever recorded, with just .52 inches of rain recorded at SeaTac Airport. It beat out 1910 which received .58 inches of rain.

“Normal rainfall is about 4 inches,” Kelley says. So June – September is expected to see “less than 4 inches” of rain.

Right now, May is on track for one of the driest Mays in recorded history. Kelley says, “there have been .12 inches of precipitation so far, and the forecast continues to call for mostly dry weather.”

Summer officially begins Thursday, June 21 and ends Saturday, September 22.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	05/22 Enticing Seattle businesses w/tax credits
SOURCE	http://q13fox.com/2018/05/22/tacoma-pierce-county-leaders-try-to-entice-seattle-businesses-with-tax-credits/
GIST	<p>TACOMA, Wash. – The backlash from Seattle’s employee tax is creating the perfect opportunity for Pierce County leaders to try to entice businesses to the South Sound.</p> <p>The senior reporter at the Puget Sound Business Journal predicts tech jobs will stay in Seattle, but South Sound leaders argue other companies, more family-friendly industries, may find Pierce County’s offer too appealing to pass up.</p> <p>Seattle’s sister-city to the south wants to come out of the shadows.</p> <p>“Tacoma is enjoying new record breaking growth with multi-developments, restaurants, and services,” said Tacoma Mayor Victoria Woodards.</p> <p>But too many of those newcomers are heading north to Seattle for work. So Tacoma crafted four tax incentives for new companies.</p> <p>“Businesses who create new positions in Tacoma can qualify for up to four different job credits. That total equals \$1,500 per employee per year for five years,” said Woodards,</p> <p>Tacoma's tax credit are the opposite of Seattle’s \$275 per employee tax on big businesses.</p> <p>“They might as well put a sign up at city limits that said we’re closed for business,” said Puget Sound Business Journal senior reporter Marc Stiles.</p> <p>Stiles said it’s reason enough for new businesses to consider the more family-friendly and cheaper Tacoma. What about big tech giants like Amazon, Google, or Expedia?</p>

“Top talent wants to be in an urban environment less so a suburban environment,” said Stiles.

That’s why Stiles doesn’t think Seattle’s tech bubble will burst because of the new employee tax.

“There are a lot of other tech companies, Google is expanding to South Lake Union and Facebook is growing like crazy so the draw is to be near these companies that are innovating,” said Stiles.

If nothing else, Seattle’s skyrocketing cost of living is nothing compared to the original Silicon Valley of the Bay Area. But considerably less than that is the cost of living in Tacoma. Add in the tax incentives, and Tacoma and Pierce County leaders are rolling out the red carpet for new businesses.

“As we work to recruit and retain companies that bring sustainable family living-wage jobs and sustain growth,” said Woodward.

With State Farm announcing plans to leave Tacoma, there are plenty of office spaces and tax breaks to go around.

Pierce County leaders announced Tuesday they want to be in the tech game. There is a small but growing tech scene sprouting up near the UW branch in downtown Tacoma.

Ultimately, Stiles said, Seattle business owners are fed up with the city’s inability to control homelessness and provide affordable housing. That’s why he believes repealing this employee tax will show up on the November ballot where business owners and employees will vote down the tax.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	05/23 Australia, China relationship turmoil
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/05/23/asia/australia-china-turnbull-visit-intl/index.html
GIST	<p>(CNN)Antagonistic statements by top media and political figures in Australia and China have undermined attempts by Canberra to rebuild its relationship with Beijing after months of diplomatic tension.</p> <p>Chinese state media tabloid Global Times, known for its hawkish statements on government policy, said in an editorial Wednesday a planned visit by Australian Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull should be postponed "to make Australia pay for its arrogant attitudes."</p> <p>"China just needs to slow their relationship for a period. For example, it will not be necessary for the Australian Prime Minister to visit China this year. In fact, he could visit a few years later," the editorial said, adding ministerial visits could also be postponed.</p> <p>Turnbull said in a press conference last week he would be visiting China "later in the year."</p> <p>Less than a day earlier, Australian politician Andrew Hastie, who is also the Chair of the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security, accused a wealthy Australian Chinese political donor of funding the bribery of a senior United Nations official.</p> <p>Hastie made the claims in federal parliament, under the protection of parliamentary privilege, which allows politicians to make potentially defamatory comments with legal immunity.</p> <p>The provocative statements won't help improve Australia-China relations, which have deteriorated since Canberra proposed new anti-foreign interference laws that China believes are aimed at Beijing.</p> <p>Speaking to reporters at an event on Wednesday, Australian Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull claimed the relationship between the two countries was solid.</p> <p>"We have a strong relationship, it's a frank one, Julie had a good meeting with her counterpart in Buenos</p>

	<p>Aires, trade is growing," he said. "We have a good frank relationship with China, it's a very strong one."</p> <p>Turnbull has recently been working hard to appease Beijing, saying during an interview with Sky News in February China would never be considered a military threat. "We don't see the region through what is frankly an out-of-date Cold War prism," he said.</p>
<p>Return to Top</p>	

HEADLINE	05/22 Study: role of race kids' suicide risk
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/study-reveals-striking-trends-role-of-race-in-kids-suicide-risk/
GIST	<p>Several recent studies have pointed to a worrisome increase in suicide rates among Americans of all ages, and young people in particular. While suicide rates traditionally have been higher among whites than blacks in the United States, new research finds that's not true among younger children.</p> <p>When researchers focused in on kids between the ages of 5 and 12, they discovered that the suicide rate among black children is roughly two times higher than that of white children in the same age group.</p> <p>For teens, the trend reversed. Suicide rates were about 50 percent lower in black adolescents aged 13 to 17 than their white counterparts. The findings are published in JAMA Pediatrics.</p> <p>"While the suicide rate was lower for black youth than white youth overall, we found a striking change in that trend when we analyzed the suicide rates by the two age groups," study co-author Lisa Horowitz, Ph.D., of the National Institute of Mental Health, said in a statement.</p> <p>What's behind the rise in youth suicides?</p> <p>The findings were similar for both boys and girls.</p> <p>Suicide is a major public health problem in the United States and the second leading cause of death among American teens. The authors note that the overall risk of suicide among children is very small, but of course the impact can be devastating for parents, friends, and communities.</p> <p>For the study, conducted by researchers from Nationwide Children's Hospital and the National Institutes of Health, the authors used data from a CDC database which tracks fatal and nonfatal injuries, violent deaths, and cost-of-injury data. The researchers looked at data from 2001 to 2015 for children ages 5 through 12 and teens ages 13 to 17.</p> <p>Why are black children at a higher risk of suicide?</p> <p>The study did not include data on what might be contributing to the racial difference in suicide rates in the younger age group. That's going to be the focus of follow-up research, says study co-author Jeff Bridge, Ph.D., director of the Center for Suicide Prevention and Research at Nationwide Children's Hospital.</p> <p>"There's very little research about suicide in black youths," he told CBS News. "Most of the studies that have looked at risk factors for suicide included mostly white suicide[s]."</p> <p>Bridge said he and his team are planning to look at potential factors such as the availability of health care and community resources, attitudes towards mental health care, and the potential impact on children of higher homicide rates among older black adolescents.</p> <p>Jeanne Miranda, Ph.D., professor in the Department of Psychiatry and Biobehavioral Sciences at the University of California, Los Angeles, who was not involved in the study, called the findings "distressing." While she also emphasized that there is no data to explain the reasons behind the disturbing trend, she did offer a few theories.</p>

"We know that African-Americans are much less likely to use mental health services," Miranda told CBS News. "One reason for this is the lack of access to care. Even with the expansion of Medicaid under the Affordable Care Act, the states that chose not to expand Medicaid are heavily African-American in the South."

Another concern, she says, is that African-Americans may have less trust in the mental health care system. "It's still unfortunately quite white," said Miranda, who also co-directs the Youth Stress and Mood Program at UCLA. "There are not enough minorities [working at mental health care facilities] and I think people don't always feel comfortable seeking mental health services."

Exposure to violence, which is statistically much higher among black youth, and families torn apart due to the higher rate of incarceration of African-American men, may also play a role in suicide risk in black children, she says. According to the Pew Research Center, African-Americans make up 12 percent of the total U.S. adult population but account for 33 percent of the share of people in prison.

"There's also quite compelling evidence that in some ways, there's this school to juvenile justice to prison pipeline that shows that African-American kids are punished more severely in schools," Miranda said. "When we started seeing these 'zero tolerance' policies, it primarily ends up falling on the heads of African-American children who are disproportionately or more severely punished for the same violations of school rules. That is setting them up for failure in a system."

"All of this speaks to the legacy of racism and I think there's a demand for African-American children to be stoic in the face of all this and not get care," Miranda said.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	05/23 Las Vegas casino workers vote to strike
SOURCE	https://www.nbcnews.com/business/business-news/las-vegas-casino-workers-vote-authorize-strike-n876651
GIST	<p>Tens of thousands of hotel and casino workers have voted to authorize a strike next month at dozens of casinos and resorts if contract agreements aren't reached before they expire at the end of May, the Culinary Union announced late Tuesday.</p> <p>Ninety-nine percent of 25,000 union members who voted at two sessions Tuesday favored authorizing a strike, the union said.</p> <p>The vote authorizes the union negotiating committee to call a strike any time after June 1, and does not mean that a city-wide strike will occur. But it could give leverage to the unions in negotiations.</p> <p>"A strike is a last resort. We want to come to an agreement, but the union and workers are preparing for a citywide strike if contracts are not settled by June 1," Geoconda Argüello-Kline, secretary-treasurer for the Culinary Union, said in a statement.</p> <p>The properties that could be affected include those owned by MGM Resorts, Caesars Entertainment, Tropicana Las Vegas and other properties, the union says.</p> <p>Contracts for the culinary and bartenders unions at 34 casinos expire at midnight May 31, covering around 50,000 workers, according to Culinary Workers Union Local 226. They include bartenders, room attendants, servers, cooks and kitchen workers.</p> <p>The unions have proposed contract language to provide security for workers against sexual harassment, and the use of subcontractors and technology, among other issues, the culinary union said.</p> <p>"Over eight decades, casino workers in Las Vegas have been faced with the same decision: Show up or give up," Argüello-Kline said in a statement earlier this month. "You either show up and fight for what</p>

you deserve, or you give up and take whatever the company gives you."

MGM said it will keep meeting with the union. "As we continue to bargain in good faith, we are confident that we'll resolve contract issues and negotiate a contract that works for everyone," the company said in a statement.

More than 40 million people are estimated to have visited Las Vegas in 2017, according to the Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority. In Clark County, gaming revenue was around \$9.5 billion in fiscal year 2017, with more than \$6 billion of that from the Las Vegas Strip, according to a Nevada Gaming Control Board report released in January (those numbers are before expenses are taken into account).

The last city-wide casino workers strike in Las Vegas occurred in 1984 and spanned 67 days. Union members lost an estimated \$75 million in wages and benefits, while the city lost a similar amount in tourism revenue, the Associated Press reported. Millions more were lost in gambling income.

[Return to](#)

[Top](#)

HEADLINE 05/22 More children drowning in open water

SOURCE <https://www.today.com/health/new-drowning-study-warns-about-dangers-swimming-open-water-t129487>

GIST As the weather heats up many families will cool down by swimming at pools, rivers, lakes, ponds and the ocean. But a new report from Safe Kids Worldwide and Nationwide's Make Safe Happen offers a warning about drowning: families need to pay more attention to swimming safety — especially in open water.

"We used to hear a lot about kids drowning in pools and there has been a fair amount of work done in that area, and we have seen those drownings decrease," Morag Mackay, director of research at Safe Kids Worldwide, told TODAY. "But drownings in open water have increased."

The report — Hidden Hazards: An Exploration of Open Water Drowning and Risks for Children — finds that 43 percent of drowning occur in open water, such as quarries, oceans, lakes, rivers, retention ponds, reservoirs and ponds. Drowning in pools makes up 38 percent of drownings.

In total in 2016, 1,000 children from infancy to age 19 drowned, the highest number of drowning fatalities since 2011. On top of that, more than 7,000 children visited an emergency room because of a near-drowning. At least 80 percent of children who drown in open water are boys; half of all open water fatalities are teens, age 15 to 19.

"We socialize boys to take more risks and therefore that is part of it," Mackay said. "We may supervise slightly different based on the gender of the kids."

The report also notes that African American and Native American children and teens are at an increased risk of drowning deaths.

"We see racial disparities in swimming ability and access to swim lessons," Mackay said. "Something that society can do is really look at where opportunities are for kids learning how to swim."

While learning how to swim reduces the risk of drowning and near drownings, the report encourages parents to be mindful of the differences between pool and open-water swimming.

The risks from swimming in open water include:

- Rapid water temperature changes
- Steep drop-offs
- Difficult to judge distances
- Limited visibility

- Dangerous currents
- Increased vegetation and rocks

[Return to](#)

[Top](#)

HEADLINE	05/22 US sanction power reaching limit?
SOURCE	https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2018-05-22/u-s-sanction-power-may-be-reaching-its-limit
GIST	<p>Six years ago, in the course of investigating London-based bank Standard Chartered Plc over suspicions it had flouted U.S. sanctions against Iran, the New York State Department of Financial Services published an email from a senior executive to one of his counterparts in New York. “You f***ing Americans,” the message read. “Who are you to tell us, the rest of the world, that we’re not going to deal with Iranians?”</p> <p>It’s a sentiment that has echoed through halls of power in recent weeks following President Trump’s May 8 decision to pull out of the 2015 Iran nuclear deal and impose unilateral sanctions, despite all indications that the country was complying. In Year Two of the Trump administration, the number of financial penalties has hit a high after years of increasing use. “The current administration is kind of drunk on the sanctions power,” says Jarrett Blanc, a senior fellow at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace who was a leading Department of State official in the Obama administration responsible for Iran nuclear issues. “They don’t understand that the tool is limited and fragile.”</p> <p>Today’s global economy runs through the U.S. financial system, which constitutes a major source of the country’s influence. The dollar is the world’s currency, and Wall Street remains a key financial center, which helps U.S. leaders sway friends and coerce rivals. That status is “not ordained,” Blanc says. “At a certain point, it might be worthwhile for foreign governments and private-sector actors to work around New York.”</p> <p>The U.S. began stepping up its use of sanctions after the Sept. 11 attacks, deploying them against terror suspects and their financial backers, says Brian O’Toole, a former senior adviser at the U.S. Department of the Treasury’s sanctions unit, now a senior fellow at the Atlantic Council. Over time, Washington increasingly used financial penalties as a tool of foreign policy, as in the U.S.-led multinational effort to pressure Iran to curtail its nuclear program, which culminated with the 2015 agreement.</p> <p>When Trump was elected a year later, the strategy began to shift yet again. In January 2018 the Pentagon declared that terrorism was no longer the main threat to the U.S. It identified China and Russia as the chief rivals in a new era of great-power politics. “America First” meant that sanctions were more likely to be unilateral—and more likely to be deployed at the expense of other diplomatic strategies. “They’ve leaned heavily on Treasury,” O’Toole says. “They’ve basically gutted the State Department.”</p> <p>The Treasury is still pursuing militants: On May 16 it imposed a raft of measures against the Iran-backed Shiite militia Hezbollah. But it’s the renewed attempt to target the economies of Russia and Iran that’s confounded investors and upset U.S. allies. Although the administration’s March announcement of tariffs against imported steel and aluminum got more press, mayhem ripped through global metals markets and supply chains after the Treasury slapped penalties on Russian aluminum producer United Co. Rusal Plc in response to the Kremlin’s interference in the 2016 presidential election. Trump’s Iran decision a month later sent oil prices soaring. Even though new curbs on Iran won’t kick in for months, they’ll be the “strongest sanctions in history by the time we are complete,” U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said on May 21.</p> <p>The most important response to the onslaught of U.S. sanctions won’t come from the target countries. The key decisions—to comply or defy—will be made by the only actors on the same economic scale as the U.S.: China and Europe. “For absolutely core national security reasons, China will find ways around the hold of the U.S. banking sector,” says Jeffrey Sachs, an economics professor at Columbia University. In the past five years, China has set up its own lending institutions parallel to the Washington-based World Bank and International Monetary Fund and pushed the yuan as an international currency. The country is likely to strengthen its presence in Iran no matter what Trump does.</p>

The calculations are more complex for Europe's leaders, longtime allies of the U.S. who share many of its concerns, including those about Russian election meddling and Iran's involvement in Middle East wars. In July 2017, Germany's Kiel Institute for the World Economy published a study on the economic impact of multilateral sanctions imposed on Russia over its annexation of Crimea three years earlier. While Russia naturally took the biggest hit, a surprisingly large share of the losses—\$44 billion—was borne by the sanctioners. Of that, almost 40 percent fell on Germany; only 0.6 percent hit the U.S.

Reacting to Trump's Iran decision, French Economy Minister Bruno Le Maire fumed, "Do we want to be vassals who obey decisions taken by the United States while clinging to the hem of their trousers?" Meeting in Bulgaria less than a week later, European leaders agreed on a package of measures to defy American pressure. Special rules to shield European Union companies from U.S. sanctions will be activated for the first time in two decades. The European Investment Bank will be allowed to finance business in Iran, and EU countries were encouraged to explore transfers to Iran's central bank.

Numerous battles loom in the coming months. The global Swift cross-border payment system—based in Brussels but dependent on U.S. cooperation—is one likely flashpoint. The planned Nord Stream 2 pipeline, which would bring Russian natural gas to Germany, is another. "We would be delighted if the project did not take place," U.S. State Department energy expert Sandra Oudkirk told reporters in Berlin.

In the long term, Sachs says, there's a bigger risk. While countries such as Venezuela, which is promoting its own state-backed cryptocurrency, Iran, and even Russia may chafe at the greenback's dominance, they lack the clout to do much about it. Now that the bigger players have a motive to find ways around the dollar, he says, there's no technical reason why they couldn't succeed. "Europe and China have banks," he says. "One of these days, the U.S. is going to talk the dollar right out of its international role."

[Return to](#)

[Top](#)

HEADLINE	05/22 Officials: 450 migrants from caravan in US
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2018/may/22/more-450-caravan-migrants-made-it-us/
GIST	<p>More than 450 people from the illegal-immigrant caravan managed to make it into the U.S., officials told Congress on Tuesday.</p> <p>Of those just 122 were arrested for jumping the border, while more than 330 others showed up at official ports of entry and demanded asylum, the officials told the House Homeland Security Committee, giving the first complete look at the effects of the caravan.</p> <p>Despite the Trump administration announcing very publicly a zero-tolerance policy for the caravan, authorities have announced charges against only a small fraction of the 122 people who jumped the border.</p> <p>Homeland Security officials weren't able to give an exact number of people who did face charges, but the Justice Department only announced 11 prosecutions in California, and U.S. Customs and Border Protection pointed to a few others in Texas.</p> <p>In court documents filed in California, a Border Patrol supervisor said the agency didn't lodge charges against mothers who jumped the border with their children or, in one case, a woman who was eight months pregnant — but it was unclear how many people that covered in total.</p> <p>The caravan began as about 1,500 people from Central America making their way north through Mexico to the U.S., traveling for weeks. Some got turned back in Mexico, others were granted protections in Mexico, but nearly 600 reached Tijuana, and of those more than 450 did get into the U.S.</p> <p>"We encountered almost 500 of them," said Ronald D. Vitiello, acting deputy commissioner of Customs and Border Protection.</p>

The majority — more than 330 — followed government directions and waited to apply for asylum through the official ports of entry, and are now in processing in the U.S.

Of those, asylum officers have screened 216 already, and found 205 — nearly 95 percent — cleared the initial low bar of claiming a “credible fear” of being sent back to their home country, giving them an initial foothold in the U.S.

That’s “so low that nearly everybody can make it through,” said Rep. Martha McSally, the Arizona Republican who served as chairman of Tuesday’s hearing where officials detailed the caravan enforcement.

Many of the asylum seekers will be released into the country and eventually given work permits while they await their full asylum hearings, which can take years.

Only about 20 percent will be successful in winning those cases, while many others won’t even bother to pursue their asylum cases, instead ignoring summonses and disappearing into the illegal immigrant population, analysts said.

Lee Francis Cissna, director of U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, which handles the initial asylum screening, said the caravan migrants are emblematic of a much larger problem. His agency now has an asylum backlog of more than 300,000 cases, many of them likely to be bogus.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	05/22 Congo: Ebola vaccination, more cases
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/Health/wireStory/congo-announces-confirmed-cases-ebola-virus-55348382?
GIST	<p>Congo's health ministry announced six new confirmed Ebola cases and two new suspected cases Tuesday as vaccinations entered a second day in an effort to contain the deadly virus in a city of more than 1 million.</p> <p>Dozens of health workers in the northwestern provincial capital, Mbandaka, have received vaccinations amid expectations that some will be deployed to the rural epicenter of the epidemic. Front-line workers are especially at risk of contracting the virus, which spreads in contact with the bodily fluids of infected people, including the dead.</p> <p>"In the next five days 100 people must be vaccinated, including 70 health professionals," Health Minister Oly Ilunga said. "The priority of the government is to ensure that all these brave health professionals can do their job safely."</p> <p>Congo's health ministry said there are now 28 confirmed Ebola cases, 21 probable ones and two suspected. The six new confirmed cases were in the rural Iboko health zone, it said. Of the confirmed Ebola cases, 14 are in Iboko, 10 are in Bikoro where the outbreak began and four are in the Wangata area of Mbandaka.</p> <p>The death toll from hemorrhagic fever stands at 27, with three of them confirmed as Ebola. Two of the Ebola victims were nurses, one in Iboko and the other in Bikoro.</p> <p>The WHO said 33 people received the first vaccinations Monday, including a few people in two communities of Mbandaka. More than 7,500 doses are available in Congo, WHO said Monday, and another 8,000 doses will be available in the coming days.</p> <p>Allowing Congolese to watch health officials receive vaccinations is crucial, health worker Ezela Elange told The Associated Press.</p> <p>"Our hope is that ... the sick will heal, the whole province will be healed," Elange said.</p>

	The vaccination campaign eventually will move to cover the two other health zones where confirmed cases have been reported. A major challenge will be keeping the vaccines cold in this vast, impoverished, tropical country where electricity is patchy.
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	05/23 Remittances big business Venezuela
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/migrant-remittances-big-business-cash-starved-venezuela-55370781?
GIST	<p>The giant metal pots in the kitchen of a drab Bogota cafeteria are filled with simple dishes like vegetable rice. But Edgary Granadillo's delicate arrangement of the plates he sets before rushed lunchtime office workers hints at the finer dishes he once served.</p> <p>The former executive chef at a beach resort in Venezuela once commanded a staff of 65 cooks and made regular appearances on television cooking shows.</p> <p>Now he is laboring for \$10 a day, with one sole aim: to send money back home.</p> <p>"The wages there aren't enough," Granadillo, 30, said, his dark, somber eyes keeping a careful eye on a bubbling saucepan of fish head soup. "People need to rely on a Venezuelan outside the country, who can send something, in order to survive."</p> <p>As the number of Venezuelans fleeing their country's deepening economic and humanitarian crisis climbs, a burgeoning lifeline for those back home is emerging — remittances. Skirting strict currency controls, dozens of transfer operations, mostly small-scale businesses run by a handful of exiles entirely online, have opened abroad to help emigres convert their dollars and pesos into Venezuelan bolivars that arrive within minutes in a relative's Venezuelan bank account.</p> <p>The remittances are big business. Independent experts estimate Venezuelans now send at least \$1 billion a year to friends and family members that they've left behind.</p> <p>That money is critical at a time when Venezuela's minimum wage is now worth less than \$2 a month, and the government of President Nicolas Maduro, who won a new six-year term Sunday in a contested vote many fear will spur even more people to leave, is taking note. Blaming the operations for feeding devaluation — and hoping to snag a piece of the pie — Venezuelan officials recently shut down several exchange houses and announced they would be opening their own.</p> <p>More than 100 people linked to remittance businesses have been detained in what officials dub "Operation Paper Hands." They are accused of speculating on the value of the bolivar by using the black-market exchange rate. The board of directors of Venezuela's top private bank, which held many of the remittance accounts, was arrested as part of the operation.</p> <p>Venezuela's chief prosecutor, Tarek William Saab, has warned that "new detention centers should be built for this type of crime," which he said was causing "grave damage" to the nation's economy. He added that while many of the business operators might be working from outside the country, avoiding arrest, officials have identified accomplices within Venezuela.</p> <p>"They might be abroad playing with the pain of Venezuelans, but we know who they work with," he said.</p> <p>Most remittances sent to Latin America come from migrants in the U.S., who send money to Mexico, Cuba and other nations in Central America and the Caribbean. In 2016, those money transfers valued \$74.3 billion — in some cases, contributing more than 10 percent of a nation's gross domestic product.</p> <p>Venezuela historically had been a receptor of migrants, and thus a country people sent remittances from, but that has changed.</p>

"The majority — 100 percent, and if not 100 percent, more than 99 percent — of Venezuelans who leave the country are doing so in order to send money back to relatives," said Yulia Torres, founder of an Instagram account called "Venezuelans in Bogota" that has attracted more than 40,000 followers.

"They might not ask you for it, but they absolutely need it," she said of relatives back home.

To keep their accounts flush with bolivars, money changers must wade into Venezuela's murky black market, where they sell dollars held in accounts abroad at 100 times the official rate, which only state agencies and privileged insiders have access to.

At a typical transfer shop, Venezuelans who operate the business maintain personal bank accounts within Venezuela while opening new ones in foreign currencies abroad. Migrants in Bogota, for example, deposit pesos into the business' Colombian bank account and the exchange operators transfer an equivalent amount of bolivars from their own Venezuelan account to that of the indicated relative.

Ecoanalitica, a Venezuelan financial consulting firm, estimates about \$1.1 billion in remittances were transferred to Venezuelans last year, a number analysts say could be higher given the difficulty in calculating informal transactions. Even on the lower end, that would mean upward of 4 million Venezuelans, or around 15 percent of the population, receive help from abroad.

"Increasingly middle class households need remittances in order to survive," said Jean Paul Leidenz, a senior economist at Ecoanalitica. "But we cannot just depend on remittances for hard currency income. Because they never enter the economy."

[Return to](#)

[Top](#)

HEADLINE	05/23 India, Pakistan tensions soar in Kashmir
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/tensions-soar-india-pakistan-kashmir-frontier-55372466?
GIST	<p>Tensions soared Wednesday along the volatile frontier between India and Pakistan in the disputed Himalayan region of Kashmir, as rival soldiers shelled dozens of villages and border posts for a sixth straight day.</p> <p>A total of five civilians and a soldier were killed on both sides, officials from the two countries said, in escalating violence in the disputed region that both countries blame the other for initiating.</p> <p>Indian police said Pakistani soldiers continued targeting dozens of Indian border posts and villages with mortars and automatic gunfire in the Jammu region. At least four civilians were killed and 30 others injured on the Indian side, said a top police officer, S.D. Singh.</p> <p>In Pakistan, two security officials said Pakistani and Indian troops exchanged fire near the country's Sialkot city in eastern Punjab province. They said the two sides traded fire over the past 48 hours, killing a civilian and a soldier.</p> <p>The officials said several people were also wounded, including three border guards. The officials spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak to reporters.</p> <p>As in the past, each country accused the other of initiating the latest border skirmishes and violating the 2003 cease-fire agreement.</p> <p>Wednesday's fighting follows days of confrontations that left four civilians on each side and an Indian soldier dead.</p> <p>The fighting has sent tens of thousands of villagers fleeing from their homes in dozens of affected villages</p>

<p>Return to Top</p>	<p>along the border to government buildings converted into temporary shelters or to the houses of friends and relatives living in safer places.</p> <p>Dozens of schools in villages along the frontier have been closed and authorities advised residents to stay indoors as shells and bullets rained down. Some damage to houses was also reported on the Indian side.</p> <p>This year, soldiers from the two nations have engaged in fierce border skirmishes along the rugged and mountainous Line of Control, as well as a lower-altitude 200-kilometer (125-mile) boundary separating Indian-controlled Kashmir and the Pakistani province of Punjab, where the latest fighting occurred.</p> <p>India and Pakistan have a long history of bitter relations over Kashmir, which both claim. They have fought two of their three wars since 1947 over their competing claims to the region.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/23 France orders Paris migrant camp closed
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/french-government-orders-evacuation-paris-migrant-camp-55373652?
GIST	<p>France's interior minister has ordered the evacuation of some 2,300 migrants camped in Paris amid a standoff with City Hall over how to handle the long-running problem.</p> <p>Interior Minister Gerard Collomb said in a statement Wednesday that he ordered police to work out an evacuation operation soon that would "reconcile" the demands of a tough new immigration law and appeals by aid groups to give the migrants shelter.</p> <p>Tent camps have mushroomed in recent weeks along canals in eastern and northeastern Paris, raising concerns for safety and public hygiene. Two migrants drowned this month.</p> <p>Mayor Anne Hidalgo has appealed to the government for help. The city has already cleared out some 28,000 migrants from Paris camps since 2015.</p> <p>Collomb criticized Paris City Hall for refusing to evacuate them and urged a long-term plan for migrants streaming regularly into the French capital.</p>
<p>Return to Top</p>	

HEADLINE	05/23 Israel strikes Hamas sites in Gaza
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/israeli-military-hits-hamas-sites-gaza-infiltration-55373653?
GIST	<p>The Israeli military says it has struck Hamas infrastructure in Gaza after a group of militants entered Israel and torched a military post.</p> <p>The military says it hit an underground security site and Hamas naval targets Tuesday. The military says the strikes were also in response to ongoing Hamas attempts to dispatch drones and burning kites that have burned Israeli agricultural fields.</p> <p>No one was wounded in the strikes. Hamas spokesman Hazem Qassem says they are merely "a new unsuccessful attempt" to stop the Palestinian protests along the border.</p> <p>Israeli fire has killed over 100 Palestinians during mass protests along the Gaza border since March.</p> <p>Israeli Defense Minister Avigdor Lieberman says the strikes destroyed another Hamas tunnel, calling the group's military efforts a failure and waste of resources.</p>
<p>Return to Top</p>	

HEADLINE	05/23 Powerful cyclone churns in Arabian Sea
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/powerful-cyclone-churns-arabian-sea-oman-yemen-55373657?
GIST	<p>A powerful cyclone in the Arabian Sea is churning toward the coasts of Oman and Yemen, where forecasters anticipate it will make landfall on Saturday.</p> <p>Forecasters at India's Meteorological Department said Wednesday that Cyclone Mekunu will intensify into what they described as a "very severe cyclonic storm."</p> <p>They say the cyclone is now some 670 kilometers (415 miles) off the coast of Salalah, a southern Omani port city near the sultanate's border with Yemen.</p> <p>Forecasters expect the storm will reach the coast on Saturday morning, with winds gusting as high as 180 kph (112 mph).</p> <p>Authorities in Oman say they are prepared for the storm to make landfall, warning it could cause flooding and damage to homes.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	05/23 Puerto Rico: 1% still without power
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/US/14500-puerto-rico-power/story?
GIST	<p>Sunday marked eight months since Hurricane Maria devastated Puerto Rico, and about 14,500 people there still don't have electricity.</p> <p>Puerto Rico Electric Power Authority said that number represents less than 1 percent of energy customers with access to power.</p> <p>PREPA set a goal of providing power to 100 percent of customers before May 31.</p> <p>The Army Corps of Engineers, which had been restoring access to the grid, handed those duties back to PREPA on Friday.</p> <p>Hurricane season starts in 10 days.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	05/22 USAID warns Africa nations on China
SOURCE	https://www.upi.com/Top_News/World-News/2018/05/22/US-official-warns-African-countries-against-dependence-on-China/9621527013356/?utm_source=fp&utm_campaign=ts tn int&utm_medium=4
GIST	<p>May 22 (UPI) -- The head of the U.S. Agency for International Development took a critical approach to Chinese economic activities in Africa during the Korea-Africa Economic Cooperation Conference in Busan.</p> <p>Mark Green, the USAID administrator attending the South Korean conference on Tuesday, said Chinese involvement in developing countries should be approached with caution, Yonhap news agency reported.</p> <p>Green said China could offer incentives initially with easy money but the loans could eventually result in unsustainable long-term debt.</p>

	<p>The U.S. government added in such circumstances developing nations will not be able to exercise self-reliance, according to Yonhap.</p> <p>Green also told African delegates in Busan that they have the choice of leading their future and destiny, adding African countries could walk the path of South Korea and transform themselves into economically powerful democracies.</p> <p>Green also pledged U.S. help so African nations could become "self-reliant" and industrialized.</p> <p>China's "One Belt, One Road" initiative includes plans to invest billions of dollars in infrastructure across a global network that includes East Africa.</p> <p>In an editorial published in the South China Morning Post on Tuesday, Hong Kong-based analyst Donald Gasper said the economic network could strengthen trade and economic links between China and the rest of the world at a time when fears of a trade war with the United States has not subsided.</p> <p>The Chinese initiative has stimulated the creation of other economic blocs, including the Eurasian Economic Union in Central Asia.</p> <p>The region is home to the ancient Silk Road, which China has evoked in promoting its economic causes.</p>
<p>Return to Top</p>	

HEADLINE	05/22 Pentagon: nukes central NKorea strategy
SOURCE	http://www.foxnews.com/us/2018/05/22/pentagon-report-nukes-are-central-to-north-korea-strategy.html
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON – A Pentagon report to Congress says North Korea sees nuclear weapons as central to its security, an assessment that would seem to complicate President Donald Trump's effort to persuade the North's dictator, Kim Jong Un, to give them up.</p> <p>The report was delivered to Congress in April, one month after Trump agreed to meet Kim to discuss the North's denuclearization. It was based on the Pentagon's analysis of North Korea's military capabilities and strategies through 2017, when it was widely believed in the U.S. government that Kim had no intention of surrendering his nuclear weapons.</p> <p>Hope for defusing a longstanding nuclear crisis on the Korean peninsula was raised in March when South Korean officials said Kim was open to negotiations over his nuclear weapons and Trump agreed to meet Kim. The outlook has grown cloudier in recent days, and Trump told reporters during an Oval Office appearance Tuesday with South Korean President Moon Jae-in that his planned meeting with Kim on June 12 in Singapore could be delayed.</p> <p>Without referring to the Pentagon report, Trump touched on one of its main points, that the North sees nuclear weapons as a means of ensuring its survival and perpetuating the rule of the Kim family dynasty. Trump was asked by a reporter whether the U.S. would "guarantee the safety" of the Kim regime if it were to relinquish its nuclear weapons.</p> <p>"I will guarantee his safety, yes," Trump said. He did not say how he would do that. "He will be safe. He will be happy. His country will be rich."</p> <p>A copy of the Pentagon report was posted Tuesday by Steven Aftergood on his Secrecy News blog. Later in the day the Pentagon made it available on its website. It was first reported by Bloomberg News.</p> <p>The report offers little suggestion that the Pentagon anticipated a circumstance in which North would consider giving up its nuclear weapons. It says the North ultimately seeks the capability to strike the continental U.S. with a nuclear-armed intercontinental ballistic missile, or ICBM, and that nuclear</p>

	<p>weapons are central to its strategic calculus.</p> <p>"Pyongyang portrays nuclear weapons as its most effective way to deter the threat from the United States," it says. "However, regime propaganda began emphasizing 'final victory' over the United States and Republic of Korea in 2017, suggesting Kim Jong Un has larger ambitions, including use of nuclear weapons to deter interference if it attempts to reunify the Korean Peninsula."</p> <p>The Republic of Korea is the official name of U.S.-allied South Korea.</p> <p>The report called perpetuation of the Kim dynasty the "primary strategic goal" of North Korea.</p> <p>The North's goals and motives have come under closer scrutiny since Kim began a peace offensive this year. He announced in April he was suspending nuclear tests and ICBM launches. Earlier this month North Korea said that it will dismantle its northeastern Punggye-ri nuclear test site between May 23 and 25 in the presence of international media.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	05/22 Venezuela expels top US diplomat
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/venezuelan-president-expels-top-us-diplomat-55357211?cid=clicksource_76_4_article%20roll_articleroll_hed
GIST	<p>President Nicolas Maduro on Tuesday expelled the top U.S. diplomat in Venezuela and his deputy for allegedly conspiring against his government and trying to sabotage the country's recent presidential election.</p> <p>"The empire doesn't dominate us here," Maduro said in a televised address, giving charge d'affaires Todd Robinson and his deputy Brian Naranjo 48 hours to leave the country. "We've had enough of your conspiring."</p> <p>Tensions between the U.S. and Venezuela have mounted following Maduro's victory in presidential elections on Sunday, a vote the White House has branded a "sham."</p> <p>Maduro said in his speech that Robinson and Naranjo, whom he referred to as the head of the CIA in Venezuela, both personally pressured several anti-government presidential aspirants not to compete in the race. Most opposition parties decided to boycott after officials blocked their most popular leaders from competing.</p> <p>Maduro also accused the Trump administration, which toughened financial sanctions on his government Monday, of seeking to escalate "aggressions" against the Venezuelan people.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	05/22 Gas prices nationwide continue rising
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/US/gas-prices-cents-week-52-cents-2017/story?id=55345217
GIST	<p>Leading up to Memorial Day weekend, gas prices nationwide are up 5 cents from last week and are 52 cents higher than a year ago.</p> <p>Regular gasoline in the U.S. on May 21 cost an average of 2.923 cents per gallon, compared with 2.873 cents per gallon on May 14, according to the Energy Information Administration.</p> <p>At a service station in Manhattan, on 11th Avenue and 51st Street, the price for regular gas was about \$5 on Monday, according to ABC New York station WABC.</p> <p>Average per-gallon prices in New York City this week for regular fuel are about \$3, and throughout</p>

	California they're \$3.618, according to the EIA.
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	05/22 India copper plant protest turns violent
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/05/22/asia/india-copper-plant-protest-intl/index.html
GIST	<p>New Delhi (CNN)At least nine protesters were killed Tuesday in clashes with authorities in southern India over a copper smelter that residents argue is causing environmental damage.</p> <p>The demonstrations by local residents and activists have been underway for several months at the Sterlite Copper smelting plant in the port city of Tuticorin in Tamil Nadu state.</p> <p>Protesters have accused the plant, owned by London-based mining giant Vedanta Resources, of polluting groundwater and causing damage to the environment. Vedanta says it adheres to environmental standards and is the subject of "false propaganda," news agency AFP reported.</p> <p>The demonstration escalated after protesters stormed and torched the office of a local administrator who had refused to allow them to hold a rally at the plant, said AFP.</p> <p>Rahul Gandhi, leader of the opposition Indian National Congress party, said the protesters were "gunned down by the police," before criticizing the police action as "state sponsored terrorism" on his Twitter account.</p> <p>A police officer told AFP that attempts by security forces to disperse the 5,000-strong crowd with baton charges and tear gas were to no avail before they opened fire with live ammunition.</p> <p>Following the incident, Edappadi K. Palaniswami, Tamil Nadu chief minister, ordered an inquiry into the circumstances surrounding the shooting but stood by the security force's actions.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	05/22 Uncertainty surrounds NKorea summit
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/05/22/politics/trump-moon-north-korea-white-house/index.html
GIST	<p>Washington (CNN)The historic diplomatic encounter planned for three weeks from now between President Donald Trump and North Korean despot Kim Jong Un appeared in doubt on Tuesday as Trump questioned whether preparations could be completed in time.</p> <p>"There's a very substantial chance that it won't work out," Trump said in the Oval Office, where he was sitting for critical talks with his South Korean counterpart. "That doesn't mean that it won't work out over a period of time, but it may not work out for June 12."</p> <p>It was the clearest indication to date that the audacious summit Trump agreed to in March may be at risk. Last week, North Korea adopted a harsh new tone and threatened to withdraw from the meeting, which is due to occur in Singapore.</p> <p>Trump maintained that preparations were "moving along" for the talks with Kim; indeed, advance teams are surveying hotel ballrooms in Singapore as possible venues. But the President suggested there may not be enough time for the two sides to agree on mutually agreeable parameters.</p> <p>"We'll see what happens," Trump said. "If it doesn't happen, maybe it'll happen later. Maybe it'll happen at a different time. But we are talking."</p> <p>In his meetings Tuesday with South Korean President Moon Jae-in, Trump hoped to gain clarity on North Korea's nuclear intentions. Moon, meanwhile, was hoping to shore up confidence for the Kim meeting,</p>

	<p>which he helped to broker.</p> <p>Some US officials believe Moon oversold Pyongyang's promises when his government relayed Kim's invitation to Trump for talks in March. At the time his envoy said North Korea was "committed to denuclearization," but recent statements from the North have cast doubts on Kim's willingness to negotiate away his nuclear weapons.</p> <p>That, in turn, has led to skepticism the summit between Trump and Kim will proceed. White House aides have grown pessimistic in recent days that the talks will occur, and Trump underscored the uncertainty on Tuesday.</p>
<p>Return to Top</p>	

HEADLINE	05/22 Alabama lunch counter protesters 'cleared'
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/05/22/us/alabama-lunch-counter-sit-in-cleared-state-university-trnd/index.html
GIST	<p>(CNN)A small, shameful part of Alabama's past was put to justice this month when an Alabama legislator cleared the names of 29 Alabama State University students who participated in a lunch counter sit-in in 1960 during the Civil Rights Movement.</p> <p>In addition to expunging the records of the students -- nine of whom were expelled and the rest placed on probation -- Interim State Superintendent of Education Ed Richardson also expunged the records of four faculty members who were disciplined by state officials for being "disloyal" during the same time.</p> <p>In a letter dated May 10, 2018 and addressed to Dr. Quiton Ross, the president of Alabama State University, Richardson called the 1960 disciplinary actions "unjustified and unfair."</p> <p>"They represent a time in the history of the State Board that must be acknowledged and never repeated," he wrote. "...I regret that it has taken 58 years to correct this injustice. I can only hope that this action will provide a modicum of comfort to the people affected."</p> <p>Lunch counter "sit-ins" were a form of non-violent activism that black Americans participated in during the Civil Rights era to protest racial segregation. On February 25, 1960, Alabama State University students participated in such a protest at the Montgomery County Courthouse, and were disciplined days later by the Alabama State Board of Education.</p> <p>Richardson's letter noted that the punishments these students met were "improperly based on a lawful demonstration," and the four faculty members who were either terminated or forced out of their positions were done so with "no due process" and "without a substantial basis."</p>
<p>Return to Top</p>	

Cyber Awareness

[Top of page](#)

HEADLINE	05/22 LifeBridge Health patient data exposed
SOURCE	http://www.baltimoresun.com/health/bs-hs-data-breach-lifebridge-20180522-story.html
GIST	<p>LifeBridge Health has notified 500,000 patients that their personal information may have been exposed in a cyber attack recently discovered by the health system.</p> <p>Indication of an attack was first detected in March and an investigation by a national forensic firm hired by the hospital determined that the data breach took place Sept. 27, 2016. The health system notified patients by letter last week.</p> <p>The attacker accessed the health system's servers through one of its physician practices, LifeBridge</p>

Potomac Professionals. Information potentially taken included names, addresses, birth dates, insurance information and Social Security numbers found in the patient registration and billing system.

LifeBridge has offered credit monitoring to any patients whose Social Security numbers were breached, but said it doesn't believe anyone's information was misused.

"LifeBridge Health and LifeBridge Potomac Professionals (Potomac Physicians) take the protection of health information very seriously," the health system said in a statement. "While we have no reason to believe patient information has been misused in any way, out of an abundance of caution, we are notifying potentially affected patients as well as providing resources for those who have questions or concerns. We sincerely regret any inconvenience or concern that this situation may have caused."

LifeBridge is the latest health system to have its patient data accessed. Experts have said the growing use of electronic medical records may make health systems and hospitals more vulnerable to these attacks.

[Return to](#)

[Top](#)

HEADLINE 05/22 Official: most of Atlanta up and running

SOURCE <http://www.wbrc.com/story/38251590/official-most-of-city-of-atlantas-online-network-back-up-and-running-after-cyberattack>

GIST ATLANTA (CBS46) - We are less than seventy days into the ongoing Atlanta cyberattack and city officials say the crisis finally appears to be just about over.

Most of the city's online network is back up and running, except for the municipal courts and that could be fixed as soon as next week.

"The focus with me and the team was how do we protect the city, how do we get us back up," said Richard Cox.

Chief Operating Officer Richard Cox was on the job all of four days when the news broke that the City of Atlanta was under cyber attack.

"Initially it was around the clock, we literally had teams that were staying here 20-24 hours in some cases. I'll tell you what, personally I got very acquainted with city hall early on and it was because we had to stay around the clock," said Cox.

After being held hostage for two months by ransomware hackers, nearly all of Atlanta's customer service portals have now been restored.

"The expectations were set early on that this is a long-term process and we're finding that to be true; however, I'm really pleased to say save the courts all customer facing applications are now up and we're expecting the courts to be up in the next week or so," said Cox.

The city has reserved nearly \$5 million in emergency funding to fix the vulnerabilities that led to the hack.

"The City of Atlanta is in the best defensive posture we've ever been in and I say defensive because what I've learned is you can't totally secure a network but you can do a really good job of defending it we've learned that municipalities and organizations get attacked on a regular basis so we never claim victory but we feel really good about our progress," said Cox.

And so far, there's no evidence that anyone's personal information has been compromised.

[Return to](#)

[Top](#)

HEADLINE	05/22 New variants found in Spectre, Meltdown
SOURCE	https://www.infosecurity-magazine.com/news/new-variants-found-in-spectre-and/
GIST	<p>Two new variants of the Meltdown and Spectre vulnerabilities that can allow an attacker to gain access to sensitive information have been disclosed, according to a 21 May US-CERT alert.</p> <p>Google and Microsoft announced that the new variants, 3a and 4, known respectively as Meltdown and Spectre, affect the central processing unit (CPU) hardware implementations, making them vulnerable to side-channel attacks.</p> <p>Security researcher for Google Project Zero, Jann Horn, reported the issue after finding a new way to attack microprocessors while testing speculative execution behavior on Intel and AMD processors.</p> <p>US-CERT wrote, "Meltdown is a bug that 'melts' the security boundaries normally enforced by the hardware, affecting desktops, laptops, and cloud computers. Spectre is a flaw that an attacker can exploit to force a CPU to reveal its data."</p> <p>Rob Tate, distinguished security researcher at WhiteHat Security, said, "Once they can get code to run locally on a victim's computer, highly skilled hackers have many tools at their disposal to expand their control and take over the machine. What made Meltdown/Spectre special was its universal nature in both working on many machines and being useful in many different scenarios on a given machine."</p> <p>The vulnerabilities were assigned Common Vulnerability Exposure numbers. Variant 3a, a rogue system register read, was assigned CVE-2018-3640 while Variant 4, known as Speculative Store Bypass (SBB), was assigned CVE-2018-3639. Tate said Variant 4 is being discussed in a fairly narrow scope of accessing specific unpatched browsers' private data.</p> <p>"If an attacker has access to run code on a machine, there are already a number of simpler (and more universal) techniques to try before resorting to this, and it's far from the wide-reaching implications of the original Spectre. So, while patches should be applied when possible, Intel is right to call this a Medium," said Tate.</p> <p>The more commonly useful a vulnerability, the more it helps attackers simplify their process; thus, the easier it becomes for non-skilled hackers to compromise more computers.</p> <p>In an industry where people are trained to expect speed, it's not uncommon to see the vast majority of people choose speed over security, said Renaud Deraison, co-founder and CTO of Tenable. "The speed of the chips inside our personal computers, our tablets and our phones is critical to their performance – everybody knows that."</p> <p>"In this case," continued Deraison, "the vulnerabilities take advantage of the very features that make them fast. Intel optimized for performance and later learned they were facing a trade-off between security and performance."</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	05/23 Facebook chief tells EU lawmakers 'sorry'
SOURCE	https://www.securityweek.com/im-sorry-facebook-boss-tells-european-lawmakers
GIST	<p>Facebook chief Mark Zuckerberg apologized to the European Parliament on Tuesday for the "harm" caused by a huge breach of users' data and by a failure to crack down on fake news.</p> <p>But Zuckerberg's appearance failed to satisfy MEPs who accused him of dodging questions and criticized a format that gave the parliament's political leaders far more time to give long-winded speeches.</p> <p>His livestreamed testimony in Brussels was the latest stop on a tour of apology for the Cambridge Analytica scandal that saw him quizzed for ten hours in the US Congress in April, and will take him to</p>

Paris on Wednesday.

Zuckerberg said that while Facebook has brought in new features to connect people, it had become clear in the last two years that they "haven't done enough to prevent these tools from being used for harm".

"And that goes for fake news, foreign interference in elections or developers misusing people's information. We didn't take a broad enough view of our responsibility," he said in his opening statement.

"That was a mistake, and I'm sorry for it."

The European Parliament invited Zuckerberg in March after Facebook admitted that up to 87 million users may have had their data hijacked by British consultancy firm Cambridge Analytica.

The firm, which was working for US President Donald Trump's 2016 campaign, has since declared bankruptcy.

Zuckerberg originally tried to send a junior executive instead but finally bowed to pressure to appear. However he only agreed for it to be livestreamed on Monday after initially insisting on it being behind closed doors.

Appearing calm and unruffled during the 90-minute hearing, Zuckerberg welcomed the EU's sweeping new personal data protection rules, which come into effect in three days, saying that his website would be "fully compliant".

But some European lawmakers were still unhappy with the format in which Zuckerberg answered questions for only 25 minutes -- half as long as the time it took the parliament's political leaders to get through their long-winded questions.

"Today's pre-cooked format was inappropriate and ensured Zuckerberg could avoid our questions," Guy Verhofstadt, the European Parliament's Liberal leader, tweeted afterwards.

The former Belgian prime minister asked Zuckerberg during the hearing if he wanted to be remembered as a "genius who created a digital monster".

Manfred Weber, the German head of the centre-right European People's Party, the largest group in parliament, said the Facebook chief was "not very convincing" and "did not answer all our questions".

But European Parliament President Antonio Tajani -- who invited Zuckerberg and arranged the meeting -- called Zuckerberg's visit a "success" even if he said his apology was "not enough" and required follow up.

Zuckerberg meanwhile pledged that Facebook would make fresh investments to protect its users in the wake of the scandal -- with many of those in Europe where he plans to have 10,000 employees by the end of the year.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	05/22 TIDAL streaming service reveals breach
SOURCE	https://www.scmagazine.com/jay-zs-tidal-streaming-service-discloses-breach-while-denying-number-fudging-accusations/article/767483/
GIST	<p>In denying accusations that it manipulated its subscriber statistics, Jay-Z-owned music streaming platform TIDAL instead has disclosed a potential data breach, according to various industry reports.</p> <p>The Norwegian financial newspaper Dagens Næringsliv recently reported that the streaming service allegedly misled stakeholders and investors by inflating its streaming and subscriber numbers for Kanye West's "Life of Pablo" and Beyonce's "Lemonade" albums, resulting in millions of false plays and</p>

inequitable royalty payouts. To back up its claims, the report cited a forensic analysis of a hard drive containing internal TIDAL data.

In response, TIDAL CEO Richard Sanders flatly denied the allegations in a company statement and instead focused on the possibility of a breach incident, reported Music Business Worldwide.

“Although we do not typically comment on stories we believe to be false, we feel it is important to make sure that our artists, employees, and subscribers know that we are not taking the security and integrity of our data lightly, and we will not back down from our commitment to them,” said Sanders. “When we learned of a potential data breach we immediately, and aggressively, began pursuing multiple avenues available to uncover what occurred. This included reporting it to proper authorities, pursuing legal action, and proactively taking steps to further strengthen our stringent security measures that are already in place.”

[Return to](#)

[Top](#)

HEADLINE 05/22 Study: legitimate apps used in stalking

SOURCE <https://www.scmagazine.com/researchers-find-abundance-of-legitimate-apps-used-to-stalk-intimate-partners/article/767837/>

GIST Researchers from Cornell Tech, NYU, Technion, Cornell University, and Hunter College conducted what was described as the first large-scale study of apps used by stalkers to track their intimate partners.

“Survivors of intimate partner violence increasingly report that abusers install spyware on devices to track their location, monitor communications, and cause emotional and physical harm,” researchers said in “The Spyware Used in Intimate Partner Violence” report.

Researchers first tried to simulate the activities of someone looking to carry out abusive behaviors and found an abundance of resources including easy to find spyware or simply misusing legitimate apps to stalk victims.

To run this test the researchers ran several Google queries on a small set of terms such as “track my girlfriend's phone without them knowing” and collected information from Google's suggestions from similar searchers to seed further searchers. These searchers returned more than 27,000 URLs revealing a wide variety of resources including blogs reviewing different apps, how-to guides, and news articles about spyware aimed at helping people engage in some form of intimate partner surveillance.

Researchers found 65 percent of these linked to blogs, videos, or question-and-answer forums discussing how to engage in intimate partner surveillance (IPS).

“The blogs describe how to use one or more tools to spy on someone,” the report said. “Example blog post topics include “Read your wife's messages without touching her phone” on a blog linking to mSpy and “These apps can help you catch a cheating spouse” appearing on the NY Post news site.”

These queries also returned 23 functional apps not available on any official app store, several links to apps available on official app stores, and hundreds of spyware apps.

The findings helped highlight that while there are several explicit spyware apps, there are also several dual-use apps which have a legitimate purpose (e.g., child safety or anti-theft) which are easily and effectively repurposed for spying on a partner. Some of the app developers were found to advertise their products' malicious alternative uses in advertisements, blogs, and customer support services.

“Some apps are overtly branded for surreptitious monitoring, like FlexiSpy [2] and mSpy [6],” researchers said in the report. “But survivors and professionals report that other seemingly benign apps, such as family tracking or “Find My Friends” apps [8, 29, 58], are being actively exploited by abusers to perform IPS.”

[Return to](#)

[Top](#)

HEADLINE	05/22 Turla cyberespionage group new tactics
SOURCE	https://www.scmagazine.com/turla-cyberespionage-group-switched-to-open-source-malware/article/767867/
GIST	<p>The Turla cyberespionage group has implemented some new tactics over the last few months incorporating some open-source exploitation tools instead of relying solely on their own creations to run campaigns.</p> <p>ESET researchers found that starting in March the Turla has been leveraging the open-source framework Metasploit to drop the group's proprietary Mosquito backdoor. The group has periodically used open-source hacking tools for other tasks, but ESET believes the group has never before used Metasploit as a first stage backdoor.</p> <p>The reason ESET singled out this change is it believes the information could be useful for those performing incident response on attacks involving Turla</p> <p>The group has not altered its targets, mainly Eastern European embassies, nor its attack methodology, using a compromised Flash installer to drop the malware along with the real Flash Player.</p> <p>The general order the attack follows is the fake Flash installer is accessed by the victim. However, unlike in the past when two malicious DLLs were dropped by Turla, a Metasploit shellcode is executed and then a real version of Flash Player is downloaded from a Google Drive. The final stage has the shellcode download a Meterpreter which gives the malicious actor the ability to control the device and then the Mosquito back door is put in place.</p> <p>Recently, we observed a change in the way in which the final backdoor is dropped. Turla's campaign still relies on a fake Flash installer but, instead of directly dropping the two malicious DLLs, it executes a Metasploit shellcode and drops, or downloads from Google Drive, a legitimate Flash installer. Then, the shellcode downloads a Meterpreter, which is a typical Metasploit payload [6], allowing the attacker to control the compromised machine. Finally, the machine may receive the typical Mosquito backdoor. The figure below summarizes the new process.</p> <p>“Because Metasploit is being used, we might also guess that an operator controls the exploitation process manually. The time frame of the attack was relatively short as the final backdoor was dropped within thirty minutes of the start of the compromise attempt,” the report said.</p>
	<p>Return to</p> <p>Top</p>

HEADLINE	05/22 L.A. County 211 service records exposed
SOURCE	https://www.scmagazine.com/32-million-la-county-211-records-exposed-on-misconfigured-aws-s3-bucket/article/767888/
GIST	<p>The Los Angeles County 211 service left about 3.2 million call records on an exposed AWS server that included a wide variety of personally indefinable information on callers along with the sometimes very personal reason they called looking for help.</p> <p>The data on the server, which was discovered by Upguard, included three million lines of call logs, 200,00 rows of detailed notes on the calls which contain information such as graphic descriptions of elder abuse, child abuse and suicidal distress. All of which was stored in an AWS S3 server misconfigured to be publicly accessible.</p> <p>“These notes describe the reason for the calls, including personally identifying information for people reporting the problem, persons in need, and, where applicable, their reported abusers,” Upguard noted.</p> <p>The LA County 211 service provides information and referrals for all health and human services in LA</p>

	<p>County, according to its website, to include crisis services, domestic violence and those in need of mental health assistance.</p> <p>In additional cases, full names, phone numbers, addresses, and in 33,000 instances of full Social Security numbers were exposed. Making the information even more useful was the fact that it was so well organized with separate categories for all types of problems and situations being labeled and broken out.</p> <p>“Considering the amount of focus that S3 bucket misconfigurations have gotten in recent months, this exposure of sensitive information is simply unjustifiable. At the end of the day, organizations are responsible for ensuring that they implement a continuous compliance and active cloud protection in order to protect personal information and prevent misconfigurations like this from slipping through the cracks,” said Zohar Alon, co-founder and CEO, Dome9, to SC Media.</p> <p>UpGuard discovered the AWS S3 bucket on March 14 and once the researchers realized the sensitive nature of the information that was available it contacted LA County 211. However, it took until April 24 for the proper person to be found and for mitigation efforts to proceed.</p> <p>The information that was compromised was not confined to people seeking help, but several hundred LA County 211 users were also involved. UpGuard noted that hashed passwords for 384 were exposed with 153 of these were actively using the system.</p>
<p>Return to Top</p>	

HEADLINE	05/22 Hackers find BMW cars' vulnerabilities
SOURCE	https://thehackernews.com/2018/05/bmw-smart-car-hacking.html
GIST	<p>Chinese security researchers have discovered more than a dozen vulnerabilities in the onboard compute units of BMW cars, some of which can be exploited remotely to compromise a vehicle.</p> <p>The security flaws have been discovered during a year-long security audit conducted by researchers from Keen Security Lab, a cybersecurity research unit of Chinese firm Tencent, between January 2017 and February 2018.</p> <p>In March 2018, the team responsibly disclosed 14 different vulnerabilities directly to the BMW Group, which affects its vehicles since at least 2012.</p> <p>These are the same group of researchers who have previously found multiple vulnerabilities in various in-car modules used by Tesla, that could have been exploited to achieve remote controls on a target car.</p> <p>Now that BMW started rolling out patches for the vulnerabilities to car owners, the researchers have gone public with a 26-page technical report [PDF] describing their findings, though they avoided publishing some important technical details to prevent abuse.</p> <p>The researchers said a full copy of their research is expected to appear sometime in early 2019, by which the BMW group entirely mitigates against the vulnerabilities.</p> <p>The team of Chinese infosec researchers focused on three critical vehicular components—Infotainment System (or Head Unit), Telematics Control Unit (TCU or T-Box), and Central Gateway Module in several BMW models.</p> <p>Exploiting these vulnerabilities could allow attackers to send arbitrary diagnostic messages to the target vehicle's engine control unit (ECU), which control electrical functions of the car, and to the CAN bus, which is the spinal cord of the vehicle.</p> <p>This would eventually allow miscreants to take complete control over the operation of the affected vehicle to some extent.</p>

[Return to](#)

[Top](#)

HEADLINE	05/22 Pet tracker flaws expose pets, owners
SOURCE	http://www.darkreading.com/endpoint/pet-tracker-flaws-expose-pets-and-their-owners-to-cybercrime/d/d-id/1331866
GIST	<p>In a future where everything is connected, cybercriminals may not need to target you to steal your personal data. They can hack your pets instead.</p> <p>Kaspersky Lab researchers today published the results of a study investigating vulnerabilities in popular pet trackers, which transfer GPS coordinates from pets to owners for safety and location monitoring. The flaws they discovered could let an attacker hack these devices, identify and replace the coordinates of a pet and its owner, and access owners' data.</p> <p>In studying several brands of pet trackers, researchers found: Bluetooth capabilities that don't require authentication, authorization tokens and coordinates that can be stored sans encryption, trackers that don't check server certificates for HTTPS connections, and trackers and apps that allow the installation of false firmware and transmit the name, email, and coordinates of the pet's owner.</p> <p>It's another reason to worry about the implications of poor IoT security. If a hacker can intercept these coordinates, they can identify where a pet or owner is at any given time, learn their daily routines, and over time develop a pattern of owners' and animals' habits.</p>
Return to	
Top	

HEADLINE	05/22 Cybercriminals battle against banks
SOURCE	http://www.darkreading.com/endpoint/cybercriminals-battle-against-banks-incident-response/d/d-id/1331869
GIST	<p>Financial institutions traditionally have established some of the most secure perimeters and defenses against cybercriminals and nation-state actors, but new studies show how they often struggle to detect or quell ongoing attacks that have infiltrated their internal networks.</p> <p>CISOs from major financial firms surveyed and interviewed recently by Carbon Black say they're seeing attackers moving across their networks under the cover of legitimate applications and tools such as Windows PowerShell (89%), Windows Management Interface (59%), and SSH (28%). Those camouflaged, memory-based attacks – aka file less attacks – were used in more than half of successful breaches of the bank networks, according to Carbon Black.</p> <p>In addition to the usual Windows utility suspects, Google Drive, unsigned digital certificates, and legit processes hiding malicious code (aka process hollowing), each were found in about 10% of cases at banks.</p> <p>Leigh-Anne Galloway, cybersecurity resilience lead at Positive Technologies, says these methods work for the bad guys because banks often don't pay close attention to the security of their internal networks. Her firm, which provides penetration testing to banks in Europe and elsewhere, uses legitimate tools in those engagements. "When doing pen tests, we try to act as close as possible to the actions of the attacker - including 'living off the land' - so that the organization can understand how well its internal monitoring tools for attacks like SIEM or SOC work," she says.</p> <p>The pen testers run Mimikatz PowerShell version as well as the "procdump" utility, where they copy operating system memory. "You can extract passwords from this dump on your laptop, which naturally will go unnoticed by the protection systems. Such methods show high efficiency," she says, with the pen testers able to steal passwords from the operating system memory using Mimikatz in 100% of banks they tested.</p>

Persistent attackers aren't backing down when banks detect them and launch their incident response processes, either. One in four bank CISOs in the Carbon Black study say their institution faced attackers fighting back when they got spotted, trying to deter defenses and the investigation into the attack.

"They are leaving wipers or destructive malware to inhibit [IR], deleting logs, and inhibiting the capacity of forensics tools," for example, says Tom Kellermann, chief cybersecurity officer at Carbon Black. "Sometimes they are using DDoS to create smokescreens during events."

These counter-IR activities are forcing banks to be more proactive and aggressive as well, he says. "They need to have threat hunting teams. You can't just rely on telemetry and alerts."

While banks are often relying on their IR playbooks, attackers have the freedom to freelance and counter IR activities. They're changing their malware code on the fly when it gets detected, deleting activity logs to hide their tracks, and even targeting bank security analysts and engineers to help their cause. Carbon Black found in its study that one in ten bank victims say they spotted secondary command-and-control infrastructure set up in their networks – which can make response even more difficult.

Positive Technologies' Galloway says attackers also encrypt their data transmissions over the victim's network, falsify time-stamps in files, and employ file compressors and anti-debugging methods that can thwart discovery of their activity and tools.

While 90% of banks in the Carbon Black survey said they had experienced a ransomware attack threat, Kellermann says another data point appears more ominous: one in ten had spotted destructive attacks that were not ransomware-related. "I think that's going to grow," he says, as attack groups use destructive malware such as data-wipers to "burn the house down" on their way out for cover or to send a message.

"The real dangers to financial institutions isn't just dealing with identity fraud and wire fraud," Kellermann says.

[Return to](#)

[Top](#)

HEADLINE	05/23 FBI inflated encryption case figures
SOURCE	https://www.zdnet.com/article/fbi-inflated-encrypted-phone-figures-misleading-public/
GIST	<p>Contrary to what the FBI told the public, we now know that instead of 7,775 encrypted smartphones proving stumbling blocks to FBI criminal investigations, there are no more than 2,000.</p> <p>Over the last seven months, FBI Director Christopher Wray claimed that the agency couldn't access the content of 7,775 devices in 2017 -- more than half of all the smartphones it tried to crack -- despite having a search warrant.</p> <p>Wray called this a "major public safety issue", and used it to push a "responsible encryption" mantra -- in other words, encryption backdoors.</p> <p>The FBI denied ZDNet's request for information on these phones. The bureau said the information was exempt from disclosure, as the records "could reasonably be expected to interfere with enforcement proceedings."</p> <p>Internally though the FBI knew they miscounted the devices as of a month ago. The bureau still doesn't have an accurate count of how many encrypted phones it has from last year.</p> <p>This miscount arose from the use of three different databases to track the phones. This led to some phones being counted multiple times.</p> <p>This "mistake" came as no surprise to the Electronic Frontier Foundation (EFF). Andrew Crocker of the EFF wrote, "Frankly, we're not surprised. FBI Director Christopher Wray and others argue that law</p>

enforcement needs some sort of backdoor 'exceptional access' in order to deal with the increased adoption of encryption, particularly on mobile devices."

Kevin Bankston, Director of New America's Open Technology Institute, added, "For years, the FBI has been pushing for backdoors into encrypted mobile devices based on broad claims that law enforcement is 'going dark', even as practically every expert outside of law enforcement has made clear that doing so would seriously undermine our cybersecurity, our digital privacy, and our tech economy. Now, it turns out that the FBI's claims were based on bad math and the problem is only a small fraction of what we were originally told making it all the more clear that Congress should refuse the FBI's call for legislation that would undermine the security of our smartphones."

Still, the FBI maintains, "Going Dark," the agency's term for criminals using encryption to evade justice, "remains a serious problem for the FBI, as well as other federal, state, local and international law enforcement partners."

And, so the battle between law enforcement and personal privacy over encryption continues.

[Return to](#)

[Top](#)

HEADLINE	05/22 FBI mum on encryption investigations
SOURCE	https://www.zdnet.com/article/fbi-refuse-to-say-investigations-hampered-by-encryption/
GIST	<p>The FBI said thousands of encrypted phones are hindering its investigations, but the agency is refusing to back up its claims.</p> <p>For years, the agency said that encryption helps criminals evade justice because investigators and prosecutors are locked out from accessing intelligence that they say can help convictions. The agency calls this "going dark," and it has for years argued that tech companies should undermine encryption by installing backdoors that give police access, much to the chagrin of experts.</p> <p>The FBI will occasionally say how many phones and devices it can't unlock. At the last count earlier this year, it was 7,775 encrypted devices -- a reportedly inflated figure.</p> <p>But the FBI has never said how many investigations suffer as a result. In doing so, the agency would quantify the scale of the "going dark" problem.</p> <p>ZDNet filed a request under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) to find out.</p> <p>In a letter Monday, the FBI denied the request, saying the information was exempt from disclosure, as the records "could reasonably be expected to interfere with enforcement proceedings."</p> <p>The FBI also would not say if the records do or do not exist.</p> <p>"It's worthless to know that the FBI can't get into any number of phones if 99 percent of those phones weren't important to making their case," said Robyn Greene, policy counsel and government affairs lead at New America's Open Technology Institute, told ZDNet.</p> <p>"Members of Congress who are buying what the FBI is selling are just taking it on faith that there's actually a problem -- even the FBI doesn't know its extent, if there is one at all," she said.</p>
Return to	
Top	

HEADLINE	05/22 Microsoft to block Flash in Office 365
SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/microsoft/microsoft-to-block-flash-in-office-365/
GIST	Microsoft announced plans last week to block Flash, Shockwave, and Silverlight content from activating

in Office 365.

The block will only apply to Office 365 subscription clients, but not to Office 2016, Office 2013, or Office 2010 distributions, the company said.

This is a full-on block, and not just Microsoft disabling problematic controls with the option to click on a button and view its content. The block means that Office 365 will prevent Flash, Shockwave, or Silverlight content from playing inside Office documents altogether.

Only Flash, Shockwave, and Silverlight content embedded with the "Insert Object" feature are blocked, but not those embedded via "Insert Online Video."

The difference is that the former uses Microsoft's OLE (Object Linking and Embedding) technology, while the latter embed content via an Internet Explorer browser frame.

Microsoft cited different reasons for taking this decision. It said that malware authors have abused this mechanism for exploit campaigns, but also that Office users rarely used these features anyway.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	05/22 Fined for forgetting webserver for 12yrs
SOURCE	https://nakedsecurity.sophos.com/2018/05/22/server-what-server-site-forgotten-for-12-years-attracts-hacks-fines/
GIST	<p>A web server set up by an enterprising student for a conference in 2004 and then forgotten about has left the University of Greenwich nursing a £120,000 (\$160,000) fine from Britain's Information Commissioner (ICO).</p> <p>Forgetting about a web server isn't generally a good idea, but this was a particularly dangerous oversight because it had been linked to a database containing the personal data of 19,500 University staff, students, alumni, and conference attendees.</p> <p>The data also included more intimate personal data of 3,500 people covering learning difficulties, staff sickness, food allergies, and extenuating circumstances put forward by students during their studies.</p> <p>You can probably guess where this is heading – eventually cybercriminals chanced upon the forgotten server and did their worst.</p> <p>The initial breach is thought to have occurred in 2013, before it was broken into several times during 2016 with the help of an SQL flaw and some uploaded PHP exploits that opened the way to the databases holding the good stuff.</p> <p>Eventually, one of the attackers posted the data to Pastebin in January 2016, at which point the breach became public knowledge.</p> <p>What went wrong? That's the unsettling bit because on one level – at least from the perspective of 2004 – not much.</p> <p>The University's Computing and Maths School (CMS) had held a training conference and one of the academics involved asked a student to build a web microsite. The site included a facility for conference academics to upload documents anonymously via URL, something that attackers would eventually use to their advantage.</p> <p>Nobody remembered (or had the job of) shutting this down once the conference had finished and so it sat there for years as new vulnerabilities were discovered, patches were applied, skills were improved on all sides and attacks on web servers became everyday occurrences.</p>

	<p>How it was forgotten about is not clear, but anyone working in IT will be familiar with the cold-sweat-inducing spectre of shadow IT. A lack of processes for managing servers not within the IT department and the fact that the University later reorganised itself into new faculties were probably contributing factors.</p> <p>Of course, something as risky as a server connected to a database should never be left in the hands of a single person whose job doesn't also include securing it.</p> <p>Perhaps the biggest error wasn't that the server was forgotten about but that this simple error went unnoticed for an extraordinary 12 years.</p> <p>That implies that nobody was proactively assessing security – because if the criminals were able to find the microsite, surely the University could have too.</p>
<p>Return to Top</p>	

HEADLINE	05/21 Malicious PHP script infects 5,000 sites
SOURCE	https://threatpost.com/malicious-php-script-infects-2400-websites-in-the-past-week/132161/
GIST	<p>A botnet dubbed Brain Food is giving webmasters indigestion with related attacks that push bogus diet pills and IQ-boosting pills via web pages hosted on legitimate sites. So far, spammers have been successful, thanks to an effective Hypertext Preprocessor (PHP) script (also called Brain Food) that has adroitly avoided detection on websites hosting the pitches.</p> <p>Over the past four months, researchers at Proofpoint said they have tracked 5,000 Brain Food compromised websites. In a post outlining its research Friday, Proofpoint said 2,400 of those compromised sites have been active over the past seven days pushing dubious pills under the false premise the product claims made were originally on television shows Shark Tank and on identified as Entertainment Today.</p> <p>“While this botnet is small compared to other spam sending infrastructure, the size of this botnet is sufficient to provide the operators with easily reconfigured redirects,” wrote Kevin Epstein, VP Threat Operations, at Proofpoint in an email interview with Threatpost.</p> <p>Domain registrar and hosting firm GoDaddy has been disproportionately impacted by the Brain Food script, accounting for 40 percent of the 5,000 compromised sites. That’s followed by hosting firms DreamHost, UnitedLayer and CyrusOne.</p> <p>“An individual website may contain multiple copies of the PHP script. We have observed this script installed on websites using different content management systems including WordPress and Joomla,” researchers wrote.</p> <p>The body of the message contained a URL shortener link using Google’s goog.gl and bit.ly. Spammers had been blocked by Google’s URL shortener service when Google stopped allowing anonymous users from creating goo.gl links. “By the end of April, the spammer appears to have found a means of circumventing the Google restrictions,” wrote researchers.</p> <p>Recipients who click on the link are redirected to the compromised website that hosts the diet or intelligence-boosting pill pitch.</p>
<p>Return to Top</p>	

HEADLINE	05/22 Amazon facial recognition tools for police
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-switch/wp/2018/05/22/amazon-is-selling-facial-recognition-to-law-enforcement-for-a-fistful-of-dollars/?utm_term=.5bcda94d1520
GIST	Amazon has been providing facial recognition tools to law enforcement agencies in Oregon and Orlando

for only a few dollars a month, according to documents obtained by American Civil Liberties Union of Northern California, paving the way for a rollout of technology that is causing concern among civil rights groups.

Amazon is providing the technology, known as Rekognition, as well as consulting services, according to the documents, which the ACLU obtained through a Freedom of Information Act request. The cities adopted the technology without prior public discussion, the documents reveal.

A coalition of civil rights groups, in a letter released Tuesday, called on Amazon to stop selling the program to law enforcement because it could prop up surveillance of vulnerable communities.

“We demand that Amazon stop powering a government surveillance infrastructure that poses a grave threat to customers and communities across the country,” the groups wrote in the letter.

Amazon spokeswoman Nina Lindsey did not address the concerns of civil rights groups. “Amazon requires that customers comply with the law and be responsible when they use AWS services,” she said, referring to Amazon Web Services, the company’s cloud software division that houses the facial recognition program. “When we find that AWS services are being abused by a customer, we suspend that customer’s right to use our services.”

She said that the technology has many useful purposes, and that customers have used it to find abducted people and amusement parks have used the program to find lost children. During the royal wedding this past weekend, clients used Rekognition to identify wedding attendees, she said. (Amazon founder Jeffrey P. Bezos is the owner of The Washington Post.)

The details about Amazon’s program illustrate the sprawl of cutting-edge technologies deep into American society — often without public vetting or debate. Axon, the maker of Taser electroshock weapons and the wearable body cameras for police, has voiced interest in pursuing face recognition for its body-worn cameras, prompting a similar backlash from civil rights groups. Hundreds of Google employees protested last month to demand that the company stop providing artificial intelligence to the Pentagon to help analyze drone footage.

Amazon publicly introduced Rekognition in November 2016, with the promise that its clients could benefit from artificial intelligence technology developed by the company’s scientists to analyze billions of images and videos daily. Marketers could use the image recognition software to recognize celebrities in their videos, while owners of dating apps could use the program to identify unwanted suggestive or explicit content, according to the company’s website.

“Once powerful surveillance systems like these are built and deployed, the harm can’t be undone. We’re talking about a technology that will supercharge surveillance in our communities,” said Nicole Ozer, Technology and Civil Liberties Director for the ACLU of Northern California. She said the technology could be used “to track protesters, target immigrants, and spy on entire neighborhoods.”

The documents provide a detailed look at how Amazon is marketing Rekognition. It can identify up to 100 people in a crowd, the documents said.

The sheriff’s office of Washington County, Ore., built a database of 300,000 mug shots of suspected criminals that officers could have Rekognition scan against footage of potential suspects in real-time. The footage could come from police body cameras and public and private cameras. The county pays Amazon between \$6 and \$12 a month for the service, a county spokesman said.

According to the documents, Amazon asked the county to tout its experience with Rekognition to other public sector customers, including a manufacturer of body cameras.

Deputy Jeff Talbot, public information officer for the Washington County Sheriff’s Office, said the program was not operating in the shadows and had been the subject of several news local stories. He

pointed out that jail booking photos are already public and that the software simply allows officers to scan them instantaneously and in real-time, and compare them against footage of actual suspects, which is a valuable contribution to public safety. “Our goal is to inform the public about the work we’re doing to solve crimes. It is not mass surveillance or untargeted surveillance.”

He could not say how many crimes the program had helped solve and added that the software wasn’t always accurate. But he said officers were trained not to rely exclusively on the software to make decisions, and it was just an additional tool in the officer’s tool kit. For the cheap price Amazon was offering, he said it made sense to test out the service.

Zahra Billoo, executive director of the Council on American-Islamic Relations San Francisco Bay area office, one of the groups that signed the letter, said many people who are booked into jail are not always charged with a crime or are proved innocent. She said that she worried that people’s civil rights are violated when law enforcement keeps their images in a database even after they are proved innocent or were never charged. She said Amazon was contributing to these violations by making it easier to scan people’s faces, repeatedly exposing them to surveillance.

In addition to the ACLU, the coalition of about 40 groups included Color of Change, Harvard Law Criminal Justice Institute, Human Rights Watch, Muslim Advocates and the Electronic Frontier Foundation.

Amazon is one of many companies selling artificial intelligence tools such as facial recognition and image-scanning to business clients. Microsoft offers a rival service, called Facial Recognition API. A crop of start-ups market the ability to scan the emotions on people’s faces as they walk in and out of stores. Such technology has been touted as a way to prevent shoplifting.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	05/22 Mount Rainier to get cell service soon
SOURCE	http://q13fox.com/2018/05/22/mount-rainier-national-park-to-get-cellular-service-soon/
GIST	<p>SEATTLE (AP) — Cellular service will soon be available in Mount Rainier National Park after the National Park Service granted permits to two wireless carriers to install equipment at the park’s heavily used visitor center.</p> <p>The park service said Tuesday it approved permits to Verizon Wireless and T-Mobile to protect visitor and employee safety and to improve communications in the Paradise area, on the south slope of Mount Rainier, located about 100 miles southeast of Seattle.</p> <p>There are currently no cellular installations in the park. It’s not clear yet when service would be activated, officials said.</p> <p>Park officials said no towers would be built so the area’s scenery will be preserved. The companies’ equipment would be located in the attic, below the roofline, of the Jackson Memorial Visitor Center. The equipment will be enclosed behind wall panels on the gable ends of the building.</p> <p>Cell service will be strongest in the Paradise area, which saw about one million visitors last year. But cell signals may extend into wilderness areas “to a limited extent,” park officials said.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	05/23 Wyoming lures latest tech craze
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/Technology/wireStory/wyoming-makes-rush-hyped-tech-results-virtual-55373297?
GIST	Block Chain Gang LLC, Crypto Cowboy, Something Something Blockchain LLC: Based on the names of

dozens of new companies registering to set up shop in Wyoming, the state's effort to lure the latest tech craze appears to be paying off.

Proponents say blockchain — the ledger where transactions of digital currencies, like bitcoin, are recorded — could be the kick in the pants Wyoming needs to attract tech businesses and diversify its economy beyond fossil fuels.

As for how many of these new businesses will get off the ground in Wyoming or anywhere else, time will tell. So far, only a small fraction of them exist as more than electronic paperwork.

Wyoming is willing to find out. In March, Gov. Matt Mead signed four blockchain-friendly bills that arguably make the least-populated state friendlier to the technology than any other.

One new law exempts certain types of blockchain tokens, or cryptocurrencies issued to people who invest in tech startups, from state securities laws.

Another allows businesses incorporated in Wyoming to use blockchain for record-keeping, promising easier and more accurate files on transactions and shareholders. The other two facilitate cryptocurrency trading and exempt cryptocurrency from property tax — a measure more symbolic than anything because Wyoming doesn't have property taxes.

"If you can grab that tiger by the tail, your advantage over other states is tremendous," said state Rep. Tyler Lindholm, a Republican rancher and electrician who sponsored the bills.

The stakes are high as Wyoming struggles with low prices for oil and natural gas and weak demand for coal. The fossil fuels account for 20 percent of Wyoming's economy, more than any other state, and the industry's recent weakness has saddled the state with a \$500 million deficit.

Other states hoping to lure tech companies with blockchain-friendly laws include Arizona and Tennessee, which also will now let businesses use blockchain for record-keeping.

One potential problem in Wyoming: Under the U.S. Constitution's supremacy clause, blockchain tokens sooner or later are likely to be regulated by federal law and the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission, which take precedence over state securities laws and regulations.

"It's taking a sort of pro-business stance, which is great in some respects," Clyde Tinnen, a blockchain attorney with the Withers Bergman law firm in New York, said of the state incentives. "The tricky part is that as a result of the supremacy clause, it may not be as beneficial as they hope."

In Cheyenne, cheap electricity and cool weather would seem ideal for bitcoin mining, the complex computations on warehouses of servers that make the cryptocurrency work in exchange for a share of its value. The city is home to a small tech business park with a Microsoft data center and supercomputer dedicated to earth sciences.

But so far at least, bitcoin miners are setting up in Montana, not Wyoming. And Cheyenne has a long way to go to catch up to the Rocky Mountain region's undisputed tech capital, Denver, where the economy is booming and construction cranes bristle the skyline.

A few bitcoin miners have asked about Wyoming's new blockchain laws, but nothing major has come of the legislation just yet, said Ron Gullberg, business development director for the Wyoming Business Council, the state's economic development agency.

"There could be opportunities for developers to come to Wyoming. So we're doing a lot of research and a lot networking and studying up on it," Gullberg said.

Still, optimism about blockchain abounds.

[Return to](#)

[Top](#)

Terror Conditions

[Top of page](#)

HEADLINE	05/22 Report: baby powder helps fund ISIS
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/article/us-afghanistan-mining/baby-powder-helping-fund-islamic-state-in-afghanistan-report-idUSKCN1IN25N
GIST	<p>KABUL (Reuters) - Islamic State fighters in Afghanistan are making hundreds of thousands of dollars a year from illegal mining of talc, much of which ends up in the United States and Europe, advocacy group Global Witness reported on Tuesday.</p> <p>About 500,000 tonnes of talc, used in products ranging from paint to baby powder, were exported from Afghanistan in the year to March, according to Afghan mining ministry figures cited in the group's report.</p> <p>Almost all went to Pakistan, where much of it is re-exported. Pakistan provides more than a third of U.S. imports of talc and much also ends up in the European Union, it said.</p> <p>"Unwitting American and European consumers are inadvertently helping fund extremist groups in Afghanistan," Nick Donovan, Campaign Director at Global Witness, said in a statement, calling for stronger checks on imports.</p> <p>Illegal mining of gemstones and minerals such as lapis lazuli is a major source of revenue for Taliban insurgents and the report said Islamic State was fighting for control of mines in Nangarhar, the province where it has its stronghold.</p> <p>Nangarhar, on the border with Pakistan, has large deposits of talc as well as minerals such as chromite and marble, and sits on major smuggling routes used for drugs and other contraband.</p> <p>The report quoted a senior Islamic State militant commander as saying that wresting control of mining assets from other armed groups in Nangarhar was a priority: "The mines are in the hands of the mafia ... At any price we will take the mines."</p> <p>Security officials in Afghanistan have long been concerned about the uncontrolled traffic in Nangarhar of commodities like talc and chromite, which the Global Witness report said "may be the least glamorous of conflict minerals".</p> <p>It said that while it was difficult to estimate the value of the trade to Islamic State, revenue from mining in Nangarhar could amount "anywhere from the high tens of thousands to the low millions of dollars a year". Somewhere in the hundreds of thousands was a plausible mid-range estimate, it added.</p> <p>The sum did not appear very high, it said, but the U.S. military estimated the strength of Islamic State in Nangarhar at somewhere between 750 to 2,000 fighters, meaning the funds would be a significant source of revenue to the movement.</p> <p>An Afghan mining ministry spokesman said a special committee had already been established to coordinate approaches to the issue with security and intelligence services. The ministry planned a news conference this week to address some of the specific issues raised in the report.</p>
Return to	
Top	

HEADLINE	05/22 B.C. man facing deportation claims PTSD
SOURCE	http://nationalpost.com/news/canada/man-facing-deportation-from-canada-says-terror-accusation-resulted-in-ptsd

VANCOUVER — A British Columbia man who faces deportation over his Facebook posts allegedly promoting terrorist attacks in the name of the Islamic State group says he is suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder due to false accusations.

Othman Hamdan was acquitted of terrorism-related charges by a B.C. Supreme Court judge last September but immigration authorities arrested him and have determined at multiple detention reviews that he poses a danger to the public.

On Tuesday, Hamdan told a hearing of the Immigration and Refugee Board that he was living a peaceful life in Fort St. John when he was arrested for allegedly calling for lone wolf attacks through Facebook.

“I was found innocent from all of these false accusations but I’m still being incarcerated,” he said, adding he has received about eight months of therapy from a psychologist.

He said his arrest following his acquittal made him relive the experience of the prosecution “over and over again,” to the point that it has undone the therapy that allowed him to manage his symptoms.

“Please forgive me if I show some of these symptoms, like agitation,” Hamdan said.

Hamdan is a Jordanian national who said he moved to the United States to study electrical engineering but faced discrimination after the 9/11 terrorist attacks, prompting him to move to the Vancouver area in July 2002.

He told the hearing he had several Facebook accounts, including those using an old family moniker and the first name Adam because it was easier for westerners to pronounce.

Hamdan said his posts initially included poetry and were accessible to friends and family but as he began criticizing Islamic clergy for their hypocrisy, along with the Muslim Brotherhood and governments beyond the Middle East, he gained thousands of followers with whom he debated religion and politics.

“I went from a nobody to a somebody who had thousands of followers,” he said.

He said his posts of political satire and support for people struggling through the Arab Spring that started in Tunisia in 2010 and spread to other Middle Eastern countries invited activists who could also post to his timeline.

Eighty-five posts were called into question during the trial but a judge concluded they may have been offensive to some people but did not constitute terrorism.

Hamdan has repeatedly cited his acquittal at detention review hearings that have been held every 30 days since his incarceration. The Immigration and Refugee Board said the security allegations it reviews involve a different standard of proof.

He told the hearing that posts suggesting Canada had weak infrastructure, including a dam in Revelstoke, B.C., were merely meant to contrast different attitudes to infrastructure compared with the Middle East.

The RCMP’s investigation did not capture entire transcripts of many posts including those about the Islamic State group, so much of what he said to a growing group of activists is being taken out of context, Hamdan added.

In response to his lawyer, Peter Edelmann, Hamdan said he was not doing any research on any infrastructure in Canada.

The Immigration and Refugee Board has said at previous detention hearings that many of Hamdan’s posts would likely encourage violence against Canadians.

HEADLINE	05/23 Syria rejects US demand Iran withdrawal
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/0ad489c52ae44f4a8aa31e4643d7276f/Syrian-official-rejects-US-demand-for-Iranian-withdrawal
GIST	<p>MOSCOW (AP) — Syria has dismissed American calls for the withdrawal of Iranian troops and the Lebanese militant group Hezbollah from the war-torn country.</p> <p>Syrian Deputy Foreign Minister Faisal Mikdad told Russia’s Sputnik news agency “this topic is not even on the agenda of discussion, since it concerns the sovereignty of Syria.”</p> <p>U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo issued a list of demands this week for a new nuclear deal with Iran, including the pullout of its forces from Syria, where they have provided crucial support to President Bashar Assad’s government. Russia is also a key ally of Assad, and has been waging an air campaign in Syria since 2015.</p> <p>Mikdad said in Wednesday’s remarks that Syria “highly appreciates” Russia’s military support as well as advisers from Iran and Hezbollah.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	05/22 Indonesia: terror suspects killed in raids
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/indonesian-police-kill-14-terror-suspects-in-crackdown-following-suicide-bombings-1526994293
GIST	<p>JAKARTA, Indonesia—Indonesian police say they have killed 14 terrorist suspects and arrested 60 others in a crackdown following deadly suicide bombings last week linked to Islamic State.</p> <p>Police Chief Tito Karnavian told reporters Tuesday that officers killed suspects who resisted arrest during raids that he said took place primarily on Indonesia’s main island of Java and on the neighboring island of Sumatra. Police discovered bombs ready for use and bomb-making materials, he said.</p> <p>Authorities have been mounting a response to the recent attacks, including by greenlighting the military’s involvement in counterterrorism operations and expediting a new law to vastly expand police power to detain suspects. Parliament could vote on the law as early as Friday.</p> <p>The terrorist attacks killed at least 14 civilians or security personnel in the world’s most-populous Muslim-majority nation.</p> <p>On May 13, a family of suicide bombers detonated explosives at three churches in Surabaya, in eastern Java. Over the next two days, a second family detonated crude bombs at the city’s police headquarters, and militants attacked another police post on Sumatra.</p> <p>Islamic State, the Mideast-based terror group, claimed responsibility for the attacks. Police have linked the violence to the group’s lead supporter in Indonesia, an imprisoned Islamist cleric who currently is standing trial for inciting Muslims to wage attacks.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	05/22 Blast rocks Afghan city Kandahar
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/article/us-afghanistan-blast/heavy-casualties-as-blast-rocks-afghan-city-of-kandahar-idUSKCN1IN0W1
GIST	<p>KANDAHAR, Afghanistan (Reuters) - A blast in the southern Afghan city of Kandahar on Tuesday caused dozens of casualties, officials said, as fighting across the country showed no sign of easing off</p>

	<p>during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan.</p> <p>There was some confusion about the cause of the Kandahar explosion, which sent a huge cloud of dust and smoke into the air. Officials initially said it was caused by a bomb packed into a minibus but later said the explosives were in two containers stored in an area of mechanics workshops.</p> <p>Nematullah Barak, a head of the Mirwais hospital in Kandahar, said 16 dead and 38 wounded, including several children, had been brought in but the final total could be higher as ambulances were still at the scene.</p> <p>The NDS intelligence service said in a statement the explosives were discovered in a large open yard of workshops but went off before they could be defused.</p> <p>Kandahar province, on the border with Pakistan, is a major center of opium cultivation and a stronghold of the Taliban but the city has recently been relatively secure.</p> <p>Tuesday's explosion came as the Taliban pushed ahead with their spring offensive, launched last month, with fighting in several areas of the country.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	05/23 ISIS claims deadly bombing Libya
SOURCE	http://www.foxnews.com/world/2018/05/23/islamic-state-claims-bombing-in-libya-that-killed-2.html
GIST	<p>CAIRO – The Islamic State group has claimed responsibility for a car bombing at a checkpoint in eastern Libya that killed at least two security personnel.</p> <p>Libyan officials said Tuesday's attack, which left two others wounded, took place at the southern entrance of Ajdabiya, west of Benghazi.</p> <p>The town is controlled by the self-styled Libyan National Army, led by Field Marshal Khalifa Hifter, which forced Islamic militants out in 2016.</p> <p>The officials say militants attacked another checkpoint in the northeastern town of Awjila, kidnapping a police officer. IS also claimed that attack.</p> <p>Libya descended into chaos after the 2011 uprising that toppled dictator Moammar Gadhafi. The country is currently split between governments in the east and west, each of which relies on an array of militia.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	05/23 Attacks on Afghan security forces kill 5
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/attacks-afghan-security-forces-kill-55373758?
GIST	<p>Afghan officials say insurgents have killed five people, including two police and a tribal leader, in two separate attacks.</p> <p>Abdul Aziz Beg, the head of the provincial council in the western Badghis province, says militants attacked a checkpoint, killing two police and wounding four others. He says another four police were missing after the attack early Wednesday. It was not clear who was behind the attack.</p> <p>In the central Ghor province, the Taliban killed three people, including a tribal leader, in an attack on a district police headquarters.</p> <p>Police spokesman Iqbal Nezami says security forces repelled the attack late Tuesday.</p>

	The Taliban have stepped up attacks across the country since announcing their annual spring offensive last month.
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	05/23 Philippines still struggles w/Marawi siege
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/philippines-struggles-evacuees-bombed-city-siege-55373757?
GIST	<p>Philippine officials say hundreds of displaced remain in emergency shelters as the threat of militants and unexploded bombs lingers in the ruins of a southern city that was held by Islamic State group-aligned fighters for five months last year.</p> <p>The Rev. Teresito Soganub, who survived 117 days of captivity by the extremists in Marawi city, said Wednesday it will take years for him and others to overcome the horror of having lived through airstrikes and gunbattles that constantly threatened them.</p> <p>The May 23 siege that troops crushed in October killed more than 1,100 mostly militants, sparked President Rodrigo Duterte's most serious crisis and reinforced Asia's fears that the Islamic State group is gaining a foothold in the region.</p>
Return to Top	

Suspicious, Unusual

[Top of page](#)

HEADLINE	05/22 Conspiracy theorist claims WSFC files
SOURCE	https://thinkprogress.org/alex-jones-thinks-these-documents-prove-the-cia-is-making-you-itchy-they-dont-897e9aa98140/
GIST	<p>It was the kind of clerical error that happens all the time, if with a twist. Last September, reporter Curtis Waltman filed a Freedom of Information Act, or FOIA, request with the Washington State Fusion Center for law enforcement documents about anti-fascist activists and various right-wing and white-supremacist groups.</p> <p>Waltman got back the emails and intelligence briefings he was expecting, he wrote last month. But there was something he didn't expect: documents claiming the government uses "psycho-electronic weapons" and "remote brain mapping" to control people's minds, give them unexplained physical symptoms, and, well...make their feet itchy. One of the documents among these unexpected surprises even included a literal black helicopter.</p> <p>This odd tranche of materials obviously weren't law enforcement records, and their inclusion seemed like a harmless mistake on the part of the Fusion Center. Waltman wrote a story about the documents for the public-records focused news site MuckRock, which subsequently got picked up by Popular Mechanics. But the mix-up ended up being an inside joke among FOIA nerds.</p> <p>Then Alex Jones found them.</p> <p>"I reported on this 20 years ago with Dr Nick Begich," Jones said. "The exact patented documents just not from the CIA."</p> <p>The Infowars host and conspiracy-theorist-in-chief retweeted himself Tuesday, obviously, ensuring the Washington State Fusion Center's FOIA follies got a second turn in the news cycle.</p> <p>This reporter, no stranger to the CIA, decided to get to the bottom of things. Now, after another FOIA request with the Washington State Fusion Center and a short — by public-records-request standards —</p>

	<p>one-month wait, the answers are in.</p> <p>The government, and the CIA in particular, has certainly experimented with mind control before on unwitting subjects. But don't worry — the government probably isn't using satellite dishes to control your thoughts.</p> <p>Back in January of last year, a member of the public apparently sent an email to the Fusion Center with these “psycho-electronic weapons” documents attached. The body of this email, released to ThinkProgress after making a FOIA request of its own, featured an article about John Akwei, who sued the U.S. National Security Agency in 1992 over a host of allegations — including harassment, attempted poisoning, and mind control — by former high school classmates who supposedly worked at the agency.</p> <p>Judge Stanley Sporkin dismissed Akwei's case less than a month later, calling the claims “frivolous” and saying the suit didn't state “any identifiable legal cause of action.”</p> <p>Another email released to ThinkProgress in response to its FOIA request makes it clear the Fusion Center didn't intend to release these conspiratorial documents to Waltman. Records officers are among some of the most overworked and under-appreciated people in government, and this was an honest mistake.</p>
<p>Return to Top</p>	

HEADLINE	05/22 'Cancer house'? Seattle Fire Station 31
SOURCE	https://crosscut.com/2018/05/cancer-house-mysterious-case-seattle-fire-station-31
GIST	<p>It might be easier if they knew for sure, but for now the firefighters of Station 31 can only suspect they're being poisoned.</p> <p>Blocks from Aurora Avenue in North Seattle, their aging station is among the city's busiest — making it a “young man's game,” quip several of the people posted there.</p> <p>But if the work is for the youthful, a sense of mortality among the firefighters who live and work in the cramped quarters is never far off. And not because of fires or explosions — this is not Seattle's fictional “Station 19” — but something slower moving: cancer.</p> <p>The strange case of Station 31 was supposed to be closed. In the early 2000s, firefighters rang alarm bells about the number of people who worked in the North Seattle location and had gotten sick — as many as 25 in the immediately preceding years, Seattle Weekly reported at the time. A state Department of Health study concluded that, between when the station opened in 1975 and 2003, 119 of its resident firefighters became sick with cancer.</p> <p>The story ballooned as the firefighters demanded an investigation into the root of the problem and accused then-mayor Greg Nickels of resisting. At one point, Station 31 Capt. Bruce Amer threatened to pitch a tent city outside the station in protest.</p> <p>After years of back and forth, an environment consultant agency hired by the city concluded in a 2006 report, “The building as a whole appears safe for general occupancy.”</p> <p>For the mayor and the general public, the conclusion seemed to cap the controversy and the issue largely disappeared.</p> <p>But for members of the Seattle Fire Department, Station 31 has never shed its reputation as an unsafe place to work. In the years since the building was declared harmless, more current and former firefighters from the station have become ill. How many, no one can say; the accounting is anecdotal. But Capt. Mike Gagliano said in just the last year, three have gotten sick. To this day, it's still known as the “Cancer House.”</p>

As Capt. Duncan Jewell put it, “When it’s a bunch of people you know, it feels like a lot.”

Combined with the high call volume and stripped-down amenities, the fear of Station 31 is strong enough, said Gagliano, that convincing department employees to come and stay there can be a challenge. “People who have been here for a year rotate out,” he said, occasionally telling him because they fear getting sick.

So, nearly 20 years after the issue was first raised, the Seattle Fire Department is revisiting the trend — real or perceived. Last month, Chief Harold Scoggins signed off on a comprehensive comparison between Station 31 employees and the rest of Seattle Fire Department dating back to the early 1970s. The department is partnering with the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center and spending about \$400,000 on the study.

Cancer haunts all firefighters, not just those in Station 31. Inside burning buildings, the heat opens a person’s pores by as much as 400 percent for every 5 degree temperature increase, which means gasses and chemicals that fill the enclosed space can find their way around respirators and into the skin. When fire-resistant materials — found in such things as baby mattresses — do catch flame, the chemicals are toxic. There’s residual asbestos in old rafters, which firefighters used to inspect without proper gear. There’s benzene, pumped into stations via fire trucks’ tail pipes, which accumulated before better exhaust systems were installed.

Most common are non-Hodgkin Lymphoma, lung cancer and prostate cancer.

Protocols for firefighting operations have steadily improved since the late '90s, according to Scoggins, and building codes mean fewer toxic chemicals baked into the walls at fire scenes.

But cancer risk is an impossible issue to eradicate — plastics and petroleum-based products are more common than they once were. And for those who were fighting fires in the '80s and '90s, exposure may not show up until many years later. Between 2001 and 2012, some 60 percent of firefighter deaths nationally were due to cancer, according to Kenny Stuart, president of the Seattle firefighters’ union, IAFF #27. Congress is currently considering the establishment of a national system to track firefighters’ mortality from cancer. “We’ve got a pretty high sensitivity,” he said.

And yet, even in a population with higher than normal cancer rates, Station 31 stood out. When it was first raised, firefighters pointed to mold in the building, an unpaved basement with metallic flecked dirt, a chalky dust flaking from the walls.

Testing at the time and in subsequent years has turned up somewhat high levels of lead and certain bacterias, although not enough to tie them directly to cancer cases. The station has had retrofits in response — cementing the downstairs basement and plugging water leaks that make the station more prone to mold.

The department has not run tests on the building itself for a few years while they were constructing an addition for an aid car, but officials plan to again shortly.

When the issue first came up in the early 2000s, it morphed into a political fight. Stuart compared it to Nickels’ now infamous headache when he declined to salt the roads in a snowstorm. Because it was marred with so much tension, even when results came back, people in the department were not convinced.

“I don’t think it would’ve come up again if we would have answered the question the first time and I think we have to put the work in to do that,” said Scoggins, sitting at a hand-carved table near Station 31’s kitchen.

Amid change in department leadership and city hall, firefighters began raising the issue again. For his part, Gagliano actually believes the testing done on the building has been fairly comprehensive. But amid the continued drumbeat of sickened firefighters and a broader perception that the city doesn’t care about the station’s conditions, he understands why employees are slow to accept past findings. “It could be that once the perception is there, it keeps on building,” he said. But the only way to put it to bed is to get a

comprehensive look and Gagliano's fought for that. "My job is to take care of these folks," he said.

Since Scoggins was named chief by ex-Mayor Ed Murray, his rank-and-file appreciate that he's heard their concerns. "The fire chief and mayor's office have been supportive to really take an honest and robust look at this potential," said Stuart.

Scoggins said the study with Fred Hutch is taking longer than he'd hoped, largely because the department was not budgeted the \$400,000 necessary to run it. "We had to find the funding," he said. But Scoggins said they worked hard to come in under budget in 2017 and made the request toward the end of last year. It was approved.

The first phase of designing the study has already been completed. But the challenging phase of actually carrying it out hasn't begun yet.

Where before researchers compared the station's cancer rates to national rates of cancer, the Fred Hutch study will compare them to cases specifically within the Seattle Fire Department.

This could prove complicated. The department will need to get permission to access medical records of every employee between when the station was built in the 70s and today. For retired and deceased employees, even making contact will be challenging.

For a group of people who signed up to stand on rooftops and enter burning buildings, there's a palpable fear among firefighters of the incremental damage the job brings. Add to that the feeling that their own station — where they retreat to after high-adrenaline calls, which they call home — may also not be safe and the reasons for why, after nearly 20 years, this one issue persists come into focus. Just showing interest will earn you a handshake.

When asked how often he thinks about it, Scoggins, whose parents both died of cancer, said, "Every day ... it's tough watching someone go through it.

"So you want to make it as easy as possible. And if you got in the line of duty, you want to be able to say that and acknowledge that and hopefully, the family members will be taken care of a little bit better because you got it serving others."

[Return to](#)

[Top](#)

HEADLINE	05/22 Study: most Americans work on vacation
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/most-americans-work-on-vacation/
GIST	<p>A majority of workers check in with their office when they're on vacation, a new study from job placement agency Accountemps shows.</p> <p>Roughly 56 percent of workers surveyed this year said they touch base with work when they're supposed to be taking a vacation break -- up from 41 percent of workers in 2016. The survey included more than 2,800 workers from 28 U.S. markets.</p> <p>Who are most likely to be checking their emails or answering calls instead of relaxing and enjoying their break?</p> <p>"Millennials -- without question, and one of the main reasons for that is the use of their smartphones," Accountemps Regional Vice President Richard Deosingh told CBS News in an interview.</p> <p>The survey found baby boomers were the most likely to turn off their phones and unplug from work. The study also found that employees plan to take only nine vacation days this summer, down from 10 last year.</p> <p>How can you be confident before you take your vacation that you'll be able to unplug? The key is planning</p>

	<p>ahead.</p> <p>"Make sure you have a colleague or colleagues available to cover for you while you're out," said Deosingh, "and make sure you arm them with enough information as possible so they can make decisions on your behalf."</p>
<p>Return to Top</p>	

HEADLINE	05/22 Russia denies nuke missiles crashed
SOURCE	https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2018/05/22/putins-unlimited-range-nuclear-missile-crashed-22-miles-us-intelligence/
GIST	<p>The Kremlin has denied US claims that Russia's nuclear-powered cruise missile with "unlimited" range crashed after only 22 miles.</p> <p>The weapon was one of a range of "invincible" nuclear arms announced by Vladimir Putin during a speech in March.</p> <p>"Since its range is unlimited, it can manoeuvre as long as you want," Mr Putin said. "For now, no one in the world has anything like this."</p> <p>But sources with direct knowledge of a US intelligence report told CNBC that four tests of the missile between November and February all resulted in crashes.</p> <p>The longest flight lasted two minutes and covered 22 miles, while shortest ended only four seconds and five miles after launch, they said.</p> <p>CNN previously quoted a US official as saying the cruise missile had crashed during tests.</p> <p>Mr Putin's spokesman Dmitry Peskov denied the reported US intelligence findings when asked on Tuesday.</p> <p>"Listen to the president of Russia Vladimir Putin and believe him," Mr Peskov said.</p> <p>After taking off with conventional fuel, the cruise missile is designed to be powered by a small nuclear reactor during flight.</p> <p>Although Mr Putin had said the nuclear unit had successfully powered up and "provided the necessary level of thrust," US intelligence claimed this component had failed to start.</p> <p>Kremlin officials allegedly ordered the tests over objections from engineers that the weapon system was not ready.</p> <p>The US intelligence report did not mention the health or environmental impacts potentially caused by damages to the missile's reactor.</p> <p>Vladimir Putin first touted the cruise missile during a sabre-rattling March speech in which he said Russia had developed "invincible" nuclear arms including a glider warhead, hypersonic missile and underwater drone. One of the accompanying computer animations showed warheads raining down on Florida.</p> <p>The "Dagger" hypersonic missiles Mr Putin mentioned were later displayed on the belly of MiG-31 jets roaring over Red Square during the annual Victory Day parade this month.</p> <p>The new nuclear weapons were designed to overcome US missile defence systems in countries like Poland and Romania, which "violate the strategic balance" between nuclear powers, he argued.</p>

	“No one wanted to listen to us. Listen to us now,” Mr Putin said.
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	05/23 Nicaragua use of force during protests
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/05/23/americas/nicaragua-protest-violence/index.html
GIST	<p>(CNN)A human rights watch group is accusing Nicaraguan authorities of using excessive force, threats and torture against demonstrators since protests began in the country last month.</p> <p>In a preliminary report, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights says at least 76 people have been killed and 868 injured in anti-government protests.</p> <p>According to the Nicaraguan government, the death toll is 13. CNN has reached out to authorities for comment and has not yet received a response.</p> <p>The rights group, known as IACHR, is calling on Nicaraguan officials to ban the use of lethal force against protesters after it found evidence that police "used firearms, rubber bullet guns and tear gas indiscriminately to dissolve protests and demonstrations."</p> <p>"Potentially lethal force cannot be used to maintain or restore public order. Only the protection of life and physical integrity before imminent threats can be a legitimate objective to use such force," the IACHR said.</p> <p>In addition, the group is reporting that 438 people including students, civilians, activists and journalists have been detained in connection with the unrest.</p> <p>Protests began April 18 when President Daniel Ortega tried to change the country's social security system. He implemented a controversial pension reform resolution intended to halt the growing deficit. The changes increased contributions by workers and employers and reduced retired workers' pensions.</p> <p>Violent protests stopped as Ortega subsequently reversed the reforms, but the unrest continues.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	05/22 Malaysia: MH370 search to end next week
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/article/us-malaysia-politics-mh370/malaysia-says-search-for-flight-mh370-to-end-next-week-idUSKCN1100IX
GIST	<p>KUALA LUMPUR (Reuters) - A private search by a U.S. firm for Malaysia Airlines flight MH370, which went missing in 2014 in one of the world's biggest aviation mysteries, will end on Tuesday, Malaysian Transport Minister Anthony Loke said on Wednesday.</p> <p>Flight MH370, carrying 239 people, disappeared en route from Kuala Lumpur to Beijing on March 8, 2014.</p> <p>Malaysia had agreed in January to pay Houston-based Ocean Infinity up to \$70 million if it found the plane during a 90-day search in the southern Indian Ocean.</p> <p>The hunt for the Boeing 777 was previously expected to end in June, as the 90-day agreement did not cover time taken for refueling and resupplying search vessel Seabed Constructor.</p> <p>However, Ocean Infinity had finished scouring its targeted search area in April and had requested an extension until May 29, Loke said.</p> <p>“This morning I raised this (request) in cabinet and we agreed to extend to May 29,” he told reporters in</p>

	<p>Putrajaya, Malaysia's administrative capital. Asked if that meant no further extensions, he said: "Yes."</p> <p>Loke, who was sworn in as minister on Monday, said the government would release a full report on the investigation into MH370's disappearance after the offshore search was completed, but had not yet determined a date for the report's release.</p>
<p>Return to Top</p>	

HEADLINE	05/22 Fentanyl creating new era drug kingpins
SOURCE	https://www.bloomberg.com/news/features/2018-05-22/deadly-chinese-fentanyl-is-creating-a-new-era-of-drug-kingpins
GIST	<p>Outside the gates of a residential complex called Oak Bay, a construction frenzy tears up the central Chinese city of Wuhan, a metropolis of 11 million racing to catch up with Beijing and Shanghai. The aural assault of jackhammers and cement trucks fades at the walls of the complex. Inside, a leafy oasis of manicured grounds and winding red-brick walkways draws out residents for early morning tai chi sessions near the banks of the Yangtze River.</p> <p>Among the 5,000 apartments, on a high-rise's 20th floor, lives Yan Xiaobing, a chemicals distributor with short, spiky hair. His wife, Hu Qi, operates an English tutoring business. Their social-media feed shows the couple and their two young children under blue skies at the beach and posing at landmarks in Europe and Japan. One photo shows Yan reading to pupils in a classroom.</p> <p>In half-frame glasses, blue plastic house slippers and button-down shirt, Yan could have passed as an ordinary office worker when Bloomberg News reporters found him late last year. Filling the apartment doorway with his 6-foot frame, he expressed soft-spoken bafflement at the portrait the U.S. Justice Department paints of him: not a modest businessman, but a new type of international drug dealer. "This is horrifying," he said. "Their investigation must have gone wrong."</p> <p>Federal prosecutors in Mississippi charged Yan, 41, in September with leading an empire built on the manufacture and sale of drugs related to fentanyl, one of the world's deadliest and most profitable narcotics. So strong that it's been studied as a chemical weapon, the drug has saturated American streets with breathtaking speed: It kills more people than any other opioid, including prescription pills and heroin, because it's so easy to overdose. Authorities say they have linked Yan and his 9W Technology Co. to more than 100 distributors across the U.S. and at least 20 other countries. Investigators expect scores of arrests as they dismantle his alleged network.</p> <p>A month after the indictment, Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein held a Washington news conference to shine a spotlight on Yan and another man, Zhang Jian, 39, who's accused of a similar scheme. Their indictments, Rosenstein told reporters, marked "a major milestone in our battle to stop deadly fentanyl from reaching the United States."</p> <p>Yan is the first Chinese national the U.S. has ever added to its "consolidated priority organization target" list of individuals thought to command the world's most prolific drug-trafficking and money-laundering networks. Investigators say his strategy was to offer fentanyl-like compounds called analogues — which differ slightly on a molecular level but produce similar effects — in order to exploit discrepancies between the laws in the U.S. and China. Rosenstein expressed optimism that his Chinese counterparts would hold Yan accountable.</p> <p>But if Yan doesn't resemble a stereotypical drug lord, neither is fentanyl your average drug. It has upended how traffickers conduct business and how such activity gets policed. Bloomberg News examined hundreds of pages of court documents and government reports and interviewed drug dealers and law officers, retracing a byzantine path that took investigators from a Mississippi parking lot all the way to Wuhan.</p> <p>What emerged looked less like the movie fantasy of guns and fancy cars and more like an operation that brokers souvenir keychains or counterfeit cosmetics. It is barely more trouble to dispatch deadly drugs</p>

than any of the other goods Americans import from the country of 1.4 billion every day.

The Drug Enforcement Administration might have never found Yan if not for a traffic stop in Ocean Springs, Mississippi on March 20, 2013. On an overcast Gulf Coast morning, Roslyn Demetrius Chapman, then 26, turned into the parking lot of the AT&T call center where she worked. A police officer suspected the windows of her silver Mitsubishi Galant were tinted too darkly, then found her license was suspended. He arrested her, and a search of her car turned up bags of synthetic marijuana and white powder.

Gulfport police Sergeant Adam Gibbons, a native New Yorker with a hockey player's build and buzz cut, was two towns over when he got the call. As a then-13-year veteran who split time between street patrols and investigations with a DEA task force, he had insight into the trade from top to bottom and an expertise in synthetic narcotics. He took the lead. His team searched Chapman's home and a storage unit, finding more synthetic marijuana, chemicals used to make it, U.S. Postal Service boxes, shipping labels, ledgers and receipts.

He and DEA intelligence analyst John Metcalf scoured Chapman's phone records, Facebook account and laptop. It looked like she was in love with someone named Rasheed Ali Muhammad in Bridgeport, Connecticut, whom she'd met on the phone through a mutual friend. They'd rendezvoused in Washington and New York and he'd gifted her shoes and Godiva chocolate. She'd gotten his name tattooed on her chest.

"Im all in with u baby," she wrote in one email, pledging to help him in "building an empire."

Their so-called empire was an online operation that sold synthetic drugs known as spice, bath salts and flakka that mimic marijuana and stimulants. It wasn't some haphazard thing: They treated first-time customers to free samples and free shipping, took credit cards and PayPal, and provided next-day delivery, tracking numbers and 100-percent money-back guarantees.

But where were the fake weed and bath salts coming from? Gibbons obtained a search warrant for a Yahoo email account created by Muhammad and spotted the drugs' source: Yan Xiaobing in Wuhan.

A Sept. 14, 2011, message to Yan read: "Can I pay to have this stuff shipped faster? I need this stuff like yesterday," referring to JWH 210, a synthetic cannabinoid.

Using the alias William Zhou, Yan confirmed the shipment with a tracking number. "UPS is the fastest way to USA, we have tried our best to send it quickly and charge no extra fee," he wrote. A similar compound, he wrote, "is just out of stock, the new batch will be ready tonight, so we will send it tomorrow. Since September, the purchase amount are soaring, so we will increase human power and equipment to expand the production capacity."

He signed it, "Best regards."

On Aug. 10, 2012, Yan sent Muhammad's account a price list for 26 mind- and body-altering chemicals ranging from \$1,400 to \$3,600 per kilo.

(Chapman and Muhammad would later get prison sentences of nearly 17 and 120 years, respectively. In interviews, Muhammad, now 45, admitted to selling chemicals but said he did extensive research to remain within the law.)

Fentanyl wasn't on offer, but agents kept following the digital trails that have made it easier for people like Muhammad and Yan to enter the global drug trade and for investigators to hunt them down. Because Yan used Gmail, operated by U.S.-based Google, Gibbons and his team could persuade a judge to let them monitor his communications in real time. What they found broke the dam: Yan wasn't just selling fake weed and bath salts to Muhammad in Connecticut. Gibbons said he was peddling fentanyl analogues around the globe.

“This guy has hooks all over the place,” Gibbons recalled thinking as he traveled to New Orleans; Baltimore; Portsmouth, New Hampshire and dozens of other cities to track down buyers. Metcalf, the intelligence analyst, worked the international angle, alerting his counterparts about customers in Russia, Kuwait, Sweden, Brazil and 16 other countries. They went undercover as distributors, prompting Yan to send them seven shipments containing kilograms of fentanyl analogues and other synthetics. Yan labeled the packages as clothing, buttons, radios and cleaning supplies, and when Gibbons claimed that one had been confiscated by customs, Yan sent another for free.

By the time of the indictment, investigators had tied Yan to at least two Chinese factories equipped to produce deadly chemical compounds by the ton. The indictment charges Yan with conspiring to manufacture and import 22 substances banned in the U.S. over six years beginning in 2010. Included on the list are four fentanyl analogues — none of which were illegal in China at the times he’s accused of sending them to Mississippi.

That wasn’t by accident, Gibbons said. “He stayed abreast of the law to stay ahead of it.”

While the blossoming of fentanyl as an internet-era plague is new, the drug itself isn’t.

Paul Janssen, the physician-founder of Janssen Pharmaceutica, now a unit of Johnson & Johnson, synthesized it in a Belgian laboratory in 1960. It is the world’s strongest opioid approved for human medical use, soothing the most excruciating pain and helping to put surgical patients to sleep.

For years, fentanyl-related overdose deaths never exceeded a few thousand. Then, in 2014, the drugs killed more than 5,000 people. By September 2017, they accounted for more than 26,000 deaths, half the opioid total. One of the seeds of demand had been sown in the 1990s, when doctors began overprescribing legal painkillers like OxyContin. Abusers eventually turned to their stronger cousin, heroin. That in turn created an opening for dealers to offer fentanyl.

The drug is potent almost beyond comprehension — and that’s what changes the game. It’s prescribed by the millionth of a gram. Two milligrams, the equivalent of seven poppy seeds, can kill. It’s often crudely diluted, which makes it difficult for illicit users to determine how much they’re consuming.

The drug’s rise has coincided with that of the dark web, encrypted messaging apps and cryptocurrencies like Bitcoin, all of which help manufacturers remain anonymous. They can transport hundreds of thousands of doses via the U.S. Postal Service or FedEx — slipping past law officers accustomed to tracing narcotics by the truckload.

Fentanyl’s astronomical profit margins have driven its rapid spread. When Gibbons and Metcalf went undercover, they bought a kilogram from China for \$3,800, which, when turned into tablet form, could fetch on the street up to \$30 million. Compare that with a kilo of heroin, which wholesales for about \$50,000 in Gulfport and generates a profit of just \$200,000.

“Fentanyl is a smuggler’s dream,” said Scott Stewart, a former U.S. State Department special agent who’s a vice president at Stratfor, a global intelligence firm. “It’s compact. It’s valuable. It’s fantastic for the smugglers and it’s terrible for law enforcement.”

There’s no need to grow vast fields of opium poppies, which must be defended against weather, competitors and government eyes. Raw materials and equipment are cheap. Synthesis takes about a week and requires neither heat nor skills more sophisticated than following a recipe. And in recent years, rogue chemists have unearthed instructions for analogues that researchers discovered decades ago but never put into legitimate use. Sellers offer these variations before governments can outlaw them. Potency and purity vary: One dose may produce a euphoric high, while another kills immediately.

Most fentanyl on America’s streets isn’t made for pharmaceutical use and then diverted. According to the DEA, it’s illicitly manufactured in overseas laboratories. Mexican cartels play an increasingly prominent role, using networks established for heroin and methamphetamine. But U.S. officials say most originates

in China, one of the world's top manufacturers and exporters of raw pharmaceutical ingredients.

China has a fraught history with opium, dating to when foreign traders imported it in the mid-1800s. Widespread addiction followed, and attempts to stamp out the trade triggered two futile wars against the British.

Today, the Chinese consume a fraction of the pharmaceutical opioids Americans do and are thought not to have much of an abuse problem as a result. Yet a market for synthetics flourishes, driven by demand abroad. A vast chemical industry operates there with little government oversight, according to the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission, and can legally procure ingredients tightly regulated elsewhere.

While Chinese authorities control fentanyl, they've been slow to ban new analogues. And they didn't begin restricting fentanyl's two most common ingredients until this year, more than a decade after the U.S. In addition to clandestine operations, the DEA says, legitimate laboratories make the illicit opioid on the side. And unlike in the U.S., anyone can sell or purchase pill presses, which dealers use to trick addicts into thinking they're buying milder drugs like OxyContin when they're actually getting fentanyl.

American officials speak in the language of diplomacy when they address China's cooperation. They applaud its addition of more than 130 synthetic drugs — including at least 10 fentanyl analogues — to its list of controlled substances since 2015. In Beijing, presidents Xi Jinping and Donald Trump in November discussed ways to enhance coordination on drugs and fentanyl in particular.

But Chinese officials have dismissed the U.S. claim that most illicit fentanyl originates in their country. "The biggest difficulty China faces in opioid control is that such drugs are in enormous demand in the U.S.," Yu Haibin of the China National Narcotics Control Commission said in December, according to China Daily.

The U.S. lacks leverage, said Markos Kounalakis, a visiting fellow at Stanford University's Hoover Institution. "The two countries play by different rules," he said. "What's bad for America is not necessarily bad for China."

The U.S. indictment paints Yan as a wily outlaw. In person, he has an answer for each accusation. Yes, he'd shipped fentanyl analogues and other compounds to the U.S., but that was before they became illegal in China, and he steered clear of others as they were banned.

"I don't know what they do with them after they get them," he said. "They might abuse it. That's one possibility."

No, he didn't knowingly sell substances illegal in the U.S. and no, Chinese law enforcement never contacted him. He learned of the allegations, he said, only when Bloomberg News emailed him. (At a police station across the street from Yan's apartment complex, a duty officer said he wasn't aware that one of America's most wanted men lived inside.)

Yan's company, 9W Technology, was renamed 5A Pharmatech Co. in March 2016, according to the Hong Kong Companies Registry. On its website, 5A last year listed headquarters in Wuhan and two factories: one specializing in bulk chemicals of up to 500 kilograms, and the other in "production of ton class." It boasted about providing raw ingredients for pharmaceutical giants including Pfizer Inc., Abbott Laboratories, Merck & Co. and Johnson & Johnson.

Yan said those claims were only puffery that he'd hoped would make his business appear established. Instead, he said he was a mere broker. He purchased chemicals from Chinese labs, marketed them via the internet, used freight companies to ship them and received payment via international wire. He brushed off the aliases as a way to skirt a non-compete clause from a prior job. Bloomberg News was unable to verify any of his claims.

Yan said he has been essentially unemployed after unwinding his company because business was slow. His wife, Hu, continues to run her tutoring firm. She isn't named in the indictment, but incorporation documents identify her as the owner of the chemical company and emails that were used to send Chapman and Muhammed to prison show Yan arranging payments in her name.

The couple initially agreed to interviews to clear their reputations. But in the weeks after, 5A Pharmatech's website disappeared and Yan stopped responding to emails. When Bloomberg reporters visited the high-rise office tower listed as an address for 5A, another company occupied the space and its workers said they'd never heard of the firm. In April, Hu filed papers to dissolve 5A Pharmatech.

Seven months after Rosenstein's press conference, China has extradited neither Yan nor the other accused kingpin, Zhang. And in a rare interview that aired in December, Yu of the Narcotics Control Commission told Vice that the U.S. failed to show that either man broke Chinese law.

"We haven't reached a point to indict or arrest them yet," Yu said. "The U.S. unilaterally indicted these two Chinese nationals, which has caused practical difficulties in our subsequent investigation." The commission didn't respond to repeated requests for comment for this article.

With the DEA's powers to pursue suspects overseas limited, agents are working to break up domestic trafficking rings. Last month in an unrelated case, authorities in New England indicted 45 people and seized more than 30 kilograms of suspected fentanyl, two firearms and more than \$500,000 cash.

While Yan will likely never see an American courtroom, let alone a prison, Gibbons and Metcalf haven't slowed down in Gulfport. They travel the country, educating colleagues on their techniques. Their spider maps of co-conspirators grow bigger as they write more affidavits, obtain more search warrants and comb through new troves of emails. Yan isn't the only target, even within his chemical company, Gibbons said. "He's one guy out of many."

[Return to](#)

[Top](#)

HEADLINE	05/23 Drought on tap to intensify in Southwest
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/Technology/wireStory/drought-tap-intensify-us-southwest-55372737?
GIST	<p>Rivers are drying up, popular mountain recreation spots are closing and water restrictions are in full swing as a persistent drought intensifies its grip on pockets of the American Southwest.</p> <p>Climatologists and other experts are scheduled Wednesday to provide an update on the situation in the Four Corners region — where Arizona, New Mexico, Colorado and Utah meet.</p> <p>The area is dealing with exceptional drought — the worst category. That has left farmers, ranchers and water planners bracing for a much different situation than just a year ago when only a fraction of the region was experiencing low levels of dryness.</p> <p>With the region's water resources strained, a top federal official has resumed pressure on states in the Southwest to wrap up long-delayed emergency plans for potential shortages on the Colorado River, which serves 40 million people in the U.S. and Mexico.</p> <p>"We face an overwhelming risk on the system, and the time for action is now," Bureau of Reclamation Commissioner Brenda Burman said Tuesday. She spoke before the Imperial Irrigation District in Southern California, one of the biggest single users of the Colorado River.</p> <p>The drought has hit the Colorado River hard. Forecasters say the river will carry only about 43 percent of its average amount of water this year into Lake Powell, one of two big reservoirs on the system.</p> <p>There's a 52 percent chance that Mexico and the U.S. states of Arizona and Nevada will take a mandatory cut in their share of water in 2020 under the agreements governing the river, forecasters have said.</p>

	<p>In New Mexico, stretches of the Rio Grande — another of North America's longest rivers — have already gone dry as federal biologists have been forced to scoop up as many endangered Rio Grande silvery minnows as possible so they can be moved upstream.</p> <p>The river this summer is expected to dry as far north as Albuquerque, New Mexico's most populous city. The area saw its first major dose of rain Tuesday, bringing an end to a 54-day dry spell. It wasn't enough to make up for months without meaningful precipitation.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	05/22 Hazmat response to suspicious letters
SOURCE	https://www.kiro7.com/news/south-sound-news/suspicious-letter-causes-hazmat-response-at-pierce-county-jail/754534242
GIST	<p>TACOMA & REDMOND, Wash. - Hazmat crews were called to the Pierce County Jail and the Redmond District Court Tuesday morning for suspicious letters received there.</p> <p>Firefighters were called to the Pierce County Jail, 910 Tacoma Avenue, at about 10:30 a.m. after white powder was found inside a letter.</p> <p>An office in the building was evacuated. No injuries were reported.</p> <p>A hazmat crew later determined that the powder was not hazardous.</p> <p>A suspicious letter was also received at the King County Redmond District Court Tuesday morning.</p> <p>Authorities were called to the scene at 10:15 a.m. The courthouse was evacuated while a King County Sheriff's Office hazmat team investigated.</p> <p>In that case, no threat was found and everyone was allowed to go back inside.</p> <p>Authorities do not know if the two cases are related.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	05/22 Military is running out of bombs
SOURCE	https://www.defensenews.com/pentagon/2018/05/22/the-us-is-running-out-of-bombs-and-it-may-soon-struggle-to-make-more/
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON — The Pentagon plans to invest more than \$20 billion in munitions in its next budget. But whether the industrial base will be there to support such massive buys in the future is up in the air — at a time when America is expending munitions at increasingly intense rates.</p> <p>The annual Industrial Capabilities report, put out by the Pentagon's Office of Manufacturing and Industrial Base Policy, has concluded that the industrial base of the munitions sector is particularly strained, something the report blames on the start-and-stop nature of munitions procurement over the last 20 years, as well as the lack of new designs being internally developed.</p> <p>Some suppliers have dropped out entirely, leaving no option for replacing vital materials. Other key suppliers are foreign-owned, with no indigenous capability to produce vital parts and materials — setting up the risk that a conflict with China could rely on Chinese-made parts.</p> <p>And the military's desire to tinker with existing designs rather than create band-new weapons has left the industrial base with a lack of design experience, which means “design skills for critical components within the missile sector industrial base are at risk,” the authors write.</p>

All this is happening as the U.S. is expending munitions at a rapid rate. For instance, the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction concluded that 1,186 munitions were dropped in that country during the first quarter of 2018 — the highest number recorded for the first three months of the year since tracking began in 2013; that number is also more than two and a half times the amount dropped in the first quarter of 2017.

Mackenzie Eaglen, a defense expert with the American Enterprise Institute, said figures in the report line up with worries from senior military leaders over the last two years.

“This report puts a bunch of solid facts and figures, and real companies and impact, behind the anecdotal concerns of leadership,” Eaglen said, who added that the overall facts show “munitions production is then at risk.”

[Return to](#)

[Top](#)

Crime, Criminals

[Top of page](#)

HEADLINE	05/23 Indonesia's prison system is broken
SOURCE	https://thediplomat.com/2018/05/indonesias-prison-system-is-broken/
GIST	<p>Indonesia's prison system has taken another hit. On May 8, Mako Brimob, a maximum security detention center in Depok on the outskirts of Jakarta was attacked by inmates. The siege lasted over 36 hours left five police officers and a prisoner dead.</p> <p>Details of exactly what happened are still sketchy. In a press release, the Islamic State (ISIS) claimed responsibility for the riot – a claim refuted by the police, who say the riot was a fight over food that got out of control. Unconfirmed photographs circulated on Indonesian social media showing supposed terrorist inmates flying the Black Standard (now widely known as the “ISIS flag”) and standing over bloodied victims.</p> <p>When police from Indonesia's elite counterterrorism squad Densus 88 stormed the cells, four police officers had had their throats slit so deeply that they had almost been decapitated. One officer had been shot and killed and another, who survived, was held hostage and tortured for over a day.</p> <p>This incident, however unclear, has catapulted Indonesia's prison system back into the headlines. But the siege at Mako Brimob is hardly a rare event. The same detention center saw a smaller riot in November 2017 and prisons all over the country regularly experience mass break outs, riots, and widespread violence against both guards and inmates.</p> <p>Just a quick look at the figures reveals part of the problem immediately. Indonesia has 464 prisons and detention facilities with a capacity to hold 124,006 prisoners. But, as of March 2018, the total prison population in Indonesia, including pre-trial detainees and prisoners on remand, stands at just over 240,000 – with an occupancy rate of 193 percent. In 2000, the total prison population was just over 53,000, showing a dramatic increase in the last two decades. Without the funds and the infrastructure to manage Indonesia's ballooning prison population, it's no wonder that the system is overwhelmed and under attack.</p> <p>According to prison officials, some 70 percent of convicted inmates in Indonesia are drug offenders, as Indonesia has some of the toughest drug laws in the world. From January to March 2017, the national prison population increased by a staggering 12,000 inmates, meaning that cells meant for five prisoners now house up to 40 in some prisons. Not only is this inhumane, but packing large numbers of inmates together in one cell means that guards often struggle to contain prison populations and maintain order. In 2013, 200 inmates escaped from a prison in Medan, North Sumatra, and in 2017 over 400 prisoners fled from a prison in Pekanbaru in Riau Province.</p> <p>But it's not just mass breakouts that are a problem in Indonesian prisons. The issue of overcrowding can</p>

lead to an even more sinister phenomenon: the radicalization of prisoners.

As terrorism and security analyst Judith Jacob explains, “Without proper funding, overcrowding becomes a significant problem and individuals who are imprisoned for lesser offenses, or at least offenses unrelated to terrorism, get lumped into cells and blocks with those convicted of militancy or terrorism.”

Khairul Ghazali has personal experience of the prison system in Indonesia. A former convicted terrorist, he spent six years in Tanjung Gusta Prison in Medan, North Sumatra, on charges of masterminding a bank robbery and an attack on a police station. Speaking to *The Diplomat*, he explains some of the problems with radicalism in Indonesian prisons:

Radicalism in Indonesia flourishes in prisons for several reasons. There’s nothing in place to break up radical groups because convicted inmates are usually held together and can start new terrorist cells which can’t be easily controlled by the security forces. As inmates are in close proximity, it’s easy for them to spread their radical ideology and recruit more members.

It’s also not just an issue with the inmates themselves; prison staff also play a part in supporting a flawed system in a country where corruption is rife. As Jacob explains, “Poorly paid guards in particular are easy targets for Islamist militants, regardless of the group they’re associated with, and can be paid off in order to let in couriers and allow for members who are already imprisoned to congregate and hold meetings.”

In addition to overcrowding, there are also less well known economic reasons why prisoners are the perfect targets for those looking to spread radical ideology in prisons. Based on Ghazali’s own experience, “Prisons don’t provide inmates with work opportunities or teach them any usable skills to improve their economic situation.”

This is an important issue. It’s well known that Indonesian prisons provide little in the way of material support for prisoners, with the rationale being that families should take care of inmates to avoid them being a burden on the Indonesian tax payer. As such, inmates have to rely on family members to bring food to supplement meager prison rations as well as provide basic sundries like toiletries. This means that not only do radical groups in prisons give inmates a sense of place and belonging, they also, crucially, often take care of them financially.

Ghazali himself is a good example of how the prison system could work if it was properly organized. When he was arrested, Ghazali was placed in solitary confinement and interrogated for hours on end. He credits this experience with his decision to turn away from terrorism.

“Once I was away from other terrorists espousing the same radical ideology, and when I was questioned about what I had done, I began to realize how flawed my thinking had been,” he says.

By the time Ghazali was convicted, he was well known in the prison for being a “reformed” terrorist and kept in isolation for his own safety. This saved him from being re-radicalized. It’s a powerful example of how convicted terrorists, cut off from their peers, can reform and become role models in their community. To that end, Ghazali has now opened the Al-Hidayah Islamic Boarding School on the outskirts of Medan, which houses the children of convicted terrorists and teaches them not to follow in the footsteps of their parents.

Jacob explains other ways in which the prison system could be fixed, including “more funds for the prisons themselves, better training of guards and prison wardens, and more money for post-prison rehabilitation and monitoring.”

She, like Ghazali, explains the need for terrorist prisoners to be kept in isolation as much as possible so that they don’t get the chance to continue to spread radical ideology, either within the prison walls or outside. Jacob suggests some measures that would prevent this from happening.

“A key issue is preventing key militant Islamist figures in prison from communicating with their

supporters,” she says. “This could be done by preventing them from obtaining phones, better vetting of their visitors, and so on. Fundamentally that comes back to more money and more training in the system.”

Following the bloody incident at Mako Brimob, the authorities chose to punish over 150 prisoners involved in the prison riot by sending them to Nusakambangan, a prison island in Central Java known as “Indonesia’s Alcatraz.” The cluster of prisons on Nusakambangan is known for having housed some of Indonesia’s most notorious inmates over the years, including Ali Gufron, Imam Samudra, and Amrozi – the masterminds behind the Bali bombings in 2002, which killed over 200 people. All three men were executed in 2008. It’s difficult to see how moving inmates from Mako Brimob to Nusakambangan will achieve much other than compounding the issue of terrorist inmates being held together – further perpetuating the cycle of radicalism.

And the problems with radicalism in Indonesian prisons don’t and won’t stop when prisoners finish their sentences. According to Jacob, “Poor funding also means that few resources are available to the police to carry on monitoring the activities of militants and their newfound associates once they’ve been released.”

[Return to](#)

[Top](#)

HEADLINE	05/22 Saudi activists held ‘incommunicado’
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/f123b286992244b691fd72e4c7a2889d/Arrested-Saudi-activists-held-incommunicado-since-last-week
GIST	<p>DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — Saudi Arabia is holding and interrogating at least 10 women’s rights activists — seven women and three men — without any access to lawyers, according to people familiar with the arrests. The detentions are seen as a culmination of a steady crackdown on perceived critics of the government.</p> <p>People familiar with the arrests say the activists were allowed just one phone call to worried relatives a week ago, and that one of the women has been held entirely incommunicado. They spoke to The Associated Press late on Monday on condition of anonymity for fear of repercussions.</p> <p>The sweep began a week ago, on May 15, when police detained the 10, some of them in the capital, Riyadh, and transferred them to the city of Jiddah. Their exact whereabouts now are unknown. Saudi media say the arrests were carried out by forces from the Presidency of State Security, a body that reports directly to the king and crown prince.</p> <p>Activists told the AP that seven of those detained were involved in efforts to establish a non-government organization called “Amina” that would offer support and shelter to victims of domestic abuse. They had recently submitted their request to the government to establish the NGO.</p> <p>The arrests cast a pall over recent social openings being pushed by Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, including a historic decision to lift the world’s only ban on women driving on June 24.</p> <p>Amnesty International says Prince Mohammed’s promises of reform “fall flat amid the intensifying crackdown on dissenting voices in the kingdom.”</p> <p>“His pledges amount to very little if those who fought for the right to drive are now all behind bars for peacefully campaigning for freedom of movement and equality,” said Samah Hadid, Amnesty’s Mideast director.</p> <p>When the kingdom issued its royal decree last year announcing that women would be allowed to drive in 2018, women’s rights activists were contacted by the royal court and warned against giving interviews to the media or speaking out on social media.</p> <p>Following the warnings, some women left the country for a period of time and others stopped voicing their opinions on Twitter. In recent weeks, activists say dozens of women’s rights campaigners have also been</p>

banned from traveling abroad.

Several of the recently detained women are seen as icons of the Saudi women's rights movement and had called for an end to guardianship laws that give men final say over whether a woman can marry, obtain a passport or travel abroad. Their movement was seen as part of a larger democratic and civil rights push in the kingdom.

Their advocacy, though tempered in recent years due to fear of arrest, represented one of the last remaining spaces of activism in the kingdom, where all protests are illegal and where all major decisions rest with King Salman and the crown prince.

The Interior Ministry has not named the 10 arrested but said they are being investigated for communicating with "foreign entities," working to recruit people in sensitive government positions and providing money to foreign circles with the aim of destabilizing and harming the kingdom.

Pro-government media outlets have splashed some of the women's photos online and in newspapers, accusing them of being traitors and of belonging to a "spy cell". The pro-Saudi Asharq al-Awsat newspaper reported the group is being investigated for "using human rights as a pretext to violate the country's systems."

Legal experts have been quoted in state-aligned newspapers as saying the group could face up to 20 years in prison, and, although unlikely, charges of treason, which carry the death penalty.

Rights activists, who spoke to the AP on condition of anonymity for fear of repercussions, say Loujain al-Hathloul, Aziza al-Yousef and Eman al-Najfan — three well-known Saudi women's rights activists— are among the 10.

They say Madeha al-Ajrourh, Aisha al-Mana and Hessah al-Sheikh — all in their 60s or 70s— are also among the 10 detained. The three took part in the first women's protest movement for the right to drive in 1990, in which nearly 50 women were arrested for driving and lost their passports and their jobs.

Some of the arrested women are professors at state-run universities.

[Return to](#)

[Top](#)

HEADLINE	05/23 Red Cross: 1,200 attacks on health care
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/e3fc0d227e8842219affb82572e04ca8/Red-Cross:-Over-2,000-attacks-on-health-care-in-conflict
GIST	<p>UNITED NATIONS (AP) — Over 1,200 violent incidents against hospitals and medical personnel have taken place in 16 countries in the two years since the U.N. adopted a resolution demanding that combatants protect staff and facilities treating the wounded and sick, the Red Cross said Tuesday.</p> <p>Yves Daccord, director-general of the International Committee of the Red Cross, told the U.N. Security Council that "the gap between words and action is rather dramatic."</p> <p>Without identifying the 16 countries, he cited incidents of health workers being killed, threatened and kidnapped as well as ambulances obstructed, medical supplies destroyed or prevented from crossing front lines, and hospitals bombed or looted.</p> <p>Still, Daccord said the May 2016 resolution was "a very significant first step towards better implementation of existing international humanitarian law on medical care in armed conflict."</p> <p>The first-ever resolution focusing on the protection of hospitals and health workers in conflict zones urged all countries to bring those responsible for attacks to justice, something that has rarely happened.</p>

	<p>“It is imperative that all states — not only parties to conflicts — uphold international commitments and make the protection of health care a national priority,” Daccord said.</p> <p>The fifth report by Safeguarding Health in Conflict Coalition, which was released Tuesday, said there were more than 700 attacks on hospitals, health workers, patients and ambulances in 23 countries around the globe in 2017. According to the report, that included 252 attacks in Syria, 93 in the Palestinian territories, 66 in Afghanistan, 52 in the Central African Republic, 37 in South Sudan, 35 in Iraq, 24 in Yemen, 23 in Nigeria and 20 in Congo.</p> <p>The report said the U.N. resolution hasn’t spurred effective action and called the latest results “grim.”</p>
<p>Return to Top</p>	

HEADLINE	05/23 Group: Rohingya insurgents killed civilians
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/d1ed704d88754b9bb60798eaeedfecbcb/Rights-group:-Rohingya-insurgents-massacred-Myanmar-Hindus
GIST	<p>BANGKOK (AP) — Myanmar’s army was not the only group that slaughtered civilians in the country’s volatile west last year, Amnesty International said in a new report accusing ethnic Rohingya insurgents of massacring dozens of Hindus during an escalation of a long-running communal conflict in Rakhine state.</p> <p>The London-based rights organization said it had investigated the widely reported killing of dozens of minority Hindus on Aug. 25 in a village called Ah Nauk Kha Maung Sei and concluded Rohingya militants were responsible.</p> <p>Claims that the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army, or ARSA, had carried out a massacre there were first made by the government and security forces just hours after it occurred. It was the same day Rohingya militants attacked 30 police posts and an army base in the volatile region, provoking a bloody army counter-offensive that eventually drove nearly 700,000 Rohingya civilians into Bangladesh.</p> <p>At the time, Myanmar officials said they had discovered two mass graves containing dozens of bodies, and that around 100 Hindus were missing in all. The story, though, became controversial after survivors who reached Bangladesh gave conflicting testimony to reporters, with some blaming ethnic Rakhine Buddhist locals instead.</p> <p>Amnesty International said the findings in its report released Wednesday were based on “a careful review of evidence” that included the testimony of dozens of people and imagery analyzed by forensic pathologists.</p> <p>“Our latest investigation on the ground sheds much-needed light on the largely under-reported human rights abuses by ARSA during northern Rakhine state’s unspeakably dark recent history,” said Tirana Hassan, the group’s crisis response director.</p> <p>“Accountability for these atrocities is every bit as crucial as it is for the crimes against humanity carried out by Myanmar’s security forces,” Hassan said.</p> <p>While nobody knows for sure how many people were killed in Rakhine state since August — the government generally prohibits independent reporting from the area — the vast majority of those who died are believed to be Rohingya killed by security forces. The aid group Doctors Without Borders estimates at least 6,700 Rohingya were killed during the first month alone.</p>
<p>Return to Top</p>	

HEADLINE	05/22 Brooklyn: fake pot overdoses rise
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/k2-overdose-tally-grows-to-56-in-brooklyn-1527034026

<p>GIST</p>	<p>Two years after it turned a Brooklyn intersection into so-called “zombieland,” the synthetic drug known as K2 has emerged again, causing 56 overdoses since Saturday, law-enforcement officials said Tuesday.</p> <p>The dozens of people hospitalized all overdosed in five different locations in Brooklyn, including the area of Broadway and Myrtle Avenue. Near that intersection in July 2016, 33 people overdosed on a similar form of the drug, with many seen at the time shaking and writhing on the ground.</p> <p>New York Police Department Chief of Detectives Dermot Shea said on Tuesday the recent victims experienced similar symptoms, including foaming at the mouth. Police have arrested 12 people in connection with the overdoses, including eight for selling the drug and four for possession. Authorities are still looking for the main source of the powerful drug.</p> <p>“The chemical balances and how it’s manufactured are very dangerous,” said Chief Shea. “We don’t normally see individuals like this passing out going to the hospital in these great numbers.”</p> <p>Police believe the K2 causing the recent overdoses is coming from the same source because of the proximity of the incidents and the similarity in the packaging: many of the K2 bags have “smack” written on them.</p> <p>Police also released images of the packaging featuring images of cartoon characters. Chief Shea said the packages appeared to be designed so “kids would grab for” them.</p> <p>Three of the five Brooklyn locations were located near a homeless shelter, Chief of Department Terence Monahan said, and some who overdosed were occupants of the shelter. He said the NYPD was working with the Department of Homeless Services to make sure shelter residents were aware of the dangers of the drug.</p> <p>Law-enforcement officials say K2 is appealing to distributors because it’s made with cheap chemicals. The drug uses a leaf, however, so it resembles marijuana. Many users don’t know they’ve taken something other than marijuana until experiencing the harsh symptoms.</p>
<p>Return to Top</p>	

<p>HEADLINE</p>	<p>05/22 Arson attack youth jail construction site</p>
<p>SOURCE</p>	<p>http://mynorthwest.com/996489/seattle-youth-jail-arson/</p>
<p>GIST</p>	<p>Seattle police are investigating an arson attack at the construction site of a new youth jail after molotov cocktails were thrown onto the property early Tuesday morning.</p> <p>Detectives are “poring over the evidence,” according to the Seattle Police Department.</p> <p>SPD says an officer heard a noise inside the construction site in the 1300 block of Remington Court at around 3:30 a.m. The officer was working security for the fenced-off property. Upon further inspection, he found small fires set throughout the site along with shattered glass bottles.</p> <p>The Capitol Hill Blog reports at least four bottles were thrown onto the property. No structures or equipment were damaged.</p> <p>The officer was able to put out the fires, along with other responding police. Another fire was set on top of an office trailer.</p> <p>The youth jail project has been a controversial issue in Seattle. The No New Youth Jail Coalition is organized against the project. Multiple protests have been staged. One protest blocked off traffic for hours in downtown Seattle in March — no one was arrested. Protesters have also chained themselves across the entrance to the site. On April 20, nine people were arrested — including clergy members — who trespassed on the construction site.</p>

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	05/22 Police: confronted school shooter 4min.
SOURCE	http://time.com/5286856/santa-fe-shooting-victims-police-crossfire/
GIST	<p>Two police officers confronted the Santa Fe High School shooting suspect four minutes after he began his allegedly rampage. The officers briefly exchanged gunfire with him and talked to him for 25 minutes before he surrendered, authorities revealed on Monday.</p> <p>Galveston County Sheriff Henry Trochesset said he believes none of the eight students and two teachers killed in the shooting Friday had been caught in the crossfire between officers and 17-year-old Dimitrios Pagourtzis.</p> <p>“From what I see, I don’t believe any of the individuals that were killed were from the law enforcement,” Trochesset said at a press conference. “I can’t give you that full until the autopsy.”</p> <p>“There were minimal shots fired, at least from us, from law enforcement,” he added. “But the individual was still trying to shoot us.”</p> <p>The two officers — one of whom was critically wounded — were stationed at the school and “contained” the suspect as nearly 200 police arrived to the scene. Trochesset referred to the officers as “heroes,” noting that the work of the two first responders helped save lives. “It gave the opportunity for the other officers to continue to evacuate the school,” Trochesset added.</p> <p>He later said: “Luckily, the body count’s not higher.”</p> <p>Police identified Pagourtzis, a student at the Santa Fe, Texas high school, as the suspect in the attack. Authorities said he used his father’s guns — a shotgun and a .38-caliber revolver — to carry out the attack. He is now held at Galveston County Jail on capital murder with no bond. Trochesset said the suspect is now on “suicide watch”.</p> <p>Eight students and two teachers were killed as a result of the attack last week. Among the victims included Sabika Sheik, a student from Pakistan who was studying in Texas as part of a U.S. State Department program. Another Cynthia Tisdale, a substitute teacher who worked two jobs to take care of her sick husband, according to CNN.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	05/22 Feds seize \$25K carved ivory at SEA
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/federal-officials-seize-25000-of-carved-ivory-at-sea-tac-airport/
GIST	<p>U.S. Customs and Border Protection said it seized carved ivory worth an estimated \$25,000 after a couple attempted to smuggle the materials through Seattle-Tacoma International Airport earlier this month.</p> <p>A husband and wife flying in from the Philippines on May 11 carried in their luggage 34 pieces of elephant ivory, two carved hippopotamus tusks and two carved warthog tusks, agency spokesman Jason Givens said.</p> <p>At a customs check, they told officials they were bringing pickled mango into the country. But when officers inspected their bags with an X-ray machine, they found a box containing about 16 pounds of carved ivory and tusks wrapped in newspaper, he added. The couple didn’t have the proper documents for their cargo, Givens said.</p> <p>The officials contacted U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service inspectors, who seized the items. The couple was</p>

fined \$500 for violating an international treaty called CITES, the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora that regulates the trade of plant and wildlife species, Givens said. The seized ivory and tusks will be sent to the National Wildlife Property Repository, where they may be displayed for educational purposes or destroyed, he said.

CITES bans commercial trade of animals threatened by extinction. It also regulates the trade of species that could be in danger of becoming extinct if uncontrolled. Plant and animal products must be declared before travelers enter the U.S., and many items covered under the CITES treaty are required to have specific paperwork.

Carved elephant tusks can fetch about \$3,000 per kilogram (about \$1,400 per pound) on the black market, according to Havoscope, a service that compiles data on black-market transactions.

[Return to](#)

[Top](#)

HEADLINE 05/22 Fla. police: suspect in shootout dead

SOURCE <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/panama-city-florida-shooting-reports-suspect-fires-on-law-enforcement-today-2018/>

GIST PANAMA CITY, Fla. -- A man suspected of trading heavy gunfire with officers during an hourslong standoff with police at a Florida Panhandle apartment was found dead Tuesday after an armored vehicle approached the apartment, authorities said.

Bay County Sheriff Tommy Ford said that after sporadic bursts of heavy gunfire had pinned several officers down, the vehicle was eventually used to reach the location and a robot searched the residence, confirming the man was dead.

The standoff saw police exchanging gunfire with an assailant shooting from an elevated position with a rifle, Ford said. Several law enforcement agents had surrounded the apartment building and one bystander was hurt, he said. But he added no law enforcement agents were shot or wounded.

"We were just blessed that we didn't lose multiple officers and citizens today," Ford said at a news conference disclosing the end of the standoff.

While he called the standoff and gunfire a "nightmare scenario for us," Ford added, "Luckily none of the good guys were hurt."

He said a person leaving her apartment was injured and in stable condition. He didn't give immediate specifics.

Earlier Tuesday, witnesses reported hearing more than 50 shots as the standoff continued for hours in Panama City, where local television reporters were on camera during some of gunfire.

Bay County Sheriff's spokeswoman Ruth Corley said the suspect had been identified as 49-year-old Kevin Robert Holroyd, but there was no immediate indication of the specific circumstances that led to the standoff and gunfire.

But In neighboring Walton County, the sheriff's department said on its official Twitter account that the standoff in Panama City was connected with the suspicious death earlier in the day of 30-year-old Clinton Street in Santa Rosa Beach. That agency didn't elaborate and it was unclear how the two men were connected.

[Return to](#)

[Top](#)

HEADLINE 05/22 Renton fights street racing; closes roads

SOURCE	http://mynorthwest.com/995226/renton-street-racing-road-closure/
GIST	<p>The City of Renton has been fighting illegal street racing without success for decades, but the police might have just solved the problem.</p> <p>Every Friday and Saturday night, hundreds of cars and spectators show up in Renton’s industrial district to have their own version of the “Fast and the Furious.”</p> <p>“It’s very organized,” Renton Police Commander Chad Karlewicz said. “A lot of the people know each other. They have set meeting places. They have set race tracks. It’s not 10 or 15 people getting together to do this. It’s hundreds and hundreds of people.”</p> <p>Renton police have been chasing these racers for years, but only with limited emphasis patrols and stings, nothing long-term.</p> <p>“When we’re out there, they don’t race,” Karlewicz said. “The day that we’re not there, they are there...”</p> <p>The city decided to go to the extreme to shut this racing down. The city council voted to allow the police to shut down the three streets the racers were mainly using.</p> <p>“Let’s just take away their race track so there’s nowhere for them to race,” Karlewicz said. “Let’s be consistent in enforcement to try and convince them to go somewhere else or to stop altogether.”</p> <p>After two weekends of closing the roads from 10 p.m. to 5 a.m., Commander Karlewicz said the racers have disappeared.</p> <p>“In both weekends, we had no racing in Renton,” he said.</p> <p>So far, so good.</p> <p>“Time will tell,” Karlewicz said. “It’s a different tactic for sure, but we got to the point where we realized that we had to do something different, maybe something a little outside the box that we hadn’t thought of before. This is it, and we’re going to see where it goes.”</p> <p>When I asked Commander Karlewicz how long the city was willing to do this, he laughed.</p> <p>“Any time the weather is conducive to street racing, we’ll be out there with street closures from now until eternity,” he said.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	05/22 Claim: man confessed deadly hoax call
SOURCE	http://www.foxnews.com/us/2018/05/22/detective-man-confessed-to-making-deadly-kansas-hoax-call.html
GIST	<p>WICHITA, Kan. – A California man confessed after his arrest that he made the hoax calls that led a police officer to fatally shoot an unarmed man in Kansas, adding he routinely made similar calls to seek attention, a detective testified Tuesday.</p> <p>Tyler Barriss, 25, is accused of calling Wichita police from Los Angeles on Dec. 28 to report a shooting and kidnapping at a Wichita home. The person who made the two calls said he shot his father in the head and was holding his mother and younger brother at gunpoint in a closet in the house.</p> <p>Police went to the house where they thought the crime was occurring, and an officer fatally shot 28-year-old Andrew Finch after he opened the door.</p> <p>The shooting drew national attention to "swatting," a practice in which a person makes a false report to get</p>

emergency responders to descend on an address. Finch had not been the intended target of the call.

Sedgwick County Judge Bruce Brown ruled after the preliminary hearing Tuesday in Wichita that there was sufficient probable cause for trial on charges of involuntary manslaughter, giving a false alarm and interference with a law enforcement officer. The arraignment was set for June 29.

Los Angeles police detective Edward Dorroh told the court that in a police interview the day after the Kansas shooting Barriss claimed that he had "calculated the risk" that someone might be hurt responding to a false call. Reading from the transcript of that police interview, he testified Barris told him "it was only a matter of time and I guess that time was last night. It was so stupid."

Dorroh said he asked him whether he knew someone could get hurt, and Barriss replied: "I did know that. I am not going to deny that. I did know... the worst possible outcome happened. It is just so unfortunate."

The detective also testified that when asked why he did it, Barris replied that it was "attention seeking" and that he would have kept doing it if he hadn't been caught.

Barriss, who used the Twitter handle @SWAuTistic," told investigators that the Wichita swatting was the result of a dispute over a video game involving a \$1.50 bet, Dorroh said. One of the players contacted Barriss because a rival in the game was taunting him. Barriss told police he got the Wichita address from the player who initially contacted him, then followed the other player on Twitter and confirmed the address with him.

Wichita police officer Justin Rapp testified that he was assigned to provide cover from across the street for responding officers on the night of the Wichita shooting. He said he believed at the time that the man who came to the door was the one who had called 911 to report he had killed his father and was holding his mother and sibling at gunpoint.

Rapp said Finch was not compliant with the commands from police officers, and he saw him very briefly put his hands up to ear level and just as quickly put them down to his waist band. Finch then made a motion that looked like he might be drawing a gun from his waistband or a holster. Rapp said he fired one shot from his rifle.

"My fear is that he is going to open fire on the officers," Rapp said, adding his decision to shoot was based on information from the 911 call and Finch's actions on the porch.

Prosecutors have declined to charge the police officer who fatally shot Finch. District Attorney Marc Bennett told reporters in April that the officer who fired the shot was stationed across the street, and fired believing Finch was reaching for a weapon when he moved his arm.

Bennett told reporters after Barriss was charged in January in Kansas that there was no other situation quite like it to reference, acknowledging the "sort of novelty" of the case.

[Return to](#)

[Top](#)

HEADLINE	05/22 Experts: warning signs potential shooter
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/US/warning-signs-shooter-criminal-history/story?id=55349240
GIST	<p>Some school shooters act out and get in trouble with either school officials or police before making the deadly decision to open fire.</p> <p>For others, the shooting may be their first significant instance of violence.</p> <p>By all public accounts so far, Dimitrios Pagourtzis fell into the latter category up until the moment he shot and killed 10 people at his high school and injured 13 others last Friday.</p>

Pagourtzis's clean record contrasts with that of Nikolas Cruz, the alleged shooter who killed 17 people in Parkland in February.

According to school records obtained by ABC affiliate WPLG, Cruz was involved with an assault in January 2017, less than a month before the shooting. On the same day as the assault, he was suspended for one day and a threat assessment was ordered for him. He had been suspended for two days one month earlier. It is unclear what the result of the threat assessment was or whether one was even conducted.

In spite of an apparent lack of disciplinary issues with Pagourtzis, that doesn't mean there were no warning signs, experts say.

Scanning social media

Steve Gomez, a former FBI special agent in charge and current ABC News consultant, pointed to a T-shirt bearing the words "Born to Kill" that the teen posted on a social media account less than a month before the shooting.

"Threatening people at school, talking about violence, sharing social media posts showing guns, knives, T-shirts that say, in his case, 'Born to Kill,' are all signs," Gomez said.

Robert Boyce, a recently retired New York Police Department chief of detectives who is now an ABC News consultant, noted that social media can hold a number of clues.

"If someone sees something eerily or out of character on social media, someone needs to step forward. Go tell a teacher," he said.

Boyce was still working for the NYPD immediately after the Feb. 14 shooting in Parkland, and he said suspected school shooter complaints at schools "went way up" in the aftermath.

Other clues

Pagourtzis had reportedly been wearing a trench coat and heavy boots in the weeks before the shooting -- something that should have raised questions given that temperatures in Texas regularly hit the 80s and 90s in late spring, Boyce said.

Other changes in behavior, such as self-imposed social isolation, could also suggest a turn for the worse, Boyce said.

Sandy Hook Promise, a gun violence prevention group founded by the parents of two victims of the 2012 elementary school shooting, started a "Know the Signs" program that teaches students, parents and educators how to recognize red flags on social media and elsewhere before violence unfolds.

The group also notes on its website that "most mass shootings are planned for six months to a year. In almost every documented case, warning signs were given off that were not understood, were not acted upon quickly or was not shared with someone who could help."

Gomez said changes in romantic relationships, especially the ending of a relationship, or an individual "not taking no for an answer" and becoming aggressive are potential warning signs. School administrators need to be notified as well as law enforcement about these red flags, he added.

"What law enforcement has to do is they have to engage with the schools, the school districts, school administrators as well as parents, so they can explain to them the kind of red flags and behavioral indicators of concern that they need to look for with students who may potentially commit such violent attacks," Gomez said.

[Return to](#)

[Top](#)

SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/05/22/us/baltimore-police-officer-killed-suspect/index.html
GIST	<p>(CNN)Baltimore County, Maryland, police arrested a teenager who allegedly admitted to using a Jeep Wrangler to fatally strike an officer who was trying to get the youth to exit the vehicle.</p> <p>Dawnta Anthony Harris, 16, was arrested Monday in connection with the death of Baltimore County police Officer Amy Caprio. He has been charged as an adult with first-degree murder and will have a bail hearing Tuesday afternoon, according to police.</p> <p>The incident began around 2 p.m. Monday when police were called to investigate a report of a possible burglary in which three people had gotten out of a black Jeep and were walking around homes, according to a probable cause statement. The callers said the subjects had broken into one home, the documents state.</p> <p>Officers arriving at the scene found Caprio in the roadway suffering from traumatic injuries. She was transported to Franklin Square Hospital, where she was pronounced dead, the probable cause documents said.</p> <p>The officer had worked for Baltimore County police for nearly four years, authorities said.</p> <p>A witness said he saw Caprio outside her patrol car shouting orders to the driver of a Jeep Wrangler, according to court documents. The witness said the vehicle then drove directly at the officer and struck her, the documents state.</p> <p>The vehicle was discovered abandoned nearby, and a description of the driver was broadcast over police radio, the documents said. Harris matched that description and was stopped about a block from the abandoned Jeep, according to court documents.</p> <p>In an interview with police, he admitted he was waiting in the driver's seat of the Jeep as other associates were committing a burglary, according to court documents. Caprio followed him, got out of her vehicle and demanded he exit the Jeep, he said, according to documents.</p> <p>He confessed he partially opened the driver's door but then shut it and drove at the officer, the documents state.</p> <p>The three teenage males suspected of being involved with burglaries in the area also have been taken into custody, police said.</p>
Return to Top	

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[Return to Top](#)