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Event Calendar

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Date	Event	Location/Time	Other Information
9-13 Apr 2018	LEIU/IALEIA Training Event	Marriott Hotel, 700 West Convention Way Anaheim, CA 92801 (714) 750-8000	http://www.ialeia.org/2018_conference.php
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Events, Opportunities

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HEADLINE	04/02 Q&A: US, SKorea war drills
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/0e5dcfc5661a48e590f8b42aa56b5022/Q&A:-Things-to-know-about-US-South-Korea-war-drills
GIST	<p>SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — Another spring on the Korean Peninsula, another round of war games by the U.S. and South Korean militaries.</p> <p>This week’s drills, however, will feature a new and unusually low-key approach, with the allies resisting bringing in their big guns, and the North, for the time being, avoiding its usual belligerent propaganda against exercises that it claims are an invasion rehearsal.</p> <p>The reason for this departure? There’s interest in Washington and Seoul in nurturing a diplomatic outreach by North Korea’s young leader, Kim Jong Un, after months of weapons tests and threats of nuclear war by the North.</p> <p>On Sunday, the first day of this year’s drills, instead of vowing to destroy Seoul, Kim attended a concert in Pyongyang of visiting South Korean pop singers, clapping his hands and asking for more such performances.</p> <p>Some questions and answers about this year’s drills, which come ahead of two separate historic summits between Kim and his South Korean and U.S. counterparts:</p> <p>—</p> <p>Q: Are the drills really more low-key than in past years?</p> <p>A: Yes, they are.</p> <p>This year’s exercises were postponed because of the Pyeongchang Winter Olympics, where the Koreas worked out a series of rapprochement steps, including parading together behind a single flag during the opening ceremony and fielding a unified women’s hockey team.</p>

Seoul and Washington both publicly say the training this time will be similar to previous years. But South Korean defense officials say there are no immediate plans to bring in U.S. aircraft carriers, powerful bombers or other strategic assets that have been deployed in and around the Korean Peninsula during past drills. The North loathes such American weapons.

The two sets of drills, one field-training and the other computer-simulated, typically run for two months, but this year's exercises are scheduled to last for just one month. The allies also have no immediate plans to publicize the training, according to Seoul's Defense Ministry.

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Q: How will North Korea react to this year's drills?

A: North Korea's state media haven't said anything about the drills so far. Even if there is some criticism later, it will likely be milder than past warlike rhetoric, which often saw daily threats to launch nuclear strikes on Seoul and Washington or void the armistice that ended the 1950-53 Korean War.

Kim told visiting South Korean officials last month that he "understands" the drills will take place and expressed hope that they'll be modified once the situation on the peninsula stabilizes, according to the South Korean government.

While diplomacy holds, it's also unlikely that North Korea will test any weapons, as it has during past drills. Such tests could endanger the North's outreach and crush the current rapprochement.

South Korea's Defense Ministry said Monday that it hadn't detected any suspicious activities by the North Korean military.

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Q: What's next after the drills?

A: Kim's planned meeting with South Korean President Moon Jae-in on April 27 comes around the time the U.S.-South Korean drills end.

The meeting will be the third-ever inter-Korean summit since the Koreas' 1945 division. It is crucial because it may offer insight about what nuclear disarmament steps Kim could offer, and what concessions the allies might be willing to provide.

It is unlikely that Kim will completely give up his nukes. Only last year he claimed to have functional nuclear missiles targeting the entire U.S. mainland, though foreign experts believe the North still hasn't perfected such missiles. Kim's dictator father and grandfather long aspired to have such power.

During Kim's visit to China last week, his first overseas trip since taking office in 2011, he indicated that he prefers step-by-step, not immediate, disarmament-for-aid deals with the United States and South Korea. This could spell trouble because some hard-line U.S. officials want the North to take immediate, complete disarmament steps so as not to repeat past negotiations in which the North was seen as winning badly needed aid while covertly continuing its bomb program.

Kim and President Donald Trump plan to meet in May, but the exact date and location of their meeting haven't been announced.

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SOURCE	https://www.thenational.ae/world/europe/punish-a-muslim-day-uk-cities-stand-together-in-the-face-of-islamophobic-threat-1.717770
GIST	<p>Communities across the UK are bracing themselves for Punish a Muslim Day after letters were sent out calling for violence against Muslims on April 3.</p> <p>Last month, letters were circulated by post in major cities and on social media suggesting ways to hurt people and awarding points for certain “punishments”.</p> <p>The letters, which are being investigated by British counter-terrorism police, appear to be in response to ISIL-inspired attacks, four of which took place in the UK in 2017.</p> <p>"They have hurt you. They have made your loved ones suffer. They have caused you pain and heartache. What are you going to about it?" read one of the letters which was circulated online.</p> <p>The Saudi Embassy in London said it had been in contact with the British authorities about the contents of the letter and advised its citizens in the UK to exercise caution and vigilance.</p> <p>In the city of Leicester, where Muslims make up 20 per cent of the population, fears of attacks are high. Last week, Paul Moore, 21, was sentenced to a minimum of 20 years in prison for attempted murder after he attacked a woman and a 12-year-old girl wearing Islamic clothing.</p> <p>Leicestershire Police have said they will be ready to take action on April 3 if Muslims feel threatened.</p> <p>“We have operational plans in place should anything happen on what will hopefully be an ordinary day,” Chief Constable Simon Cole said last week.</p> <p>“It is particularly distasteful and unpleasant and I almost don’t want to talk about it in case of dignifying it and making it something it isn’t.”</p> <p>“We take hate crime seriously, and I hope the conviction and sentence of Paul Moore yesterday proves that.”</p> <p>In February, Darren Osborne, a 48-year-old, was sentenced to life imprisonment for attacking worshippers outside Finsbury Park Mosque in London last year. Osborne killed one man and injured 12 others after he drove a van into pedestrians outside the mosque who had attended nighttime prayers during Ramadan. A handwritten note was found in the van, which referred to Muslims as “feral” and lambasted London’s Muslim mayor, Sadiq Khan.</p> <p>Metropolitan Police said they were aware of concerns following the Punish a Muslim Day letters but that there was no credible information to suggest criminal activity would take place.</p> <p>However, the Met urged anyone with any information about hate crime to contact them immediately.</p> <p>The National Police Chiefs Association released a statement on Thursday about the letters, assuring the public that threats were being taken seriously and that it had taken measures to stop people becoming victims of crime.</p> <p>Meanwhile, community leaders across the country have called for unity in the face of the threat.</p> <p>In Nottingham, one of the cities where letters were circulated, 28 Muslim groups endorsed a statement asking citizens “to make a conscious effort to counter such hate by supporting the Muslim community on April 3”.</p> <p>"An attack on any part of our community is an attack on us all. Our vision like everyone else, is to live in a society that is compassionate, kind and committed to justice and peace," the statement read.</p>

	<p>In Leicester, a community group has organised an event in defiance of Punish a Muslim Day.</p> <p>St Matthew's Big Local will be holding a day of celebration for Muslims and non-Muslims alike on April 3, with activities including story-telling, face painting and a walking bus march.</p> <p>St Matthew's wrote on Twitter: "We are bringing our community together on Tuesday as our diversity is our strength."</p>
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HEADLINE	04/01 Analysis: blacks left out high-paying jobs
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/76ba3a042b454d0b8f5341f37490c6cc/AP-analysis:-Blacks-largely-left-out-among-high-paying-jobs
GIST	<p>BOSTON (AP) — Jonathan Garland’s fascination with architecture started early: He spent much of his childhood designing Lego houses and gazing at Boston buildings on rides with his father away from their largely minority neighborhood.</p> <p>But when Garland looked around at his architectural college, he didn’t see many who looked like him — there were few black faces in classroom seats, and fewer teaching skills or giving lectures.</p> <p>“If you do something simple like Google ‘architects’ and you go to the images tab, you’re primarily going to see white males,” said Garland, 35, who’s worked at Boston and New York architectural firms. “That’s the image, that’s the brand, that’s the look of an architect.”</p> <p>And that’s not uncommon in other lucrative fields, 50 years after the Rev. Martin Luther King — a leader in the fight for equal-employment opportunities — was assassinated.</p> <p>An Associated Press analysis of government data has found that black workers are chronically underrepresented compared with whites in high-salary jobs in technology, business, life sciences, and architecture and engineering, among other areas. Instead, many black workers find jobs in low-wage, less-prestigious fields where they’re overrepresented, such as food service or preparation, building maintenance and office work, the AP analysis found.</p> <p>In one of his final speeches, King described the “Other America,” where unemployment and underemployment created a “fatigue of despair” for African-Americans. Despite economic progress for blacks in areas such as incomes and graduation rates, some experts say many African-Americans remain part of this “Other America” — with little hope of attaining top professional jobs, thanks to systemic yet subtle racism.</p> <p>The AP analysis found that a white worker had a far better chance than a black one of holding a job in the 11 categories with the highest median annual salaries, as listed by the Bureau of Labor Statistics. The ratio of white-to-black workers is about 10-to-1 in management, 8-to-1 in computers and mathematics, 12-to-1 in law, and 7-to-1 in education — compared with a ratio of 5.5 white workers for every black one in all jobs nationally. The top five high-paying fields have a median income range of \$65,000 to \$100,000, compared with \$36,000 for all occupations nationwide.</p> <p>In Boston — a hub for technology and innovation, and home to prestigious universities — white workers outnumber black ones by about 27-to-1 in computer- and mathematics-related professions, compared with the overall ratio of 9.5-to-1 for workers in the city. Overall, Boston’s ratio of white-to-black workers is wider than that of the nation in six of the top 10 high-income fields.</p> <p>Boston — where King had deep ties, earning his doctorate and meeting his wife — has a history of racial discord. Eight years after King’s assassination, at the height of turbulent school desegregation, a Pulitzer Prize-winning photograph from an anti-busing rally at City Hall showed a white man attacking a black</p>

bystander with an American flag.

The young victim was Theodore Landsmark. He's now 71, a lawyer, an architect and director of Northeastern University's Dukakis Center for Urban and Regional Policy.

The Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. addresses civil rights marchers on Boston Common on April 23, 1965.

He said "structural discrimination" is the overarching cause of disproportionate race representation in high-paying fields. Landsmark and others say gains are elusive for myriad reasons: Substandard schools in low-income neighborhoods. White-dominated office cliques. Boardrooms that prefer familiarity to diversity. Discriminatory hiring practices. Companies that claim a lack of qualified candidates but have no programs to train minority talent.

Some also say investors are more likely to support white startups. When Rica Elysee — a lifelong Boston resident who grew up in predominantly black neighborhoods — brought her idea of an online platform linking beauty professionals with customers for in-home appointments to investors, she was shunned, she said.

"They said I didn't belong in the program, that they couldn't identify with it because they weren't black," said Elysee, 32, who initially marketed BeautyLynk to black women like herself. "I remember crying pretty harshly. They couldn't relate to what I was doing."

Some even advised her to move out of Boston, which had a booming innovation economy but was "not encouraging minorities in the tech space," she said. Three years later, Elysee said BeautyLynk is slowly growing but still needs capital.

Most American metro areas are like Boston, with AP's analysis showing that racial disparities in employment are indifferent to geography and politics. California's Silicon Valley struggles to achieve diversity in computer fields. In Seattle, home to Amazon, whites outnumber blacks nearly 28-to-1 in computer- and math-related fields. Financial powerhouse New York has a 3-to-1 ratio of white-to-black workers in all occupations, but nearly 6-to-1 in business and finance. Hollywood shows inequality in entertainment, with almost nine whites for every black worker.

In Atlanta, King's hometown, the proportional representation of black-to-white workers is close to even in many fields. Many reasons are cited. Atlanta has historically black colleges and universities such as King's alma mater, Morehouse; the first black mayor, Maynard Jackson, pressed for policies helping black professionals after his 1973 election; and events like the 1996 Olympics opened doors for entrepreneurs of all races.

Atlanta is an exception. For nearly all of the past half-century, black unemployment nationally has hovered at about twice that of whites.

In Boston, Democratic Mayor Marty Walsh said in a recent speech that the city is addressing the issue and is committed to placing 20,000 low-income residents in "good-paying jobs" by 2022.

Landsmark said stronger role models may be a solution. As Boston Architectural College's president, he mentored Garland. They discussed race issues in the professional world — as when Garland, trying to land jobs in his neighborhood, realized many people who looked like him were unfamiliar with the very concept of architecture. He once had to explain to a homeowner who wanted his roof reframed: "I'm not a builder, I'm an architect."

Today, Garland speaks at high schools and works at the DREAM Collaborative, which focuses on projects in low-income neighborhoods.

"I know the barriers exist in other folks' minds, and I have to disprove that," he said. "I keep myself focused on the issues."

HEADLINE	04/01 Fear: JUUL craze getting teens addicted
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2018/apr/1/juul-smoking-craze-sparks-teen-nicotine-addiction-/
GIST	<p>It's the latest smoking craze that has teenagers buzzing on social media — and public health officials warning of a new nicotine-addicted generation.</p> <p>“People JUUL at parties, JUUL when they're driving — it's a social thing. They're JUULing all the time,” said C., 17, who said some students at her high school use the popular electronic cigarette in class.</p> <p>Similar to vaping, JUUL is a brand-name e-cigarette that has outpaced its competition thanks to its sleek, discreet shape — many compare it to the size and look of a thumb drive — and its unique vaping formula of flavored nicotine and salt.</p> <p>Its battery can be recharged on a laptop within one hour, and its liquid-filled cartridges come in flavors — cool mint, creme brulee, fruit medley — that anti-smoking advocates say target teens.</p> <p>Juul's website, which asks users if they are 21 or older before allowing access, says the device is not for teens or anyone who has never smoked. It is intended only as an alternative for cigarette smokers who have had little success in quitting smoking, the company says.</p> <p>“The entire conception, premise, operations, mission of the company is to eliminate cigarettes and get adult smokers to switch to our vapor product,” said company spokeswoman Christine Castro.</p> <p>“It is not intended to be discreet. It was not designed to look like a flash drive,” Ms. Castro said. “It was designed specifically and intentionally to help smokers switch.”</p> <p>Still, on Twitter, Instagram and other online forums, young people have put up funny posts about using, losing or being addicted to their JUULs. Some post videos of themselves in classrooms or locker rooms using their JUULs and playing with the smoke.</p> <p>The problem has become widespread at their co-ed, religious school in New York, and administrators have listed it on announcements of banned substances, “no smoking, no drinking, no vaping,” said the two students, who asked not to be identified for fear of reprisals.</p> <p>“But vaping isn't JUULing,” C. said. “JUULing is more intense.”</p> <p>That intensity is the rush of nicotine into the system from the company's unique liquid formula. At 5 percent nicotine per volume, one JUUL cartridge, or pod, is the equivalent to a pack of cigarettes.</p> <p>“We're very concerned about JUUL because it has become such a popular product among young people very, very rapidly,” said Robin Koval, CEO of the Truth Initiative, a nonprofit youth anti-smoking organization.</p> <p>According to internal research by the Truth Initiative, a survey of teenagers found that a significant percentage using JUULs said they were “unaware or unsure that the product contains nicotine.”</p> <p>“We know that nicotine has effects on young people's cognitive development. If you become addicted to nicotine at a younger age, it makes you more susceptible to other addictions later on. It makes it harder to quit nicotine, whether that's from an e-cigarette-type product or combustible product,” Ms. Koval said.</p> <p>Among teenagers, anti-smoking campaigns and tighter restrictions on cigarette sales have helped curb cigarette use to a historic low of 4.2 percent among high school seniors in 2017, compared with a peak of</p>

	<p>24.6 percent in 1997, according to the National Institutes of Health’s Monitoring the Future Survey.</p> <p>Yet applause by health officials and advocates is tempered by a rise in vaping popularity. In its first survey of the subject, it found that nearly one-third of 12th-graders reported using some kind of vaping device. The majority said they vaped “just liquid,” followed by nicotine and marijuana.</p> <p>The JUUL company says on its website that it sells only to adults 21 and older, uses verification tools to prevent underage purchases and has a youth prevention section with an email contact to address concerns.</p> <p>“Kids should not use any nicotine product including ours and we’re working very hard to make headway on that,” said Ms. Castro.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/01 China: 128 US products w/steep tariffs
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2018/apr/1/china-announces-128-tariffs-us-meat-fruit-other-pr/
GIST	<p>China slapped a heavy tariff Monday on U.S. meat, fruits, wine and other products, saying it was a retaliation against President Trump’s import tax on steel and aluminum.</p> <p>Beijing had warned the U.S. that the tariffs were coming after the Trump administration announced a regime of new tariffs, first on steel and aluminum and then on Chinese high-tech.</p> <p>China’s Ministry of Commerce said the U.S. had “seriously violated” the principles of non-discrimination under World Trade Organization rules. It said the U.S. also had damaged China’s interests.</p> <p>“China’s suspension of some of its obligations to the United States is its legitimate right as a member of the World Trade Organization,” the ministry said in a statement.</p> <p>Beijing, which has insisted it wants to avoid a trade war, also called for more negotiations to resolve disputes between the world’s two largest economies.</p> <p>The Trump administration had said to expect retaliation, but said that Beijing’s unfair trade practices and theft of intellectual property warranted tariffs and other strict measures.</p> <p>China’s new tariffs hit 128 U.S. products worth a total of \$3 billion in trade, including a 25 percent tax on frozen pork and scrap aluminum, and a 15 percent tax on food commodities such as nuts, fruit and wine.</p> <p>The retaliation also included a 15 percent increase in duties on rolled steel bars.</p> <p>The tit-for-tat tariffs smacked of the trade war the U.S. business leaders and investors feared when the Trump administration began enacting get-tough policies on Beijing.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/29 Regional park and rides high demand
SOURCE	https://crosscut.com/2018/03/puget-sound-region-grows-park-and-rides-fill
GIST	<p>The Mountlake Terrace park and ride’s crowding reflects the challenges of meeting demand as the region continues to grow and more people look to transit for less stressful and more environmentally responsible commuting options. A 2009 rebuild nearly tripled the parking capacity at the park and ride, which is owned by Snohomish County’s Community Transit. But now, the garage is again bursting at the seams.</p> <p>All across the region, these free first-come, first-serve park-and-ride lots are in high demand. According to data collected by the Puget Sound Regional Council in 2017, almost a third of park-and-ride lots in the</p>

region have an occupancy rate of 90 percent or higher on weekdays. Sound Transit estimates more than half of the 37 park-and-ride lots the agency operates have more than a 90 percent occupancy rate, 12 of which are completely full most weekdays.

“Build more parking” is one of the most common requests Sound Transit receives as its light rail system expands into the sprawling suburbs, where culs-de-sac built for automobiles dominate the landscape.

“Many Sound Transit customers have few reasonably available alternatives for accessing Sound Transit services besides driving and parking a private vehicle,” Kimberly Reason, a spokesperson for Sound Transit, wrote in an email. “In some cases, lack of available parking ... will be a limiting factor for access to the transit system.”

But adding more free parking doesn’t come cheap. Rising property values and soaring construction costs have pushed the price for a future Kent park-and-ride lot at over \$100,000 per stall.

To some, that’s a pricey subsidy when it only benefits about a third of Sound Transit customers.

And others, including Seattle City Councilmember Rob Johnson, see parking lots as an unwise use of land adjacent to transit.

“As a [Sound Transit] board member, I spend a lot of time encouraging my fellow board members to think about the millions of dollars being spent in their neighborhoods to build structured parking garages and [to] think differently about how they might want that money to be spent on things like buses, bikes or housing,” Johnson said.

He said Seattle has a longstanding policy of discouraging park and rides in the city, “because we are of the belief we should be building more housing near our transit [instead of] parking lots.”

But his fellow board member, Redmond Mayor John Marchione, says that parking is needed in suburban cities because of insufficient bus service. “The further away you get from the center of the system, the more parking you need,” he said.

“In Redmond, we are focused on both bike and pedestrian access but we also have parking planned for our station that’s further east,” Marchione said. He said many people will drive in from Sammamish, Duvall or elsewhere to board light rail.

The first-mile/last-mile dilemma

Making that first connection from home to transit is one of the biggest hurdles potential riders must clear — an obstacle known to transportation planners as the first-mile/last-mile dilemma. Many suburban residents don’t live within walking or biking distance of a bus stop, and even if they did, many jurisdictions lack the adequate infrastructure to ensure those are safe travel options.

“The reason we have parking investments in our plans is because, through the community process, that’s what folks in those communities told us that they need to access and use our system,” said Matt Shelden, Sound Transit’s director of planning and innovation.

According to Sound Transit, about a third of riders across the agency’s system use the park-and-ride lots, of which the vast majority are solo drivers. The rest walk, bike, carpool, take a feeder bus or get dropped off.

The Sound Transit 3 plan — approved by voters in 2016 — adds some 10,000 new parking spaces, which is estimated to cost nearly \$700 million, or roughly \$69,000 per space to build. This will increase the number of park-and-ride spaces Sound Transit owns or leases by 64 percent, from 15,832 to nearly 26,000.

Transportation Choices Coalition (TCC), a transportation advocacy group that works to expand transit

	<p>options, agrees with Sound Transit that many suburban riders lack other options besides driving to access transit. But TCC doesn't see building more parking as the answer to the first-mile/last-mile dilemma.</p> <p>Hester Serebrin, the policy director at TCC, in an email suggested there were better ways to spend money on transit, instead of earmarking it for parking. She said, for instance, "if officials focused development efforts on transit-oriented development — housing and employment centers around those now-suburban stations — all of a sudden more taxpayers in the Sound Transit district [will] have more access to transit, in more affordable and sustainable ways."</p> <p>Sound Transit is wrestling with rising project costs that have delayed the opening of the Lynnwood Link Extension, an 8.5-mile expansion that will run from Northgate to Lynnwood, with two stops in Shoreline and one in Mountlake Terrace. One suggestion to keep the project on time and under budget is to first eliminate new parking from the plan.</p> <p>But "if parking is not provided where it is really needed, it is going to have a dampening effect on ridership," Sound Transit's Shelden said. And that will mean more cars on I-5.</p> <p>If parking is going to be expanded, TCC's Serebrin would rather Sound Transit lease existing parking rather than build new parking; build shared parking with other new development in the area; or build parking in a flexible way so it could be converted to other uses in the future. The advocacy group also wants transit agencies to begin charging a daily price for parking.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/01 'Ricky's Law' goes into effect
SOURCE	http://www.king5.com/article/news/local/long-awaited-rickys-law-goes-into-effect-in-washington/281-109557738
GIST	<p>A new law took effect April 1, 2018 aimed at helping people fighting addiction. Ricky's Law is named after suicide survivor Ricky Garcia. He believes he could have been helped sooner if Washington had involuntary commitment.</p> <p>The new law allows someone to be involuntarily committed if they are deemed at-risk of harming themselves. The law also designates nine facilities for involuntary commitment.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/02 Easter snow brings cold start to April
SOURCE	http://www.king5.com/article/news/local/easter-snow-brings-cold-start-to-april/281-534086827
GIST	<p>Easter brought with it some interesting weather. Definitely not the sunny and 60-degree weather we saw on Saturday. Sunday's wintry conditions will push into the first week of April.</p> <p>The cold front that brought Sunday's rain and wind moved through bringing much cooler air and dropped overnight temps into the mid-to-upper 30s. A wet snowflake can't be ruled out Monday morning around 1,000 feet. Luckily, there isn't much moisture left so little to no accumulation is expected.</p> <p>The next issue is in the mountains (central Cascades) where a Winter Weather Advisory is in effect until 5 a.m. Monday. The National Weather Service says snow accumulations up to three inches are expected Monday morning. Travel through the passes could be tricky, so check with WSDOT before heading out.</p> <p>Although Monday will start out a bit cooler, with a few lingering showers, the sun returns by the afternoon. Tuesday looks nice with lots of sunshine and slightly warmer temps. Rainy, but warmer, weather is expected mid-to-late week.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/01 Smoking, vaping illegal Redmond parks
SOURCE	http://q13fox.com/2018/04/01/smoking-vaping-is-now-illegal-in-redmond-parks/
GIST	<p>REDMOND, Wash. — You can't smoke or vape in any Redmond park or trail. The new park rule went into effective March 31.</p> <p>City officials said they made the rule after an extensive public outreach effort focused on addressing criminal and civil behaviors in city parks.</p> <p>This is the first change the city made to its park rules in 24 years.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/02 Wild ride behind crown prince visit to US
SOURCE	https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2018-04-02/a-wild-ride-behind-the-scenes-as-saudi-crown-prince-does-america
GIST	<p>The phone call came at 8 p.m. from the Saudi royal court: Come to The Plaza, immediately.</p> <p>We journalists rushed over to the Manhattan hotel, but it was almost three hours before anything happened. And when it did -- when Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman and Masayoshi Son, Softbank's chief executive officer, wordlessly signed papers and declared that a "huge step in human history" had been taken -- we had no idea what they were talking about. As the prince left, Son stood still for several long seconds before taking questions.</p> <p>"What just happened?" I ventured.</p> <p>The public signing of a Saudi plan to build a \$200 billion solar facility was indeed historic. If successful, it will be the world's largest solar-energy installation by a factor of 100. But no one told us what was going on as we sat on the floor (no chairs). It was just another day -- or night -- in the chaotic life of the hundreds of officials, business figures and communications consultants who are trailing the heir to the Saudi throne around the world as he tries to drum up investment and boost his country's image. He's in the middle of a three-week U.S. visit. After Washington, Boston and New York, the delegation headed to the West Coast for meetings with Microsoft founder Bill Gates and the heads of Amazon, Apple, Google and Uber.</p> <p>Visa Rush</p> <p>The trip got off to a madcap start when the Saudis applied at the last minute for more than 500 U.S. visas, according to a person familiar with the matter. As organizers weighed whether to allow media access to a gala dinner in Washington, I was invited, dis-invited and then re-invited.</p> <p>At least three government entities, along with outside firms, are involved in coordinating press coverage of the visit but information has been scarce. Journalists gleaned the outline of the prince's schedule -- when he would travel to different cities, who would accompany him and whom he would meet -- through rumors and anonymous sources.</p> <p>Part of the tension appears to be over how much to publicize -- and how much change the Saudi public can handle. While in New York, Prince Mohammed met with U.S. Zionist leaders, including from the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations and the American Jewish Committee. But the participants were sworn to secrecy. Meanwhile, another meeting he held in New York, with religious figures including Roman Catholic clergy and two rabbis, was heralded by the Saudi embassy as inter-religious dialogue that "emphasized the common bond among all people, particularly people of faith."</p> <p>Asked about the unannounced meeting, one Saudi government representative didn't respond while a second referred back to the press release about the interfaith gathering without further comment.</p>

Glazed Eyes

The prince is in a hurry to remake the once fiercely closed-off Islamic kingdom, diversifying its economy away from oil and loosening social restrictions even as he tightens his political grip over the authoritarian state. He's famous for working long hours and late nights, as the glazed eyes of the employees arranging his trip can attest. He'd barely finished official visits to Egypt and the U.K. when he jetted to Washington.

Some chaos is inevitable on a trip of such scale. But it's also a symptom of the growing pains Saudi Arabia is going through as its secretive government pledges more transparency -- crucial in the lead-up to the initial public offering of as much as 5 percent of state oil company Saudi Aramco. For a society that has long valued discretion, a road show promoting openness is a bit of an alien concept.

The Saudi government has undeniably opened up during the past few years, issuing a slew of visas for foreign journalists and appointing spokesmen where none existed. In New York, Prince Mohammed met with reporters and editors at the New York Times and the Wall Street Journal, albeit mostly off the record.

"We have committed to increasing the level of transparency and accountability," said Husameddin AlMadani, head of Saudi Arabia's National Center for Performance Management, a government agency that measures progress on the targets set by the prince. "It helps investors. It helps think tanks and researchers."

How that will play out is far from clear as officials lurch between traditional silence and promises of openness. The result is often a bizarre blend, a kind of twilight zone where something -- it's just not always clear what -- is being announced. That's what happened last week at the Plaza at midnight. As quickly as it started, the event was over. Reporters were left to meander past the closed bar and dishes of Saudi dates, observing a handful of delegates working into the morning hours.

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HEADLINE	04/01 Statues offensive Native Americans next?
SOURCE	http://www.latimes.com/nation/la-na-native-american-statue-removal-20180401-story.html
GIST	<p>Over the decades, this quiet coastal hamlet has earned a reputation as one of the most liberal places in the nation. Arcata was the first U.S. city to ban the sale of genetically modified foods, the first to elect a majority Green Party city council and one of the first to tacitly allow marijuana farming before pot was legal.</p> <p>Now it's on the verge of another first.</p> <p>No other city has taken down a monument to a president for his misdeeds. But Arcata is poised to do just that. The target is an 8½-foot bronze likeness of William McKinley, who was president at the turn of the last century and stands accused of directing the slaughter of Native peoples in the U.S. and abroad.</p> <p>"Put a rope around its neck and pull it down," Chris Peters shouted at a recent rally held at the statue, which has adorned the central square for more than a century.</p> <p>Peters, who heads the Arcata-based Seventh Generation Fund for Indigenous People, called McKinley a proponent of "settler colonialism" that "savaged, raped and killed."</p> <p>A presidential statue would be the most significant casualty in an emerging movement to remove monuments honoring people who helped lead what Native groups describe as a centuries-long war against their very existence.</p> <p>The push follows the rapid fall of Confederate memorials across the South in a victory for activists who view them as celebrating slavery. In the nearly eight months since white supremacists marched in central Virginia to protest the removal of a Robert E. Lee statue, cities across the country have yanked dozens of Confederate monuments. Black politicians and activists have been among the strongest supporters of the</p>

removals.

This time, it's tribal activists taking charge, and it's the West and California in particular leading the way. The state is home to the largest Native American population in the country and more than 100 federally recognized tribes.

In February, San Francisco officials said they planned to remove a prominent downtown monument depicting a defeated Native American at the feet of a vaquero and a Spanish missionary. In March, the San Jose City Council booted a statue of Christopher Columbus from the lobby of City Hall.

Other states are joining the movement. The city of Kalamazoo, Mich., said last month it would take down a park monument of a Native American in a headdress kneeling before a westward-facing pioneer. In Alcalde, N.M., and El Paso, statues of the conquistador Juan de Oñate have become subjects of renewed debate.

In Baltimore, a city councilman has vowed to replace a smashed Columbus monument with something that better reflects "current-day values."

In Arcata, a city of about 17,000 about two hours south of the Oregon state line, a long-simmering debate over McKinley caught fire after Charlottesville. Area tribes and activists launched a petition campaign and descended on City Hall. The protesters said they couldn't watch Confederate monuments fall without thinking of their own statue.

By the winter, the plaza played host to regular protests. McKinley became a symbol of Arcata's sins against Natives and, by extension, other races too, forcing the city to confront some of its embarrassing history. In 1886, for example, Arcata passed a law calling for the "total expulsion of the Chinese."

McKinley also became a target for anger at President Trump, who has stoked racial tensions with his comments — including his continued insistence that there were "very fine people" among the white supremacists who rallied in Charlottesville.

One Arcata resident was so incensed over McKinley that he protested 26 days straight on the plaza. He held a sign that read, "This Christmas, give the gift of not supporting racism and murder. Remove the statue."

The debate culminated in February during a long and anger-filled City Council meeting, when dozens of residents packed City Hall to testify on both sides of the issue. In the end, the council voted 4 to 1 to get rid of the statue.

"Is there a difference between honoring McKinley and Robert E. Lee?" the mayor, Sofia Pereira, who was part the majority, said in a recent interview. "They both represent historical pain."

The land that is now Arcata was once inhabited by the Wiyot Tribe. Then in the 1850s the logging boom began — and pioneers seeking wealth began rapidly grabbing tribal lands. In 1860, settlers massacred dozens of Wiyots, whom tribe members still mourn today. Wiyot children were commonly abducted and forced into servitude.

McKinley, a Republican who was president from 1897 until his assassination in 1901, never set foot in the region. But after his death dozens of memorials to him popped up across the nation.

In Honolulu, there's McKinley High School. In Philadelphia, a McKinley statue stands in front of City Hall. Chicago has McKinley Park neighborhood, with a statue of the president at the entrance to its main park.

The highest mountain in North America, Alaska's Mt. Denali, was named Mt. McKinley until it was officially returned to his original name in 2015. Unlike other sites, the mountain got its name before

McKinley died.

Just north of Arcata is an unincorporated area called McKinleyville.

The McKinley statue has been in Arcata Plaza since 1906, when a local businessman commissioned and gifted it to the city to honor "the first modern president."

The city eventually grew into a haven for hippies from the Bay Area who sought a quieter life and cheaper land. Marijuana growers flocked to the area, as did activists who enrolled at Humboldt State University for its environmental and Native American studies programs.

But the statue remained as a vestige of a more conservative past. Locals embraced the president as a mascot, dressing him as a lumberjack, and placing bunny ears on his head for Easter. Pranksters have been known to put condoms on his outstretched fingers and stuff cheese in his ears.

Local tribes long resented the statue but remained silent on the matter, figuring there was little chance it would ever come down.

"The Native people here have avoided that square for years," said Ted Hernandez, chairman of the 620-member Wiyot Tribe, which is based on a reservation about 20 miles south of the city. "Why do we have this man standing in this square where they used to sell our children?"

Hernandez's tribe is one of more than a dozen whose members showed up in Arcata or sent letters of protest over the months against McKinley.

Bernadette Smith, who recently drove four hours north from the Manchester Band of Pomo Indians rancheria to protest the monument, described getting rid of the statue as "bigger than just a small victory for our community."

"What happened is going to inspire Natives across America," she said. Smith, 31, said the win in Arcata spurred her to launch a campaign to rename the Garcia River that divides her tribe's land back to its original name of P'da Hau.

The McKinley statue also has its supporters. Dozens showed up at City Hall in February to make their case before the vote. They came again in March when the City Council briefly floated the idea of opening up the statue debate to a citywide vote.

David LaRue, an Arcata resident for the last 22 years, started a Facebook group called "Let the people vote on our McKinley statue" and is now gathering signatures for ballot initiative to do just that.

He said that unlike Confederate leaders whose monuments are no longer widely accepted, McKinley fought for the Union in the Civil War. LaRue also pointed out that McKinley defied the norms of his time in appointing several African Americans to federal posts.

"Certainly by today's standards, he had different ways of looking at things," he said. "But looking at Abraham Lincoln by today's standards, you could also say he was a horrible racist."

The debate has also divided families.

Former Arcata Mayor Bob Ornelas, who has lived in the city since 1979, said tearing down McKinley would take away from the city's culture. He said he couldn't imagine the square, home to the Saturday farmers market and nearly every major city festival, without the McKinley statue there.

"I don't read much into it," said Ornelas, who is Mexican American. "It's not Robert E. Lee. If it was somebody who is known to fight their cousins for the right to have a slave, I would be offended. But during his time he got pushed around by a Congress that was hungry for ... expanding the American

empire."

He sees things differently than his wife, a councilwoman who was mayor last year when the push to remove the statue resurged.

"We are in a small northern part of Northern California where Native people are active in our lives daily," Susan Ornelas said. "It's not just a lost thought. McKinley didn't back Native Americans at all. He backed the Curtis Act, which took away Native rights on a lot of land. Natives were so misused in that era. He didn't really directly hurt them locally but he did through federal laws."

Susan Ornelas suggested allowing residents to vote on the statue's fate before taking back that proposal.

For now, the former president stands in Arcata with his days numbered. The city estimates it will take eight months before he's gone. California law requires a lengthy environmental review, a process that is expected to bring the total cost of removal to \$65,000. Anti-statue activists say they will raise the money.

A veterans hall seven blocks away has offered to house the president.

Other monuments protested by Native peoples are also getting private caretakers. The Columbus statue in San Jose was moved to the hall of the Italian American Heritage Foundation, where the group said it will be enclosed as protection from vandalism.

In San Francisco, the city has considered moving the "Early Days" statue to a museum, though a legal challenge has kept it up for the time being.

Another Columbus statue — the most widely seen in the world — appears to be staying put. It stands 76 feet high at the center of Columbus Circle in Manhattan.

After the Charlottesville violence, New York Mayor Bill de Blasio vowed to examine all "symbols of hate." While the city decided Columbus would stay, the mayor promised "new historical markers" near the monument to contextualize it as well as a new monument honoring "indigenous peoples."

Pereira, the Arcata mayor, said simply adding context to the McKinley monument would amount to too little, too late.

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HEADLINE	04/01 Tourists to Puerto Rico boost recovery
SOURCE	https://www.nbcnews.com/storyline/puerto-rico-crisis/puerto-rico-tourists-boost-recovery-though-some-still-remain-dark-n861866
GIST	<p>SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico — The music blared from the lobby at the San Juan Marriott Resort & Stellaris Casino — which was finally packed with tourists and not just emergency workers.</p> <p>For months, this hotel and others on the island catered to FEMA contractors and National Guard members. It was among the few that didn't lose power in the aftermath of Hurricane Maria, when the hotel scrambled to maintain industrial backup generators as the island's economy ground to a halt.</p> <p>"I'm very happy that the island is open for business," said Jose Gonzalez-Espinosa, the Marriott's general manager.</p> <p>It is an island finding its rhythm again.</p> <p>More than six months after the Category 4 hurricane ravaged Puerto Rico, tourists are slowly returning and the U.S. territory's economic engine is sputtering to life.</p>

Outside the capital city, however, several mountain communities are still desperate for power, supplies and attention. Though some damaged resorts will still be closed for months, more than 85 percent of the island's hotels are back up and running. The industry is critical for the long-term recovery here.

Meanwhile, the Carnival cruise ship Fascination — which carries more than 2,000 passengers and departs from San Juan to tour the Caribbean — is sold out.

Tourism officials are hoping for almost 2 million cruise passengers over the next year — pumping a quarter billion dollars into the local economy.

In Old San Juan, business is booming again. Coffee shops are packed and reservations are hard to snag at Marmalade, a high-end restaurant where the roof collapsed during Maria.

"I think the best thing that people can do is come and not donate your money but let us serve you," said Peter Schintler, the executive chef.

Still, other parts of the island continue to struggle. In southeastern Puerto Rico, blue tarps and splintered power poles still litter neighborhoods in Yabucoa, where the monster hurricane first made landfall.

Six months after the storm, the town's mayor, Rafael Surillo, said that 70 percent of its residents were still without power. He told NBC News he was furious with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' recent decision to scale back resources.

Col. Jason Kirk said that relief effort has brought "unprecedented" logistical challenges.

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HEADLINE	04/01 More protests planned for Sacramento
SOURCE	https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/2018/04/01/easter-sunday-calm-after-tense-night-when-sheriffs-suv-hits-acgivioproester-stephon-clark-vigil-sacra/476610002/
GIST	<p>SAN FRANCISCO — More events are planned for this week in Sacramento as the city continues to deal with outrage over the death of Stephon Clark, an unarmed black man who was killed by police on March 18.</p> <p>Sunday was calm after a tense interaction during a peaceful vigil Saturday evening in which a sheriff's SUV struck a protester.</p> <p>"Be on the look out" for upcoming rallies and protests, the Sacramento Black Lives Matter group said on its Facebook page Sunday.</p> <p>"We will continue to demand justice for not just Stephon, but for all lives that have been unjustly taken at the hands of law enforcement," it said.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/01 Orange Co. fights Calif. sanctuary law
SOURCE	https://www.newsmax.com/newsfront/california-orange-county-sanctuary-law/2018/04/01/id/851916/
GIST	<p>California and its Democratic-controlled Legislature have built a reputation for leading resistance against the Trump administration's immigration crackdown.</p> <p>But at the local level, there's a backlash brewing.</p> <p>On Tuesday, the Orange County Board of Supervisors voted to condemn the state's sanctuary law and join a U.S. Justice Department lawsuit that contends it's unconstitutional.</p>

The law, Senate Bill 54, limits police cooperation with federal immigration authorities. It's a capstone of the effort by Gov. Jerry Brown, legislators and mayors of the largest cities in the state to resist stepped-up efforts to deport people in the country illegally and to stop President Donald Trump from building a wall along the U.S. border with Mexico.

The Justice Department welcomed Orange County's decision and Trump blasted the state's law on Twitter.

"My Administration stands in solidarity with the brave citizens in Orange County defending their rights against California's illegal and unconstitutional Sanctuary policies," he posted Wednesday.

Orange County, home to 3.2 million people, including hundreds of thousands of immigrants, has seen its decades-long reputation as a conservative GOP base erode in recent years. Hillary Clinton won more votes than Trump in the county in the 2016 election.

But on Tuesday its all-Republican Board of Supervisors voted 4-0 to join the federal lawsuit filed earlier this month against SB 54 and two other pro-immigrant state laws.

Supervisor Michelle Steel, an immigrant from South Korea, told the crowd that fixing the country's immigration system will take time.

"Along the way, law enforcement should absolutely cooperate fully within the constraints of federal law," she said.

About a dozen people holding American flags and signs reading "Support Our Constitution" cheered the board's actions.

"We cannot have all the states with different immigration laws. It just doesn't make sense," Doris Matyasovich told the board. "Our constitutional republic depends on following the rule of law."

Immigrant advocates, however, felt the supervisors had taken a step back in the county where, according to the U.S. Census Bureau, nearly a third of the residents are immigrants.

"History tells us that we will win. So I will be able to look in my children's and grandchildren's eyes and tell them I was on the right side of history," Bethany Anderson of Fullerton told supervisors. "Will you be able to do that?"

State Sen. Kevin de Leon, a Los Angeles Democrat who wrote the state's law, called the decision a "pretty sad use of taxpayer resources."

"This kind of obsessive immigrant bashing is embarrassing to the county and its residents, and seems designed to court the approval of a racist President and his cronies," he said in a statement.

The move highlights longstanding divisions over immigration in California. For years, some local governments have sought to help federal immigration agents pick up inmates from their jails to prevent them from being released back into their communities, while others have tried to keep their distance to encourage immigrant residents to trust police enough to come forward to report crimes.

In Orange County, leaders of the small city of Los Alamitos recently voted for an ordinance to exempt itself from the state's law while leaders in the county seat of Santa Ana — a self-declared immigrant sanctuary — will consider filing an amicus brief to support California in federal court.

The county also moved this week to improve communication with federal immigration agents by publishing the release dates of inmates online. The Sheriff's Department used to screen inmates in the county's jails to help Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents identify those subject to deportation but had to stop when the state law passed.

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HEADLINE	04/02 China space lab burns up reentry
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/Technology/wireStory/defunct-chinese-space-lab-forecast-enter-atlantic-54167092?cid=clicksource_79_2_hero_headlines_bsq_hed
GIST	<p>China's defunct Tiangong 1 space station mostly burned up on re-entry into the atmosphere Monday over the central South Pacific, Chinese space authorities said.</p> <p>The experimental space laboratory re-entered around 8:15 a.m. Beijing time, the China Manned Space Engineering Office said.</p> <p>Scientists monitoring the craft's disintegrating orbit had forecast the craft would mostly burn up and would pose only the slightest of risks to people. Analysis from the Beijing Aerospace Control Center showed it had mostly burned up.</p> <p>Brad Tucker, an astrophysicist at Australian National University, said that Tiangong 1's re-entry was "mostly successful" and that it would have been better if the space station had not been spinning toward Earth.</p> <p>"It could have been better, obviously, if it wasn't tumbling, but it landed in the Southern Pacific Ocean, and that's kind of where you hope it would land," Tucker said.</p> <p>"It's been tumbling and spinning for a while, which means that when it really starts to come down it's less predictable about what happens to it," Tucker said. He likened it to an airplane landing, saying it's more difficult to predict where a plane that is "shaking around and moving" will land than one that is smoothly descending.</p> <p>Launched in 2011, Tiangong 1 was China's first space station, serving as an experimental platform for bigger projects, such as the Tiangong 2 launched in September 2016 and a future permanent Chinese space station.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/01 Russia queries OPCW for info spy case
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/expelled-russian-diplomats-return-us-amid-spy-dispute-54158222
GIST	<p>The Russian Foreign Ministry asked the international agency that monitors chemical weapons for information Sunday about the investigation of the poisoning of a former Russian spy and his daughter in England.</p> <p>A list of questions submitted to the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons includes what sort of assistance Britain requested from the watchdog agency and which sampling procedures were used to collect the substance that sickened Sergei Skripal and his daughter, Yulia.</p> <p>OPCW representatives were among a group of experts Britain asked to analyze the chemical agent involved in the poisonings. Britain claims it was the Soviet-manufactured nerve agent Novichok and has said Russia is likely responsible, which Moscow adamantly denies.</p> <p>The Foreign Ministry's request came on the same day that Russian diplomats and their families returned to Moscow on two planes after being expelled from the United States, part of the international fallout from the March 4 attack on the Skripals.</p> <p>Russia consistently has complained that Britain has not provided evidence to back up its claim of Russian</p>

	<p>involvement or that the poison that afflicted the Skripals was a Russia-developed nerve agent.</p> <p>The Russian Foreign Ministry also submitted questions to British and French authorities on Saturday. The ministry did not say what actions Russia might take if the parties do not answer the questions or provide partial responses.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/02 Strike, security clampdown shuts Kashmir
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/kashmir-shut-strike-security-day-deadly-fighting-54170394
GIST	<p>A security clampdown and a strike sponsored by separatists fighting against Indian rule Monday shut most of Indian-administered Kashmir a day after deadly protests and fierce fighting killed 16 combatants and four civilians.</p> <p>Armed police and paramilitary soldiers in riot gear fanned out across the region Monday and are patrolling streets in anticipation of anti-India protests and clashes.</p> <p>Authorities have also clamped a curfew in the old parts of the disputed region's main city of Srinagar, the urban center of protests and clashes against Indian rule.</p> <p>Shops and businesses closed in other areas where no security restrictions were in place. Separatist leaders who challenge India's sovereignty over Kashmir have called for a shutdown on Monday against the killings.</p> <p>Authorities shut schools and colleges and canceled university exams in an attempt to stop protests by students. They also stopped train services and cut cellphone internet services in the most restive towns, and reduced connection speeds in other parts of the Kashmir Valley, a common government practice aimed to calm tensions and prevent anti-India demonstrations from being organized.</p> <p>Troops laid steel barricades and coiled razor wire on roads and intersections to cut off neighborhoods as authorities anticipated widespread protests.</p> <p>At least 13 rebels and three Indian army soldiers were killed in Sunday's fighting in three gunbattles in the southern Kashmir where new-age rebels have revived militancy and challenged New Delhi's rule with guns and effective use of social media.</p> <p>As the fighting raged, massive anti-India protests erupted in several parts of Indian-controlled Kashmir and at least four civilians were killed and dozens injured in the latest round of anti-India protests.</p> <p>In recent years, Kashmiris, mainly youths, have displayed open solidarity with anti-India rebels and sought to protect them by engaging troops in street clashes during military operations against the militants. The protests have persisted despite the Indian army chief warning recently that tough action would be taken against stone-throwers during counterinsurgency operations.</p> <p>Nuclear-armed India and Pakistan each administer part of Kashmir, but both claim it in its entirety.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/01 Deportation plan sparks protests Israel
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/plan-deport-20000-asylum-seekers-sparks-protests-fear/story?id=54097368&cid=clicksource_76_2_hero_headlines_headlines_hed
GIST	Thousands of Israelis have taken to the streets of Tel Aviv to protest a new deportation initiative by Benjamin Netanyahu, which calls for the deportation of 20,000 African Eritrean and Sudanese asylum

	<p>seekers -- whom the prime minister has called "infiltrators" and illegal economic migrants.</p> <p>The vast majority of them crossed illegally into Israel between 2006 and 2014.</p> <p>The movement against the deportations has drawn a vocal minority, including Israelis who have compared what the Africans are facing to the plight of the Jews during the Holocaust.</p> <p>The deportation plan calls for the removal of single male African asylum seekers who have illegally crossed into Israel from Egypt's Sinai desert. They have a choice: take \$3,500 and a plane ticket and leave voluntarily, or face jail and forced deportation.</p> <p>The policy was supposed to take effect Sunday, but Israel's High Court froze the plan until April 9 after asylum seekers filed a petition, questioning its legality.</p> <p>Much of the controversy surrounds the plan to deport the asylum seekers to Rwanda and Uganda.</p> <p>The deportation plan is not without its supporters, however. In fact, according to a poll by the Israeli Democracy Institute, 66 percent of Israelis support deportation.</p> <p>And Education Minister Naftali Bennett recently tweeted, "The government must not fold in the face of the campaign to keep the illegal job infiltrators in Israel. Otherwise we will become the employment office for the world."</p>
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HEADLINE	04/01 Spring snowstorm heads to Northeast
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/US/spring-snowstorm-headed-northeast-5th-major-storm-march/story?
GIST	<p>After pounding the Midwest, a spring storm is getting ready to hit the Northeast early Monday -- the fifth major storm since March to barrel through the region.</p> <p>By around 3 a.m., Scranton, Pennsylvania and Hartford, Connecticut, will be blanketed by about 1 to 4 inches of a slushy mix of rain and snow.</p> <p>Some parts of the Northeast could see as much as 4 to 6 inches as well, making many highways and roadways perilously icy and slick.</p> <p>Conditions are expected to worsen by sunrise on Monday as the night's dose of slush turns into heavy, wet snow in cities like Philadelphia and New York City.</p> <p>Some airports, including New York's John F. Kennedy International, LaGuardia and Newark, are already bracing for the weather situation. Delta Airlines and JetBlue has issued a travel waiver for some passengers set to fly out of or into those hubs.</p> <p>By mid-afternoon, the sun is expected to peek through the clouds, the snow should recede and the temperature will surge back to less shivering mid-40s.</p> <p>The storm is the fifth major one to hit the Northeast in as many weeks, following four nor'easters since the beginning of March.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/01 Teachers to rally in Kentucky, Oklahoma
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/US/tens-thousands-teachers-planning-massive-rallies-classroom-walkouts/story?id=54161538&cid=clicksource_81_2_hero_headlines_headlines_hed

GIST	<p>Tens of thousands of public school teachers in Kentucky and Oklahoma plan to attend rallies on Monday at their state capitols in what they hope will be the latest display of muscle by the nation's educators demanding higher wages and better classroom resources.</p> <p>The double demonstrations come less than a month after West Virginia teachers went on a nine-day strike that ended with the governor there signing legislation giving them a 5 percent pay hike -- their first raise in four years.</p> <p>"What happened in West Virginia is inspiring for sure," Charles Main, spokesman for the Kentucky Education Association, told ABC News Sunday.</p> <p>The planned rallies also come on the heels of one on Wednesday in which 2,500 teachers in Arizona -- who are demanding a 20 percent raise -- demonstrated at the state's capitol in Phoenix. Gov. Doug Ducey didn't directly address the teachers' demands, but noted that the state already gave teachers a 4.3 percent raise from 2016 to 2017.</p> <p>On Monday, thousands of teachers and supporters in Kentucky are expected to descend on the state capitol in Frankfort to demand Gov. Matt Bevin veto a bill that overhauls their pension plan, which they say was forged by lawmakers in secret backroom deals.</p> <p>Meanwhile, thousands of Oklahoma teachers and advocates for better education are poised to stage a classroom walkout and converge on the state capitol in Oklahoma City to call on lawmakers, including Gov. Mary Fallin, to restore funding for education programs and supplies they say have been drastically slashed over the last decade.</p> <p>The Oklahoma protest comes after Fallin signed legislation Thursday granting teachers annual pay raises averaging \$6,100, the largest in state history. Oklahoma teachers had been making an average of \$45,276 a year, among the lowest wages for educators in the country, according to a 2017 report by the National Education Association.</p> <p>While teachers in Oklahoma say they appreciate the pay raise, they are upset that state lawmakers shortchanged their students by slating only \$50 million for education programs and supplies.</p> <p>Alicia Priest, president of the Oklahoma Education Association, said the union had asked that teachers' pay be raised by \$10,000 annually and that funding for education be boosted by \$200 million over the next three years.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/31 Homeless man sues Portland in shooting
SOURCE	http://komonews.com/news/local/homeless-man-sues-city-for-13-million-after-getting-shot-by-portland-police-03-31-2018
GIST	<p>PORTLAND, Ore. — A homeless man who was shot by Portland police has filed a \$1.3 million lawsuit against the city.</p> <p>The incident happened in February of last year in the 2100 block of Southeast Lafayette Street.</p> <p>Police responded to a report of a potentially suicidal person.</p> <p>They say a replica handgun fell out of the vehicle Don Perkins was living in. When Perkins reached for it, police shot him in the stomach and arm.</p> <p>The lawsuit claims the two officers who responded to the incident were not properly trained to deal with the situation.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/01 Army eyes more adviser brigades
SOURCE	https://www.stripes.com/news/with-1st-sfab-deployed-army-looks-to-build-more-adviser-brigades-1.519734
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON — Building on what was merely a concept at the beginning of 2017, the Army hopes to boast five brigades of conventional soldiers hand-selected and specially trained to advise indigenous partner forces by the end of next year. Army officials say the service is seeking to quickly build its Security Force Assistance Brigades, units designed to shoulder the bulk of the Pentagon’s train, advise and assist missions throughout the world. That is why the Army is seeking funding to build three SFABs — it has begun assembling two — in fiscal year 2019, according to the service’s budget request sent last month to Congress.</p> <p>The Army’s goal is to build six SFABs, five in the active-duty Army and one in the National Guard. The service is considering building two division headquarters to manage the brigades, Army officials said. “My view right now is that with regard to irregular warfare, we’re going to be engaged in that indefinitely,” Army Secretary Mark Esper told Stars and Stripes in an interview last month. “There will always be a need to help build allied or partnered forces, so [the SFABs] can take on that mission. Which is far better than us doing it with our combat brigades’ soldiers.”</p> <p>The Army for decades has worked to train partner forces to fight. In recent wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the Army has often pulled apart its traditional combat brigades to build small training-and-advising units for that mission. The problem, Esper said, is that has meant those brigades were not focused on their primary charge — training to fight.</p> <p>With the new SFAB units focused on the Army’s train, advise and assist responsibilities, it should free the service’s 58 brigade combat teams to concentrate on preparing for potential full-spectrum combat operations — the kind of fighting they would face in a near-peer war against an adversary such as Russia, China, North Korea or Iran, Esper said.</p> <p>The Army is still ironing out how the SFABs fit into the service’s model, including where it will station units.</p> <p>SFABs are unlikely to focus simply on advising partner forces in combat, Esper said. Instead they are likely to be used to help train allies across the globe, perhaps in areas like South Korea, Eastern Europe, Africa and South America.</p> <p>Much will be learned from the 1st Security Force Assistance Brigade’s current deployment to Afghanistan, he said. The Fort Benning, Ga., unit arrived there early this month, charged with advising Afghan troops close to the front lines in the 16-year fight against the Taliban.</p> <p>“Anytime you get to stand up a brand new organization is exciting,” said Army Col. Scott Jackson, the commander of 1st SFAB. “Anytime you get to stand up something built like this one is, is even more exciting. To say you’re breaking ground on something is phenomenal for everybody in this organization.”</p> <p>The unit that began taking shape last summer has already started passing on lessons learned to the 2nd Security Force Assistance Brigade, which the Army began building at Fort Bragg in North Carolina in January.</p> <p>The 1st SFAB will learn much more about the proper way to operate as it works in Afghanistan, Jackson said.</p> <p>The security force assistance brigades are the brainchild of Gen. Mark Milley, the Army’s chief of staff, who has long contended privately that the Army would need teams of soldiers to train partner forces outside of the special operations community.</p>

	<p>Milley, a Green Beret, has insisted that while similar to the traditional role of Special Forces, the SFAB concept does not infringe on their responsibilities.</p> <p>“In today’s world, we think the mission profile of train, advise, assist exceeds the capacity of Special Forces — who are running at a very, very high op tempo,” Milley told lawmakers March 15. “So, Special Forces is primarily now — not exclusively, but primarily — training and advising host nation special operations.”</p> <p>The SFABs, meanwhile, will focus on training partners’ conventional forces — those who conduct traditional ground operations.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/31 Malala returns for first visit to hometown
SOURCE	https://www.upi.com/Top_News/World-News/2018/03/31/Nobel-laureate-Malala-visits-hometown-for-first-time-since-attack/6061522519949/?utm_source=fp&utm_campaign=lh&utm_medium=2
GIST	<p>March 31 (UPI) -- Nobel Peace Prize winner Malala Yousafzai was happy to return to her hometown, Mingora, Pakistan, Saturday, her first time back since a Taliban attack in 2012.</p> <p>Yousafzai, 20, visited her old school and home in Mingora, located in the Swat valley area of Pakistan.</p> <p>"My first visit to Swat valley after 5 and half years since the attack. I have felt so happy. I am proud of my land and culture, Yousafzai wrote in the school's guestbook, CNN reported.</p> <p>Yousafzai became the youngest person to receive the Nobel Prize at age 17 in 2014 for her work to advocate for girls' right to education. The last time she was home she suffered a bullet wound to her head from a Taliban gunman.</p> <p>Yousafzai still faces some critics of her advocacy work for girls' education in Pakistan.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/01 Governor quits over Russia mall fire
SOURCE	http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-43610306
GIST	<p>The long-serving governor of the Russian region where a shopping mall fire left dozens of people dead has resigned.</p> <p>Aman Tuleyev said stepping aside from governing Kemerovo was "the right, conscious and only true decision" following the disaster.</p> <p>He announced the move in a video address posted on the regional administration's website.</p> <p>Last month's fire killed more than 60 people, most of them children.</p> <p>Thousands of people protested in the aftermath of the tragedy over alleged safety failings at the Winter Cherry mall.</p> <p>Investigators say the fire alarm was broken and exits were blocked - and that security guards, who were supposed to help with any emergency evacuation, were among the first to flee when the fire broke out.</p> <p>Many children became victims because they were using entertainment facilities at the top of the mall, including a cinema whose doors are said to have been locked.</p> <p>Investigators are looking at whether the fire could have been started by an electrical short-circuit or arson</p>

	<p>in the children's play area.</p> <p>President Vladimir Putin - who visited Kemerovo in the wake of the fire - blamed "criminal negligence" for the blaze.</p> <p>Mr Tuleyev - whose niece was reportedly killed in the fire - had been governor of the coal-mining region since 1997, AFP news agency reports.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/01 US, SKorea begin military exercises
SOURCE	http://www.foxnews.com/world/2018/04/01/us-south-korea-begin-military-exercises-after-olympics-delay.html
GIST	<p>The United States and South Korea are resuming joint military exercises Sunday on the Korean Peninsula after a hiatus because of the 2018 Winter Olympic Games.</p> <p>Approximately 300,000 South Korean soldiers will be joined by more than 11,500 U.S. troops for a monthlong operation dubbed Foal Eagle, Yonhap News Agency reported.</p> <p>The annual joint exercises between the two nations usually begin in late February or early March, and last for two months. This year the exercises were pushed back and condensed because of the Olympics, which were held Feb. 9-25 in Pyeongchang, South Korea.</p> <p>The United States agreed to the change so as not to provoke North Korea, which sent athletes, artists and a government delegation to the Games.</p> <p>South Korean President Moon Jae-in reportedly requested the military rescheduling prior to the event.</p> <p>North Korean leader Kim Jong Un has long viewed the annual military exercises as a provocation.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/31 Mukilteo teens 'never again' at rally
SOURCE	http://www.king5.com/article/news/local/mukilteo-teens-say-never-again-at-rally-to-end-gun-violence/281-533867186
GIST	<p>A week after thousands of people marched to push for an end to gun violence, a community gathers for their own event. The issue hits close to home in Mukilteo, where three teenagers were shot and killed at a party in 2016.</p> <p>The rally was called "Never Again: Mukilteo" and was organized by teens. They took center stage at the event, which included poems and music.</p> <p>"Kids are more invested in this issue now because of what we've experienced as a school with lockdowns, with friends we've lost," said Ketta Davis.</p> <p>Several took the stage to talk about how gun violence impacted their lives and the changes they want to see. Paul Kramer, the father of Will Kramer who was shot at that party in 2016, spoke to the group about his frustrations and hope.</p> <p>"When there's another shooting, the wounds get reactivated, retraumatized so to speak. It's sad that this continues," he said.</p> <p>Kramer said the teens' energy and enthusiasm for change give him hope they can reduce the likelihood that other families and communities will face the same tragedy.</p>

	<p>"It's sad that we haven't been able to do it, that's the job of the adults to make the changes when they need to take place, and we haven't gotten it done," said Kramer.</p> <p>The teens encouraged voter registration and said it's time to get rid of politicians who don't support their agenda. State Senator Marco Liias says he believes they will take on some of the issues in their next session.</p> <p>"The issue of assault weapons should they be legal at all? And if they are, what are the background checks and age restrictions? What about high capacity magazines? What about a waiting period?" he said.</p> <p>Students put painted hands on a bench they're working on as a memorial to Jake, Anna, and Jordan, who died in the shooting. They hope a more lasting memorial will be a change in the law that prevents families from dealing with this in the future.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/01 Anti-India protests erupt in Kashmir
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/anti-india-protests-erupt-kashmir-troops-kill-rebels-54157117?cid=clicksource_76_4_article%20roll_articleroll_hed
GIST	<p>Deadly protests against Indian rule erupted in several parts of Indian-controlled Kashmir on Sunday following the killings of at least eight rebels in fighting with government forces, officials said.</p> <p>The new round of anti-India protests and clashes, which led to the killing of at least one civilian, comes after Indian troops launched deadly counterinsurgency operations targeting mainly the southern parts of Kashmir, where new-age rebels have revived militancy and challenged New Delhi's rule with guns and effective use of social media.</p> <p>The gunbattles in southern Kashmir began overnight after government forces raided two villages following a tip that rebels were hiding there and came under fire, police said.</p> <p>Police said the militants tried to escape from a security cordon while firing their guns and grenades but were killed in the ensuing fighting.</p> <p>Seven militants, including some commanders, were killed in the Shopian area, while one rebel was killed and another captured in Anantnag early Sunday, said top police officer S.P. Vaid.</p> <p>Police said a third gunbattle also erupted in Shopian, where several rebels were trapped.</p> <p>No rebel group fighting against Indian rule immediately issued any statement about Sunday's fighting.</p> <p>As the fighting raged, anti-India protests erupted in several villages in southern Kashmir in solidarity with the rebels.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/01 Gaza protests shrink as funerals held
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/03/31/middleeast/gaza-protests-and-funerals/index.html
GIST	<p>Gaza (CNN) Hundreds of Palestinians marched Saturday in Gaza along the border with Israel, as funerals were held for protesters killed the day before in confrontations with Israeli forces.</p> <p>The protests were much smaller than on Friday, when thousands of Palestinians massed along the border in what was supposed to be a peaceful demonstration called the March of Return. Israeli forces fired upon marchers it said participated in violence, killing 17 people and injuring more than 1,400 others in the</p>

	deadliest day in Gaza since the 2014 war.
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HEADLINE	04/01 US blocks UN inquiry Gaza violence
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/03/31/middleeast/gaza-protests-un-intl/index.html
GIST	<p>Gaza (CNN)The US blocked a United Nations Security Council statement Saturday morning, which called for an independent inquiry into Friday's violence in Gaza that left at least 17 Palestinians dead and more than 1,400 injured, two UN diplomats tell CNN.</p> <p>Following Friday's escalated confrontations, Kuwait drafted a statement asking the Security Council to take action.</p> <p>It is unclear if other countries would have also objected, UN diplomats tell CNN. If one country objects, then the statement cannot be adopted.</p> <p>But Israel's UN Ambassador Danny Danon lodged a complaint with the United Nations Security Council for holding an emergency session on the first night of Passover -- a major Jewish holiday -- according to a statement released by Israel's UN Mission on Sunday.</p> <p>Danon claimed Kuwait intentionally called for the session as Israel's UN Mission was observing Passover, thus barring their participation while they observed a religious holiday.</p> <p>He said the move "exploited procedural rules" and is "antithetical to the spirit of the UN," according to the Israeli Mission statement.</p> <p>UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres had called for the independent inquiry into Friday's violence.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/01 Sacramento sheriff vehicle hits protester
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/04/01/us/stephon-clark-protests/index.html
GIST	<p>(CNN)A bystander video shows the moment a demonstrator was hit by a Sacramento Sheriff's deputy's vehicle Saturday night as people protested the shooting death of Stephon Clark.</p> <p>The collision happened during a vigil as a woman carrying a "Stephon Clark Rest in Power" sign walked in front of a sheriff's vehicle and motioned the driver to stop, according to a video from the National Lawyers Guild Legal Observers obtained by CNN.</p> <p>The deputy then drove away, said Guy Danilowitz, a legal observer who recorded the video.</p> <p>"The vehicle accelerated and struck her, accelerated very fast and struck her violently and she fell to the ground," Danilowitz said.</p> <p>"It was a very fast acceleration, not the way you would move with people around," he added.</p> <p>About eight seconds before the collision, a deputy inside the sheriff's SUV could be heard on a loudspeaker repeatedly telling protesters to "back away from my car."</p> <p>The California Highway Patrol said it is investigating a collision involving a Sacramento County Sheriff's vehicle and "a pedestrian."</p> <p>A spokesman with the California Highway Patrol would not confirm whether the woman was a protester or if the incident was a hit and run.</p>

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HEADLINE	03/31 Russia hunting defectors in America?
SOURCE	http://www.newsweek.com/russian-defectors-america-putin-russia-threat-skripal-868013
GIST	<p>They get lonely. They miss their friends and family left behind in Russia. And so, despite the danger of exposing themselves to Kremlin retribution, Russian defectors hiding abroad make phone calls or send emails back to relatives in the motherland.</p> <p>And when they do, the Kremlin is listening.</p> <p>“It’s easy to find us, if they are really determined,” one defector in the U.S. tells Newsweek. Phone calls and emails make it easy for Russian eavesdroppers to locate them. A visit from a relative back home makes it even easier. Agents can just trail them to a defector’s doorstep.</p> <p>Some U.S. security sources say there has been an uptick in Russian activity here over the past two years. Suspected Russian agents have been spotted cruising the neighborhoods of some defectors protected by CIA security teams, they say. The FBI and CIA have been “bringing people out of retirement, people who worked against the Russians in the 1990s,” to cope with the the challenge, the defector said, speaking anonymously out of fears for his personal safety.</p> <p>The CIA declined to comment. The FBI did not respond to questions about Russian activity in America.</p> <p>The March 4 nerve-agent attack on Sergei Skripal, a former Russian spy for British intelligence, in a shopping mall in Salisbury, England has U.S. counterintelligence agencies on edge.</p> <p>“Everyone’s been on high alert since the Skripal poisoning,” Michelle Van Cleave, head of the National Counterintelligence Executive under President George W. Bush, tells Newsweek. On Thursday, another former Russian double agent in the U.K, Boris Karpichkov, reported that he’d been warned last month that Kremlin agents were coming for him, too. “Be careful, look around, something is probably going to happen,” an old comrade told him in mid-February, according to NBC News. “It’s very serious, and you are not alone.”</p> <p>Skripal and his daughter, Yulia, were assaulted with Novichok, a lethal chemical agent invented by Soviet-era biowarfare engineers in the 1980s. A policeman who came to their aid was also infected. Skripal remains in critical condition; his daughter, who had recently left Russia to visit her father in England, is “recovering rapidly,” authorities said.</p> <p>A similar attack is not unthinkable here, CIA veterans with long histories with Moscow tell Newsweek.</p> <p>“I’ve heard nothing along those lines, but it’s very plausible.,” former CIA analyst and Russia specialist Mark Stout says. “Even without the recent events I’d be concerned.” The Russians, he said, “largely got out of this business in the mid-1970s,” but with the rise of Vladimir Putin to power in the 1990s they got back into “tracking down and hunting defectors.”</p> <p>“I would certainly not rule out” an attempt on a defector’s life here, says Daniel Hoffman, a 30-year CIA veteran who spent five years on duty in Russia. “Putin has demonstrated there are no limits to the methods he would use to target Russia’s ‘main enemy’ and our allies.”</p> <p>“The Russians have always sought to locate Russian defectors in the U.S. and Britain, and attempt to lure them back to Russia if possible,” fellow CIA veteran and Russia hand John Sipher told Newsweek. Their message: “all is forgiven.” Few believe it. Only one defector is known publicly to have returned home and lived to tell about it: Vitaly Yurchenko, who in 1985 changed his mind, apologized to his CIA minder in a Georgetown pub, walked out the door and up the street to what was then the Soviet embassy. The Russians made propaganda hay out of his turnaround, probably to encourage other re-defections.</p>

The recent string of events suggests Russia has abandoned the carrot for the stick. “The attack on Skripal should be ringing alarm bells for all NATO member countries, including the United States, that something like that could happen here,” says Hoffman. “We can assume that there has been a recent step-up in activity” here, Sipher says, “given the events in the U.K.”

Led by British Prime Minister Theresa May, European leaders responded furiously to the Skripal attack, expelling scores of suspected Russian spies working under official diplomatic cover in their countries. President Donald Trump, as is his fashion, declined to join the Europeans in their harsh criticism of the Kremlin, but the administration booted 60 Russian diplomats from the U.S.—48 from its Washington, D.C. embassy and 12 from the Russian mission to the United Nations—and shuttered the Russian consulate in Seattle. Moscow responded in kind, expelling 58 U.S. diplomats and closing the American consulate in St. Petersburg.

Moscow rejected any responsibility for the attack on Skripal—and at least some spy veterans raised questions about it, too. The Russian defector who spoke with Newsweek called it an amateuristic job, “very unprofessional,” not only because it failed to kill its target but inevitably pointed a finger at the Kremlin. A top Russian assassin, he said, would have avoided a public attack and used a poison dust delivered via, say, a mailed letter that killed its victim “three days after” being inhaled, obscuring its source and the perpetrator. He also pointed Newsweek to a recent Russian documentary film alleging that quantities of Novichok, the nerve agent fingered in the Skripal attack, had been stolen from the Russian lab.

And why Skripal, the defector asked? The former GRU officer had been unmasked as a British mole years earlier and squeezed dry under interrogation before being released in a trade for 10 Russian spies arrested in the U.S. in 2010. “He had no more secrets with him,” the defector says. “He was no threat to Russia. There was no reason to punish him any more.” More likely, he says, some former GRU comrades whom Skripal betrayed to British intelligence were taking revenge, using “idiots” in the Russian mob to carry out the “amateuristic” hit.

The Russian ambassador to the U.S., Anatoly Antonov, said much the same. “He spent five years in Russian jail. So it was enough time for us to know everything that he knew,” the ambassador told NBC News. “Why we should make revenge?”

That’s easy, Hoffman says. “Putin wanted to whip up his electorate with anti-western rhetoric” before the March 18 elections. And he was assured of “an intense reaction” over Skripal from May, who was home secretary in 2006 when another defector, Alexander Litvinenko, was fatally poisoned by plutonium. The expulsions, Hoffman said, allowed Putin to “portray Russia as a besieged fortress, which only he could defend.”

The Kremlin has a long history of none-too-subtle assassinations, its critics point out. A Russian agent murdered former revolutionary Leon Trotsky with an ice pick to the head in Mexico in August 1940. Six months later, an outspoken Russian defector, Walter Krivitsky, was found in a pool of blood in his room in a Washington, D.C. hotel. The official investigation, unaware he was on a Soviet hit list, concluded he committed suicide.

Likewise last year in Washington, D.C. police officially concluded that Putin’s former media chief, Mikhail Lesin, died of blunt-force injuries to the head, neck, and torso from falls during a in November 2015 drinking binge. But “everyone thinks he was whacked and that Putin or the Kremlin were behind it,” an FBI agent recently told BuzzFeed. In February, the news site also surfaced evidence implicating Russia “in 14 suspicious deaths on British soil that the U.K. government had largely ignored.”

The Lesin affair, says former FBI intelligence analyst Aaron Arnold, “could be a good test to see if they could get away with it—a litmus test to see how far people would let them go.”

In January, Democrats on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee issued a report warning that the long, deadly arm of Russian intelligence might well reach into the United States and take somebody out. “The

trail of mysterious deaths, all of which happened to people who possessed information that the Kremlin did not want made public, should not be ignored by Western countries on the assumption that they are safe from these extreme measures,” it said.

Putin said as much after the FBI rounded up Anna Chapman and nine other deep-cover Russian “illegals” here in 2010. Whoever betrayed them would suffer: “It always ends badly for traitors,” he said. “As a rule, their end comes from drink or drugs, lying in the gutter. And for what?”

The defector Newsweek spoke with is fatalistic about his chances of living peacefully into old age here.

“I know it’s going to happen to me sooner or later,” he said on the phone as a baby cried in the background. “All I can do is renew my life insurance. If they send a professional, I’m done.”

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HEADLINE

03/31 Saudi crown prince quiet visit to Seattle

SOURCE

<http://www.heraldnet.com/northwest/saudi-arabias-crown-prince-quietly-visits-boeing-in-everett/>

GIST

SEATTLE — The crown prince of Saudi Arabia was in town Friday and Saturday on a very secretive visit amid tight security.

Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman’s private VIP 747 jumbo jet, inbound from New York, landed at Paine Field in Everett just after 2 p.m. Friday for a tour of Boeing — his first West Coast stop on a three-week U.S. trip to refashion the image of Saudi Arabia in the eyes of Americans.

After a tour of the widebody jet plant that built his airplane, the 32-year-old crown prince looked on as Boeing Chairman and Chief Executive Dennis Muilenburg signed a memorandum of agreement to set up a \$450 million joint venture in Saudi Arabia that will provide maintenance and repair support for the kingdom’s military aircraft.

The crown prince’s final itinerary and plans in Seattle were not announced.

In an advance draft itinerary obtained by The Seattle Times, meetings were also penciled in with Amazon and Microsoft executives, with Bill Gates and with former U.S. Defense Secretary Robert Gates, who lives in the state.

However, Saturday morning meetings listed on the advance agenda with Washington state’s governor and Seattle’s mayor aren’t happening — both politely declined the Saudi meeting requests, on the grounds they are busy that morning.

On Friday morning, the Fairmont Olympic Hotel in downtown Seattle, home for the day to a large Saudi royal court delegation, though not the crown prince himself, was surrounded by black Chevy Suburbans with government license plates and Seattle police vehicles.

Inside the hotel entrance, visitors entered through an airport-style baggage-screening machine to find the lobby swarming with Saudi and American security personnel. A couple of bomb-sniffing dogs lounged on the thick carpet.

The whereabouts of the crown prince himself, and even where his 747 would land, were not disclosed in advance.

The crown prince, effectively the power behind the throne held by his father, is here to rebrand the image of the desert kingdom that’s best known for its vast oil wealth and adherence to a strict fundamentalist brand of Sunni Islam, and to discuss a diversification of its economy away from oil.

The crown prince presents himself as a liberalizing modern, reforming and opening up the claustrophobic

kingdom and in particular allowing more freedom to women.

He just lifted a 35-year-long ban on cinemas and allowed Saudi women for the first time to attend mixed-gender public entertainments such as soccer games

And in a plan dubbed Saudi Vision 2030, he has declared his intention to make Saudi Arabia “a global investment powerhouse.”

That’s the reason for meeting with so many corporate leaders while in the U.S.

Coinciding with his visit, multiple media accounts report that a 97-page glossy magazine promoting the crown prince has turned up on shelves in unlikely parts of the U.S., such as a Walmart in rural New Hampshire.

Entirely free of ads, the advertorial-style magazine is published by American Media, the Florida-based tabloid publisher headed by President Donald Trump’s friend David Pecker.

The agreement announced in Everett on Friday will form a joint venture between Boeing and state-owned Saudi Arabian Military Industries (SAMI) that will become the sole provider of maintenance support for the Saudi air force’s fleet of military jets.

Boeing also agreed to transfer the technological know-how required to install weaponry on these aircraft as well as localize the supply chain for spare parts.

The idea is to build up local expertise within Saudi Arabia, furthering the crown prince’s Vision 2030 plan. The agreement will create 6,000 jobs in Saudi Arabia, Boeing said.

In a news release, H.E. Ahmed Al-Khateeb, chairman of SAMI, said the joint venture with Boeing will help build “a strong autonomous military-industries ecosystem in the Kingdom.”

The joint venture was part of the package of U.S. defense deals touted last May during Trump’s state visit to Saudi Arabia. Boeing CEO Muilenburg accompanied the president on that trip.

The crown prince’s planned meeting with Bill Gates is likely intended to add some philanthropic luster to his image. Last fall, Gates met with the crown prince in Riyadh, where the two announced a \$10 million initiative to empower young people.

Some in Seattle are critical of the welcome that business interests have laid on for the crown prince and in particular of any military support offered for Saudi Arabia as it wages a bloody proxy war in Yemen against forces aligned with Iran.

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HEADLINE	03/30 SEA international wait times getting worse
SOURCE	https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/sea-tac-international-arrival-wait-times-are-getting-worse-but-relief-is-on-the-way/724529811
GIST	<p>At midday, almost every day, Sea-Tac Airport's passport control is jammed.</p> <p>Airline schedules mean many planes from overseas arrive at nearly the same time.</p> <p>"We are over capacity for that time of day," said Mark Wilkerson, Seattle Area port director for U.S. Customs and Border Protection.</p> <p>Luggage carousels for customs in the 43-year-old facility are so overcrowded, the airport pays workers just to move bags to make room.</p>

Miguel Vilar flew in from Paris, and had to wait in a crowded corridor before even reaching passport control.

The airport holds people in a hallway between the gate and passport control to manage congestion.

Last year, the airport said the average wait -- just in the hallway -- was 25 minutes.

So far this year, it's averaging 27 minutes.

"What can a person think about that after a 10-hour flight?" Vilar said. "I just want to take my luggage and go home."

Sometimes, passengers are held on arriving planes, either on the tarmac or the gate, if there's not enough space.

Port officials said Norwegian and Virgin Atlantic planes now don't even go to gates to offload passengers, and load them directly onto buses instead.

Wilkerson said he even if he had more agents, they wouldn't be able to move passengers any faster through Sea-Tac's cramped space.

"We're very hopeful for the future and leaving this 40-plus-year-old international facility behind," said Charles Goedken, terminal operations manager for Sea-Tac Airport.

The Port of Seattle says a new international arrivals facility costing nearly \$800 million will solve the problem by nearly doubling the number of international-capable gates and creating a 450,000-square-foot facility for Customs and Border Protection, compared to the 80,000 current square feet.

"A lot of the lines we see at Sea-Tac today will basically go away," Wilkerson said.

Customs and Border Protection is expected to offer biometric technology at the new facility to help move passengers through faster.

The new arrivals facility is under construction and expected to open late in 2019.

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HEADLINE	03/30 Squatter complaints on rise in Seattle
SOURCE	https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/squatter-complaints-on-the-rise-in-seattle/724544347
GIST	<p>More than 18 months after KIRO 7 first went along with a new Seattle task force focused on squatters and vacant property issues, numbers show that complaints are on the rise.</p> <p>According to the city's Department of Construction and Inspections, in 2015, there were 354 vacant building complaints. In 2016, the year the task force launched, there 419. In 2017, there were 439.</p> <p>Most recently, neighbors have complained about squatters who have taken up residence in the parking lot of a closed Sam's Club on Aurora Avenue. They said they've found garbage in the lot and also around the neighborhood.</p> <p>"Condom wrappers, condoms, needle caps, needles, broken glass pipes and things of that nature," neighbor Bliss Moore said. "It's not very cool. If they would just clean up their mess.... Then I wouldn't feel so hesitant about having them in the 'hood.'"</p> <p>"The city launched this new task force. Why is this problem getting worse?" KIRO 7 reporter Linzi</p>

Sheldon asked Faith Lumsden, the city code compliance director.

“Well, we are seeing a lot of people breaking into vacant buildings seeking shelter,” Lumsden said. She said the city is growing and so is redevelopment.

Addressing problem properties can be like playing Whack-a-Mole.

“We are doing better at keeping vacant buildings from becoming really, really horrible,” she said. “We see it, we fix it, it shifts to some other building.”

Squatting isn't just against the law.

When KIRO 7 went along with the city's task force in 2016, police and fire officials explained the houses can be dangerous for first responders: some squatters have even set booby traps.

But the task force has had successes. Examples include a problematic Wallingford site owned by developer Robert Hardy that had several fires. A neighbor sent KIRO 7 a photo on Friday showing a brand new structure going up.

And after squatters moved into a foreclosed house on MLK Jr. Way South in South Seattle, the city cleaned it up, boarded it up, and sent bills to the mortgage company.

Changes in the city code last fall, Lumsden said, have been “very, very helpful.” One allows speedier demolition of sites with two unauthorized entries and a memo from first responders about the dangers.

The other enables the city to bill the site's owner not just for securing the site with things like fencing and plywood, but also for cleaning up the outside. Garbage, Lumsden said, can be a signal to other squatters that a building is vacant.

“Now we can clean up the whole nuisance,” she said. “We don't have to just board it up but leave a yard filled with trash and overgrown weeds.”

Lumsden only has two inspectors and they are not full-time.

“Do you need more inspectors?” KIRO 7 reporter Linzi Sheldon asked.

“I always need more inspectors,” she said. “I'm pretty sure I'm not supposed to say that on television but yes, indeed, we need more inspectors. Of course we do.”

“When you see the numbers going up, is that frustrating?” Sheldon asked.

“Is it better reporting [of problems]? Is it ever going to stop? I don't think so,” Lumsden said. “I think we'll see this as long as Seattle keeps growing.”

She said the city is trying to work with developers and nonprofits to see if they can have tenants or caretakers in properties longer while permits are going through. This, she said, will reduce the time they are vacant and vulnerable to squatters.

Lumsden said the city is also considering increasing the minimum standards for securing a building—perhaps, she said, requiring owners to use sturdy plexiglass, which is very difficult for squatters to remove, as opposed to plywood.

She said anyone who currently owns a vacant home or building needs to understand the risks.

“People need to know that having a vacant property, especially a vacant house, is dangerous,” she said. “It's going to—sooner or later—invite someone to break in.”

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HEADLINE	03/30 Some Seattle recycling heads to landfills
SOURCE	http://www.king5.com/article/news/local/some-seattle-recycling-heads-to-landfills-amid-new-rules-from-china/281-533718269
GIST	<p>Some recycled material from Seattle is now ending up in landfills as a result of new recycling restrictions from China, The Seattle Times first reported Thursday.</p> <p>China only wants recyclables that are empty, clean and dry. So at the beginning of this year, China started cracking down. The Washington Refuse and Recycling Association says China banned the import of 24 varieties of solid waste and recyclables and imposed a new 0.5% contaminant limit.</p> <p>KING 5 reported in October that the new policy was coming and businesses, like The Recycling Depot, were bracing for the impact.</p> <p>Friday, we went back to The Recycling Depot, where manager Joe Salvatore said they were preparing to close the Rainer Avenue location.</p> <p>"We've been here for 38 years," said Salvatore. "Recycling has changed. We just can't make the profit that we need to stay open."</p> <p>Customers still arrive with truckloads of cardboard, but the cash isn't coming in like it use to.</p> <p>"I've got just two employees left. I've let everybody else go," said Salvatore.</p> <p>He says the closure, that's likely imminent, has a lot to do with China. The rules there are making it harder to run the business, according to Salvatore.</p> <p>"China is a big player in the world of recycling, and boy, when they make a move as dramatic as this one has been, it affects the entire world," he said.</p> <p>"In Washington, some communities are diverting recyclables to landfills to prevent public health and fire code issues," said Brad Lovaas, WRRRA Executive Director. "It's not safe to store large quantities of recyclables inside for fire code reasons and not feasible to store them outside due to our wet climate."</p> <p>Since China is the largest consumer of recyclables in the world, the ban has driven prices way down.</p> <p>"If I can't pay my customers a good amount of money to bring it in to me, then its not worth it for them to pick it up," said Salvatore. "We've been here a long time and people just depend on this place to bring their stuff. It is going to be a shame if we have to shut down."</p>
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HEADLINE	03/31 April: National Sex Assault Awareness
SOURCE	https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/onpolitics/2018/03/31/donald-trump-sexual-assault-awareness-prevention-month-april/475350002/
GIST	<p>President Trump, who faces sexual misconduct accusations from numerous women, on Friday declared April as National Sexual Assault Awareness and Prevention Month.</p> <p>"Sexual assault crimes remain tragically common in our society, and offenders too often evade accountability," Trump's presidential proclamation read.</p> <p>Since 2001, the U.S. has observed April as sexual assault awareness month, with some advocates holding</p>

	<p>events to mark the month since the 1990s, according to the National Sexual Violence Resource Center. Both former president Barack Obama and Trump previously used presidential proclamations to raise awareness for the issue in April.</p> <p>Since Trump last designated the month in April 2017, a national reckoning around sexual assault and harassment has occurred with the #MeToo movement. According to a USA TODAY survey, 94% of women in the entertainment industry say they experienced some form of sexual harassment or assault during their careers in Hollywood, where the movement first started.</p> <p>"We must respond to sexual assault by identifying and holding perpetrators accountable. Too often, however, the victims of assault remain silent," Trump's 2018 proclamation continued.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/31 CDC: flu season continuing decline
SOURCE	https://www.upi.com/Health_News/2018/03/31/CDC-Flu-season-continuing-its-decline/9291522503445/?utm_source=fp&utm_campaign=ts_hn&utm_medium=13
GIST	<p>SATURDAY, March 31, 2018 -- Spring continues to take the bite out of this year's brutal flu season, new numbers show.</p> <p>For starters: yet another drop was seen in doctor visits, and less severe strains of influenza are becoming ever more dominant.</p> <p>But hospitalizations for the flu are still a problem, and there have been additional pediatric deaths, the latest federal numbers show.</p> <p>For the seventh week in a row, there was a decrease in the number of doctor visits for flu-like illness, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported Friday.</p> <p>As of March 24, the CDC said, 2.5 percent of patient visits to doctors were for the flu, down from 2.7 percent of patient visits the week before.</p> <p>And, as health officials predicted, cases of less severe influenza B infections continue to be more common than cases of more severe influenza A infections.</p> <p>For the week ending March 24, influenza B infections accounted for 58 percent of cases, while influenza A infections accounted for 42 percent. For the entire season so far, influenza A strains have been responsible for 70 percent of all cases, the CDC report noted.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/30 UN peacekeeping mission Liberia ends
SOURCE	https://www.upi.com/Top_News/World-News/2018/03/30/UN-ends-peacekeeping-mission-in-Liberia-after-15-years/2831522436008/?utm_source=fp&utm_campaign=ts_tn_int&utm_medium=4
GIST	<p>March 30 (UPI) -- U.N. Secretary-General António Guterres congratulated the government of Liberia for turning "the page on crisis and conflict" as the United Nations ended its mission in the west African nation Friday.</p> <p>U.N. peacekeepers departed Liberia after nearly 15 years in the wake of two deadly civil wars.</p> <p>"The secretary-general congratulates the people and government of Liberia for their determination to turn the page on crisis and conflict," a statement on behalf of Guterres said. "He commends the government's continued efforts to ensure sustained peace and sustainable development in Liberia."</p> <p>U.N. peacekeeping troops entered the country in October 2003 at the end of the second Liberian civil war</p>

	<p>between a rebel group in the north, one in the south and the government of former President Charles Taylor.</p> <p>The first Liberian civil war, from 1989 to 1997, left about 250,000 people dead and the second claimed nearly 300,000 lives. After the second war, conflict remained.</p> <p>"The secretary-general expresses his profound respect to the memory of the 202 peacekeepers who lost their lives in the service of peace during the nearly 15 years the mission was deployed in Liberia. He expresses his gratitude to all troop- and police-contributing countries," the U.N. statement said.</p> <p>Guterres said U.N. officials would remain in Liberia in order to support the government in reforms and establishing peace.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/31 Israel fires warning shots at Gaza border
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/article/us-israel-palestinians-protests/israeli-troops-wound-13-on-gaza-border-day-after-deadly-protest-idUSKBN1H70AU
GIST	<p>GAZA (Reuters) - Israeli troops fired warning shots toward Palestinian youths gathered at the Gaza-Israel border on Saturday, wounding 13 people, health officials said.</p> <p>Tension remained high in the area a day after deadly violence broke out in one of the biggest Palestinian demonstrations there in years.</p> <p>An Israeli military spokesman said he was checking the details of Saturday's unrest.</p> <p>On Friday at least 15 Palestinians were killed by Israeli security forces confronting protesters, some of whom the military said had opened fire, rolled burning tires and hurled rocks and fire bombs toward troops across the border.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/31 Autopsy results fuel more Calif. protests
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/article/us-california-police/autopsy-of-california-black-man-shot-by-police-fuels-more-protests-idUSKBN1H707K
GIST	<p>SACRAMENTO, Calif. (Reuters) - About 200 demonstrators squared off with police in riot gear overnight in California's capital and more protests were planned for Saturday after an autopsy on Stephon Clark contradicted the police account of the shooting of the unarmed black man by officers.</p> <p>Waving signs and chanting Clark's name in unison, the protesters gathered at city hall before marching into the Old Sacramento part of the city, filled with bars, restaurants and tourists.</p> <p>Protesters, some with megaphones and black masks covering their faces, shouted "Shoot us down, we shut you down", along with expletives directed at the police.</p> <p>More than 80 police and California Highway Patrol officers in riot gear blocked protesters from marching onto a highway. There were no arrests, the Sacramento Bee reported.</p> <p>Clark's death two weeks ago was the most recent in a string of fatal shootings of black men by police that have triggered protests across the United States and fueled a national debate about bias in the American criminal justice system.</p> <p>The latest demonstrations were touched off by a new private autopsy on Clark that showed that none of the eight bullets that hit him struck him in the front, contradicting the police version of events, a lawyer for the</p>

	deceased's family said on Friday.
	Clark was shot six times in the back, once in the side and once in the leg, the autopsy found.
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HEADLINE	03/21 UK plays down search of Russia plane
SOURCE	http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-43606085
GIST	<p>The UK has rejected a complaint from Russia over a search of one of its aircraft at London's Heathrow Airport, as a row over the poisoning of a former Russian spy deepens.</p> <p>The British government described the search of the Aeroflot plane on Friday as "routine" after Russia suggested it was "illegal".</p> <p>Aeroflot flight SU2582 landed at Heathrow on Friday at 15:40 local time.</p> <p>A man identified by Russian TV as pilot Vitaly Mitrofanov said he was confined to his cockpit by a team with a sniffer dog.</p> <p>The Border Force officers inspected the plane for up to three minutes before leaving with a "thank you", he added.</p> <p>The pilot maintains they "gave no reasons" for the inspection, and he was not allowed to "observe their actions" or accompany them in their work.</p> <p>"If there is no explanation, the Russian side will deem the actions towards our plane as illegal and also reserve the right to take similar action against British airlines," Russia's ministry of transport said in a statement.</p> <p>Russian foreign ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova dubbed the search a "provocation" so the British government could "save its face in any possible way".</p> <p>UK Security Minister Ben Wallace said in a statement that it was "routine for Border Force to search aircraft to protect the UK from organised crime and from those who attempt to bring harmful substances like drugs or firearms into the country".</p> <p>He added: "Once these checks were carried out the plane was allowed to carry on with its onward journey."</p> <p>Former chief executive of the UK Border Agency Rob Whiteman said intelligence would have been a factor.</p> <p>"This incident with the Aeroflot flight at Heathrow being searched would have been a routine security search which the security services would have undertaken acting on intelligence," he told the BBC.</p> <p>"These searches are routine - they don't happen every day, but they do happen fairly regularly."</p>
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HEADLINE	03/31 Armed French officers spark Italy row
SOURCE	http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-43606225
GIST	<p>Armed French customs officers have provoked widespread anger by entering a migrant clinic over the border in Italy.</p> <p>Five officers forced one individual to undergo a urine test at the facility west of the city of Turin on Friday</p>

evening, Italian reports say.

The premises is located about 1km (0.6 miles) inside the Italian border.

Political figures in Italy, which has received over 600,000 migrants in the last four years, condemned the move.

The French ambassador, Christian Masset, was called into the Italian foreign ministry in Rome on Saturday to explain what had happened.

"French border agents entered - armed - the clinic run in Bardonecchia, forcing a migrant to a urine test and intimidating our doctor and the mediators and lawyers," the medical organisation which operates a clinic at the premises, Rainbow for Africa, said.

The organisation said the actions of the French officers "seriously interfered" with the work of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in Italian institutions.

It added that the French border was becoming "increasingly militarised" and called for a change in France's strict policy in rejecting migrants.

However, the French government responded by saying they had asked for permission to enter the centre and were allowed in. They said a team of French customs officers on board a train travelling into Italy suspected a Nigerian train passenger with Italian residency of carrying drugs.

French customs officials were allowed to use the station at Bardonecchia under a bi-national agreement, it said.

Bardonecchia mayor Francesco Avato said he was "very upset" by the news, adding that the French officers "had no right" to go into the property.

Former Italian Prime Minister Enrico Letta said the incident was "yet another mistake on the issue of migrants".

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HEADLINE	03/30 Russian ambassador: 'toxic' US relations
SOURCE	https://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/u-s-russian-relations-worst-ambassador-antonov-can-remember-n861391
GIST	<p>Russia's ambassador to the United States has told the "Today" show that he can't remember a period of worse relations between Washington and Moscow, after both countries expelled dozens of diplomats following the poisoning of a former Russian spy.</p> <p>In an exclusive interview with Savannah Guthrie broadcast Friday, Anatoly Antonov also reiterated Russia's denials that it meddled in the 2016 U.S. presidential election, saying it was "impossible to imagine" that the Kremlin was responsible.</p> <p>Special counsel Robert Mueller's indictment of 13 Russian nationals on suspicion of interfering in the vote was, according to the ambassador, "not a proof" of responsibility.</p> <p>"It seems to me that atmosphere in Washington is poisoned — it's a toxic atmosphere," he said. "It depends upon us to decide whether we are in Cold War or not. But ... I don't remember such [a] bad shape of our relations."</p> <p>He added that "there is great mistrust between the United States and Russia" at present.</p>

	"Today Russia's responsible for everything, even for bad weather," he said. "It's high time for us to stop blaming each other. It's high time for us to start a real conversation about real problems."
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HEADLINE	03/30 'Teddy Bear Patrol' seeks donations
SOURCE	http://www.king5.com/article/life/heartwarming/teddy-bear-patrol-police-given-bears-to-comfort-children/281-533681917
GIST	<p>A Lake Forest Park Police Officer handed a stuffed animal to a child amid an Amber Alert earlier this week. In an act of compassion, police officers and first responders are giving children toys to cope with traumatic incidents.</p> <p>Departments throughout Northwest Washington have this program in place as a part of an annual Bartell Drugs drive for the stuffed animals. In partnership with WARM 106.9 FM, the "Teddy Bear Patrol" campaign runs April 1 through 28 and is in its 29th year of operation.</p> <p>Stores in King, Snohomish, and Pierce counties are designated locations for teddy bear donations. The drug stores are also sponsoring a matching bear program in which they'll match each customer's purchase of an official "Bartell Bear" for \$8 and they will donate the second bear to the campaign.</p> <p>Last year's drive saw more than 15,000 bears donated to the cause. The stores are accepting donations through April 28 and are asking for bears to longer than 12 inches.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/30 Seattle mayor halts streetcar project
SOURCE	http://www.king5.com/article/news/local/seattle-mayor-halts-streetcar-project-cites-rising-costs/281-533650829
GIST	<p>The Seattle streetcar project, the "Center City Connector", is dead, for now. The project is now estimated at \$200 million.</p> <p>On Friday afternoon, Seattle Mayor Jenny Durkan announced in a statement the immediate halt of the streetcar, citing rising costs. The project was previously estimated at \$177 million.</p> <p>The mayor's office says the project is facing a \$23 million shortfall driven by "increased design expenditures, escalating construction costs, and errors in estimating the full cost of the streetcar vehicles."</p> <p>Durkan's decision comes a week after ordering an independent review of the costs related to the Center City Connector, according to a release.</p> <p>"The City of Seattle has a critical obligation to spend taxpayer dollars wisely and an equal obligation to transparency," said Mayor Durkan.</p> <p>Last week, Seattle City Council member Lisa Herbold expressed her concern for the project and called for a pause on the multi-million dollar project.</p> <p>Following the mayor's announcement, Herbold released a statement Friday that read in part, "This step is necessary to ensure that the independent review ordered by the Mayor is meaningful. Had work proceeded as scheduled-especially in awarding a construction contract- it would be more difficult to integrate the results of the independent review, or delay or stop the project."</p> <p>Durkan joins the City Attorney's Office to investigate the project's management.</p> <p>Senior Deputy Mayor Mike Fong says the project will not move forward until all reviews and</p>

	investigations are complete, issues surrounding costs are resolved, and the city can determine if additional financial resources are necessary.
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HEADLINE	03/30 Milwaukee responds lead level reports
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/milwaukee-parents-concerned-lead-levels-after-troubling-report/
GIST	<p>Parents in Milwaukee say city leaders aren't doing enough to protect their kids from lead. While the national average for lead poisoning is about three percent, more than 11 percent of Milwaukee's children in 2016 suffered from it. Wisconsin health officials are reviewing Milwaukee's lead prevention program after several reports highlighted deficiencies in keeping lead away from kids.</p> <p>Milwaukee's mayor said lead from paint is the city's primary concern, since lead-based paint is in at least 100,000 homes. Some residents are also worried about lead pipes, even though the water is treated to keep the lead out, reports CBS News' Adriana Diaz. One of those residents is Aminah Al-Mujaahid, who painstakingly prepares water for her family, filtering it pitcher by pitcher.</p> <p>Last year her youngest son Shu'aib had a blood lead level of 11.4 – more than double what is considered lead poisoning. Lead can affect IQ, and Aminah and her husband Nazir believe it's stunted their five-year-old son's brain development.</p> <p>"In my assessment he's operating more on a three, three-and-a-half-year-old level," he said. "I'll say 'hey what's your name' or 'how old are you'....He'll look at you, he'll look at you like he's trying to decipher and figure it out."</p> <p>Milwaukee health officials say lead from paint poses the greatest risk to local families, but the Al-Mujaahid's believe it's in their water after recently learning they have lead service lines, which supply water to their home. The city says its water meets federal lead standards and it's treated to prevent lead from leaching from the pipes.</p> <p>Improperly treated water in Flint, Michigan, caused widespread lead contamination there three years ago. Up to 10 million homes nationwide still have lead service lines, even though Congress banned lead plumbing supplies more than 30 years ago. About 74,000 are in Milwaukee, where the city has a program to split the cost of replacing lead pipes with homeowners but so far only one percent has been done.</p> <p>"Any time they touch the water, it's alarming for me because I'm thinking about the exposure, their lives are important to us and....But it's difficult to see the city, not care," Aminah said.</p> <p>The Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program doesn't have records of investigating about 100 addresses where kids blood lead levels reached 20 or higher. Health officials also don't know if 4,500 families received follow-up letters with children's lead test results.</p> <p>"Well, a big part of this we don't know the answer to," Milwaukee Mayor Tom Barrett said. "I was told by my staff, that we did not have the documentation that established with certainty that all the kids had received this letter. That was enough for me to say, well then we're gonna send out another reminder."</p> <p>Wisconsin congresswoman Gwen Moore wants the federal government to investigate and has raised concerns over the funding and effectiveness of Milwaukee's lead removal programs.</p> <p>"The problem is devastating," Moore said. "It's really important to have this independent audit done by the Centers for Disease Control."</p> <p>Mayor Barrett is not against the idea of an audit by the CDC.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/31 Israel: will respond if violence continues
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/fcb59618f063452c9c701aab8538dbe1/Israel-says-it-will-expand-response-if-Gaza-clashes-go-on
GIST	<p>GAZA CITY, Gaza Strip (AP) — Israel will target militant groups inside Gaza if violence along the territory’s border with Israel drags on, the chief military spokesman warned on Saturday, a day after thousands of Palestinians staged protests near the border fence.</p> <p>The mass marches were largely led by Gaza’s ruling Hamas group and touted as the launch of a six-week-long protest campaign against a stifling decade-old blockade of the territory.</p> <p>Protests are to culminate in a large border march on May 15, the 70th anniversary of Israel founding. The date is mourned by Palestinians as their “nakba,” or catastrophe, when hundreds of thousands were uprooted in the 1948 Mideast war over Israel’s creation.</p> <p>Palestinian health officials said 15 Palestinians were killed by Israeli fire and more than 750 hit by live rounds, making Friday the bloodiest day in Gaza since the 2014 cross-border war between Israel and Hamas.</p> <p>It appears unlikely protests will continue at such a scale, with larger turnouts expected after Friday noon prayers, the highlight of the Muslim religious week.</p> <p>On Saturday, several dozen Palestinians approached the border fence in an area east of Gaza City, but stopped about 200 meters before the barrier.</p> <p>An Associated Press reporter saw two men who walked closer to the fence get shot in the legs by Israeli soldiers, in separate incidents about 15 minutes apart.</p> <p>Medics at the scene said both were shot by live rounds. In all, at least 10 Palestinians were wounded by live fire Saturday, health officials said.</p> <p>In Friday’s confrontations, large crowds had gathered near the fence, with smaller groups of protesters rushing forward, throwing stones and burning tires.</p> <p>Israeli troops responded with live fire and rubber-coated steel pellets, while drones dropped tear gas from above. Soldiers with rifles were perched on high earthen embankments overlooking the scene.</p> <p>Israel’s military initially claimed Friday that “thousands of Palestinians are rioting in six locations throughout the Gaza Strip, rolling burning tires and hurling stones.” Video released by the army did not back such a description.</p> <p>On Saturday, the chief army spokesman, Brig. Gen. Ronen Manelis, said that while thousands of Palestinians approached the border Friday, those engaged in stone-throwing were in the hundreds.</p> <p>Manelis denied soldiers used excessive force, saying those killed by Israeli troops were men between the ages of 18 and 30 who were involved in violence and belonged to militant factions.</p> <p>Protest organizers have said mass marches would continue until the day of the “nakba,” an anniversary with particular resonance in Gaza where the vast majority of 2 million residents are descendants of refugees. The day, May 15, will this year also coincide with the start of the Muslim holy month of Ramadan.</p> <p>Manelis reiterated Saturday that Israel “will not allow a massive breach of the fence into Israeli territory.”</p> <p>He said that Hamas and other Gaza militant groups are using protests as a cover for staging attacks. If violence continues, “we will not be able to continue limiting our activity to the fence area and will act</p>

against these terror organizations in other places too,” he said.

The border protests were seen as a new attempt by Hamas to break the border blockade, imposed by Israel and Egypt after the Islamic militant group seized Gaza from forces loyal to its rival, Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, in 2007. The continued closure has made it increasingly difficult for Hamas to govern.

The large turnout of marchers in the dangerous border zone also seemed to signal desperation among Gaza residents.

Life in the coastal strip has deteriorated further in recent months, with rising unemployment, grinding poverty and daily blackouts that last for hours.

The prospect of more protests and Palestinian casualties in coming weeks could also place Israel on the defensive.

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HEADLINE 03/31 Palestinians prepare for fresh protests

SOURCE <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-5564717/Palestinians-prepare-fresh-protests-funerals-begin-16-people-killed-clashes.html>

GIST Palestinians are preparing for further protests after 16 people were killed in the Gaza's bloodiest day in years.

Protesters are returning to a tent city near the Israel-Palestine border to resume a demonstration planned to last six weeks.

Funerals for those who were killed saw mourners chanted 'revenge' while holding Palestinian flags.

Israel has defended its soldiers who yesterday opened fire on Palestinians who had strayed from the tent city protest.

Tens of thousands of demonstrators descended on the site as Israeli troops approached the heavily fortified fence and cut off the Gaza strip.

Military chiefs said Israeli soldiers began shooting when troops were bombarded with stones and firebombs.

They also claimed Palestinians tried to damage fencing and infiltrate Israel and that protesters opened fire on Israeli soldiers along the border.

But Palestinian officials have accused Israel of disproportionate force, while human rights groups questioned Israel's use of live fire.

UN chief Antonio Guterres called for an 'independent and transparent investigation.'

More than 1,400 protesters were also wounded - 758 of them by live fire.

Others were injured by rubber bullets and tear gas inhalation, according to the Gazan health ministry.

Israel has not reported any casualties among its troops.

Palestinian president Mahmud Abbas has declared a day of national mourning and said Israel is fully responsible for the deaths.

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HEADLINE	03/30 Teacher unrest keeps spreading
SOURCE	http://nymag.com/daily/intelligencer/2018/03/red-state-teacher-unrest-just-keeps-spreading.html
GIST	<p>Eight Kentucky school districts — including those in Louisville and Lexington — are closed today as teachers stay home to protest the GOP legislature’s destructive “reforms” of their pension system. Oklahoma teachers are planning to strike on Monday despite winning a \$6,100 pay raise. And Arizona teachers rallied at the state capital on Wednesday and are threatening to strike if their demands for major pay raises and restoration of education funding cuts are not met.</p> <p>As this wave of unrest among teachers spreads nationally, it’s clear it has been inspired by the nine-day strike that won West Virginia teachers (and other state employees) a pay raise earlier this month. But there’s something more fundamental going on than copycat protests. We’re seeing a teacher-led backlash against years, and even decades, of Republican efforts at the state level to cut taxes and starve public investments. This is very clear in Oklahoma, where a quick pay raise the legislature passed this week is deemed by teachers to have missed the larger point:</p> <p>“While this is major progress, this investment alone will not undo a decade of neglect. There is still work to do to get this legislature to invest more in our classrooms. And that work will continue Monday, when educators descend on the capitol,” Alicia Priest, president of the Oklahoma Education Association, said in a Facebook video Wednesday.</p> <p>The pay-raise bill signed by Governor Mary Fallin yesterday brought in \$447 million in new revenues from higher taxes on cigarettes and oil-production facilities. But the teachers are demanding \$3.3 billion “to restore millions of dollars in school funding that have been cut in the past decade,” as Vox reports.</p> <p>Similarly, in Arizona the teacher protests are not just about teacher pay, though they are among the lowest paid in the country. Their demands are much broader, as the Washington Post notes:</p> <p>Teachers, who organized a grassroots campaign on social media, are demanding a 20 percent raise and restoration of school funding to 2008 levels, before the Great Recession struck, according to the Arizona Republic. They are also asking state lawmakers to stop cutting taxes until Arizona’s per-student spending reaches the national average.</p> <p>Asking Republican legislators to “stop cutting taxes” is a demand many of its objects would consider outrageous, even unnatural. But this collision is a reminder that GOP claims that tax cuts at the state as well as the federal level would pay for themselves by generating sustained economic growth have once again proved faulty, with public education being the primary victim of chronic budget shortfalls.</p> <p>While Republican pols in Arizona and Oklahoma, like their counterparts in West Virginia, are backpedaling furiously and trying to prevent or resolve strikes, the conflict may go too deep for an easy resolution. In Arizona, for example, the Republican governor and legislature are engaged in a radical experiment in “portable” education funding giving parents unprecedented freedom to use public dollars for private schools (led, as it happens, by the GOP candidate in a congressional special election next month) that could pose an existential threat to public education in the state. In Kentucky, teacher grievances are mostly focused on the pursuit by Republican governor Matt Bevin and the GOP legislature of another big conservative cause: public pension “reform,” which in this case meant serious reductions in benefits and a complete revocation of teacher pension security. That the “reform” was whipped through the legislature suddenly after being attached to a sewer regulation bill did not improve its aroma.</p> <p>Perhaps the current wave of teacher protests and strikes will subside as the school year ends. But more likely, it will spill over into the election season this fall, when 36 governorships and most of the national state legislatures are up for grabs.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/30 Gaza protests: 16 killed, 1,400+ injured
SOURCE	http://www.jpost.com/Arab-Israeli-Conflict/LIVE-COVERAGE-Multiple-dead-and-hundreds-hurt-as-Palestinians-clash-with-IDF-on-Gaza-Border-547534
GIST	<p>PA leader Mahmoud Abbas said on Friday that Israel is responsible for the deaths of Gazan protesters who participated in the Friday riots near the border fence.</p> <p>"The marches today prove that the Palestinian people will not aid any plan that wishes to close the lid on the Palestinian issue", he said.</p> <p>"Jerusalem will remain Arab," said Abbas.</p> <p>The US decision to recognize Jerusalem as the Israeli capital angered many in the Arab and Muslim world, leading some Palestinians to argue that the US may no longer be a suitable peace negotiator between Israelis and Palestinians.</p> <p>21:50 Hamas spokesperson claims 16 dead after riots</p> <p>Sixteen Palestinians died as a result of taking part in the Friday riots at the border fence near the Gaza strip, said Ashraf al-Qidra, a spokesman for the Hamas-run Health Ministry In Gaza.</p> <p>He also stated that 1,416 protesters had been injured.</p> <p>The IDF stated that over 30,000 people had taken part in the riots and that the IDF snipers used live ammunition only in cases when the fence was about to be breached or when IDF troops were about to be shot at.</p> <p>Two terrorists had been spotted and neutralized by IDF forces near the border fence on Seder night during Friday evening.</p> <p>Saturday had been declared a day of national mourning by the Palestinian Authority to honor the protesters who died.</p> <p>21:24 Abbas declares day of national mourning in the PA</p> <p>PA leader Mahmoud Abbas declared Saturday to be a day of national mourning following the deaths of 12 Palestinian protesters during the Land Day riots that took place at the border fence on Friday.</p> <p>More than a thousand Palestinians were injured as the IDF soldiers used tear gas fired by drones and sniper fire to prevent terrorists from breaching the fence or firing on Israeli troops.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/30 Russia expels more foreign diplomats
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/03/30/europe/russia-diplomats-retaliation-intl/index.html
GIST	<p>Moscow (CNN)Russia ordered the expulsion of diplomats from at least 23 countries Friday, as a reciprocal move after those countries expelled Russian diplomats in solidarity with the United Kingdom over the poisoning of a former Russian double agent.</p> <p>More than 20 countries announced this week that they would expel Russian diplomats in support of Britain, which blames Moscow for the March 4 nerve agent attack against Sergei Skripal and his daughter, Yulia Skripal, on British soil. Russia denies involvement.</p> <p>According to Russia's state-run Sputnik news outlet, Russia has now expelled the following: 13 Ukrainian, four Canadian, four Polish, four German, three Lithuanian, three Czech, three Moldovan, two Italian, two Dutch, two Spanish and two Danish diplomats.</p>

Also expelled are one Finn, one Latvian, one Swede, one Norwegian, one Romanian, one Croatian and one Irish diplomat, as well as an Estonian military attache.

Moscow reserved the right to respond to Belgium, Hungary, Montenegro and Georgia with regard to their actions over the Skripal case, Sputnik said.

The wave of expulsions comes a day after Russia announced that it would expel 60 US diplomats and close the US consulate in St. Petersburg in retaliation for a similar step by Washington, which said Monday it would be expelling 60 Russian diplomats and closing the Russian consulate in Seattle.

"This message from Moscow is not surprising," German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas said in response to the expulsion of German envoys. "We had not taken the decision to expel the Russian diplomats lightly. Our reaction in the case of Skripal was necessary and appropriate as a political signal."

Maas said the decision was made in solidarity with Britain and because Russia had "refused to give any clarification" on the matter. "Nevertheless, even in the current situation, we remain committed to dialogue with Russia and will work for European security and a constructive future for relations between our countries," he said.

Russia's state-run Tass news agency reported that Russia had also demanded that Britain reduce the number of staff in its Moscow embassy to match the number of Russian diplomats remaining in London.

UK Prime Minister Theresa May ordered the expulsion of 23 Russian diplomats on March 14, describing them as "undeclared intelligence officers." Russia in turn ordered 23 British diplomats to leave Moscow and closed the UK Consulate in St. Petersburg.

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HEADLINE	03/31 Russia tells UK more diplomats to leave
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/03/31/europe/uk-russia-spy--intl/index.html
GIST	<p>Moscow (CNN)The UK will be expected to cut around 50 personnel from its diplomatic missions in Russia as relations between the two nations deteriorate further following the poisoning of a former Russian spy and his daughter in England.</p> <p>Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova told CNN on Saturday that the number was calculated to ensure the two nations achieve parity in how many staff members they have working at their diplomatic missions.</p> <p>Moscow initially expelled 23 British diplomats after 23 Russian diplomats were told to leave the UK. Russia is now insisting that more leave so the staff will be the same size in the countries' respective embassies.</p> <p>More than 25 countries announced this week that they would expel Russian diplomats in support of Britain, which blames Moscow for the March 4 nerve agent attack against Sergei Skripal and his daughter, Yulia, in the southern English city of Salisbury. Russia denies involvement.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/31 UN calls for inquiry into Gaza violence
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/03/31/middleeast/gaza-protests-un-intl/index.html
GIST	<p>Gaza (CNN)UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has called for an independent inquiry into Friday's violence in Gaza that left at least 17 Palestinians dead and more than 1,400 injured.</p> <p>Guterres made his comments late Friday before an emergency UN Security Council meeting to address the</p>

issue. UN spokesman Farhan Haq relayed his statement to the media.

"This tragedy underlines the urgency of revitalizing the peace process aiming at creating the conditions for a return to meaningful negotiations for a peaceful solution that will allow Palestinians and Israelis to live side by side peacefully and in security," Guterres was reported as saying.

Funerals are being held Saturday for those killed when thousands of Palestinians marched to Gaza's border with Israel a day earlier.

The first in a series of protests planned through mid-May, Friday marked Land Day, when Palestinian land was confiscated by Israel in 1976.

The day quickly turned into the bloodiest day in Gaza since the 2014 war as Palestinian protesters and Israeli military clashed along the fence.

In northern Gaza, CNN witnessed at least two dozen people being taken away by ambulances in a half-hour span Friday as protests started across Gaza. CNN also saw a small number of protesters throwing rocks. People were injured by live rounds, rubber bullets and tear gas. The majority were young men -- one woman was among the injured.

A spokesman for the Palestinian Ministry of Health told CNN that doctors were already running out of essential emergency medicine and blood for transfusions due to the high number of injured.

In an article on its website, the United Nations reported that Tayé-Brook Zerihoun, the deputy UN political affairs chief, told Friday's Security Council meeting that around 30,000 people participated in and around the March at various locations in Gaza.

Soon after the demonstrations started, the UN report said, "The situation turned deadly in several spots." "Some of the casualties were reportedly the result of live ammunition used by Israeli security forces during the March. Other casualties followed armed clashes between Palestinians and Israeli security forces, including the shelling of a Hamas observation point," the United Nations said.

"Reports indicate that most of the demonstrators stayed well away from the border fence and were not violent," the United Nations reported Zerihoun as saying.

"However, there are also reports that some protesters engaged in stone-throwing and violent behavior; some reportedly carrying weapons," Zerihoun said.

He reportedly told the Security Council that Israeli security forces said that militants tried to get through the fence in attempt to plant explosives.

In a briefing Saturday, IDF spokesman Brig. Gen. Ronen Manelis said there had been three attempts at throwing projectiles, including live fire and Molotov cocktails at Israeli soldiers across the fence.

However, there appears to be a disparity in the number of Palestinians injured by live bullets. Manelis said only "a few scores were hit by live ammunition," while the Palestinian Ministry of Health in Gaza said 758 people were injured.

Manelis said the protests were organized by Hamas, the militant political group that controls Gaza, adding that if these continue IDF will "hit targets deep inside Gaza."

Manelis said that most killed in Gaza were known as "terror activists," known to Israel by name and affiliation. He did not elaborate further regarding identities of those killed.

Confrontations further escalated late Friday. Israeli fighter jets targeted three Hamas sites after an IDF position was shot at in northern Gaza, according to an IDF statement. Tank fire also targeted the three sites

	following an exchange of fire.
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HEADLINE	03/30 Pittsburgh public safety drones
SOURCE	http://pittsburgh.cbslocal.com/2018/03/30/pittsburgh-public-safety-drones-surveillance-concerns/
GIST	<p>PITTSBURGH (KDKA) — Drones will be on duty in Pittsburgh this summer.</p> <p>The city’s Public Safety Department is getting two high-tech drones to assist police and firefighters.</p> <p>It’s state-of-the-art technology that can go where police, firefighters and paramedics can’t without the risk to life and limb.</p> <p>“It’s much safer and much cheaper to use technology than put a police officer or firefighter in jeopardy,” Pittsburgh Public Safety Director Wendell Hissrich said.</p> <p>The two public safety drones are set to arrive in the next two weeks and will become their eye in the sky at fires, search and rescue operations or active shooter situations. To that end, each is tricked out with three high-def, tilt-and-zoom cameras as well as thermal imaging — and that makes some people nervous.</p> <p>While the department says drones won’t be used as an investigation tool, the director of the American Civil Liberties Union in Pittsburgh, Vic Walczak, has concerns about their surveillance capabilities, especially by law enforcement.</p> <p>“They could be flying a drone outside here while we’re talking and they’re looking in the window,” Walczak said. “This is a significant expansion of the police department’s ability to invade people’s privacy.”</p> <p>“That’s not the intent here. The intent is for a public safety response, whether it’s a hazardous materials situation, a SWAT situation where we might have an active shooter or a fire situation,” Hissrich said. “It’s not used for surveillance.”</p>
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HEADLINE	03/30 Claim: cops shot unarmed man in back
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/US/stephon-clark-shot-times-times-back-independent-autopsy/story?id=54122396&cid=clicksource 81 2 hero headlines headlines hed
GIST	<p>Stephon Clark, the unarmed black man who was fatally shot by police in his grandmother's backyard, was struck eight times -- including six bullets in the back, according to a private autopsy commissioned by the family.</p> <p>Civil Rights Attorney Benjamin Crump, who is representing Clark's family, released the independent autopsy report at a news conference Friday.</p> <p>Dr. Bennet Omalu, who was the first doctor to discover chronic traumatic encephalopathy (CTE), conducted the autopsy. Omalu, who brought awareness to the issue of concussions and brain trauma to the NFL, was depicted film "Concussion," in which Will Smith played him in the leading role.</p> <p>"He was shot in the back six times. The seventh gunshot wound was slightly to the side of his body but to the back of the side of his body," Omalu said during the news conference. "Each one of these bullets independently possessed a fatal capacity."</p> <p>Crump, meanwhile, said the family autopsy proved Clark wasn't running toward police.</p>

"The narrative that had been put forth was that they had to open fire because he was charging at them," Crump told reporters. "Well, obviously, based on Dr. Omalu's findings in the family's autopsy, it suggests all the bullets were from behind."

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HEADLINE 03/30 Officer who shot Alton Sterling fired

SOURCE <http://abcnews.go.com/US/police-officer-shot-alton-sterling-fired-baton-rouge/story?id=54134701>

GIST Officer Blane Salamoni, who shot Alton Sterling, has been fired from the police department, Baton Rouge Police Chief Murphy Paul announced Friday.

Paul said he came to his decision "based on the actions of the officers" in the incident.

"These actions were not minor deviations from policy, as they contributed to the outcome to the death of another human being," he said.

Salamoni had been on administrative leave before the decision was made, Paul said. His last day as a Baton Rouge police officer was today.

The other officer involved in the shooting -- Howie Lake II -- will be suspended without pay for three days, Paul said.

The police department also released body camera and surveillance footage from the shooting.

Body camera footage shows an officer approaching Sterling. The officer then instructs Sterling to put his hands on a car "right quick" before grabbing Sterling's wrist and forcing it onto a hood of a nearby sedan. Meanwhile, Sterling asks multiple times what he did.

The camera captures the commotion that ensues, and a stun gun is heard going off in the background.

Once Sterling is on the ground, someone yells that he "has a gun."

In another body camera video -- from the second officer's perspective -- the officer says to Sterling, "Put your hands on the car or I'm a shoot you in your f----- head, you understand me?" as he pushes Sterling onto the hood of the car and points a gun at him.

"Alright, hold up, hold up, man," Sterling says as he struggles under the officer's weight. "You're hurting my arm."

One officer then instructs the other to Tase Sterling, and the same commotion follows.

Cellphone video of the shooting had been released in the past. Video shows the fatal shooting of Alton Sterling during a confrontation with police officers outside the store in Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

Sterling, a 37-year-old black man, was shot and killed on July 5, 2016, after being confronted by a pair of white police officers -- Salamoni and Lake -- outside Baton Rouge's Triple S Convenience Store. His death prompted protests across the country over police brutality.

Paul said the Sterling family has the department's prayers and that he hopes the announcement brings "some closure" to them.

Going forward, the department is going to ensure that officers get the "proper training" to ensure another "incident" does not occur.

In a press conference Friday, Paul urged members of the community to adhere to commands by police

	<p>officers.</p> <p>"Treat our police officers with the respect that their positions deserve, and I assure you that the men and women of the Baton Rouge Police Department will reciprocate that gesture," Paul said. "Please stop resisting. Stop running. When a police officer gives you directions, listen."</p> <p>Now that the decision regarding the officers' employment at the department has been made and the investigation concluded, healing can begin, Paul said, adding that the "cloud" of Sterling's death had been hanging over the community for "too long."</p> <p>"We're gonna allow our community to heal, and we're gonna allow our police officers to heal," he said.</p> <p>Louisiana Attorney General Jeff Landry announced Tuesday that the two officers involved in Sterling's shooting wouldn't face charges in the case.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/31 Deadly year for police?
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/US/2018-deadly-year-cops/story?id=53859585
GIST	<p>A troubling increase</p> <p>While officers die in traffic-related incidents more than any other situation, this year, the deaths of officers by guns has climbed to a "troubling" number.</p> <p>From Jan. 1 to March 30, 2017, 10 on-duty officers were shot dead. From Jan. 1 to March 30 of this year, 20 on-duty officers were shot dead.</p> <p>"I do worry about these firearm-related deaths," Steve Groeninger, senior director of communications and marketing at the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial Fund, told ABC News. "It's troubling."</p> <p>"It's too soon to know if it's a trend," Groeninger added. "As [the second quarter] plays out and we receive data forms from departments who lost an officer this year, we'll be able to better assess and quantify."</p> <p>In 2017, 46 on-duty officers were killed by guns, according to the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial Fund. The year before, it was 67, and in 2015, it was 43.</p> <p>If this year's pattern continues at its current rate, 2018 could see 80 on-duty police deaths from gun violence.</p> <p>Former FBI agent and ABC News contributor Steve Gomez called the increase from 2017 to 2018 "disturbing."</p> <p>"This is a trend that we are seeing with regard to people acting out, people not having self-control, especially when dealing with law enforcement officers. I think it's a symptom of both that lack of control and complying with law enforcement and we are now seeing more people who have [behavioral and mental problems] and they have access to firearms," Gomez said. "That's a deadly combination."</p> <p>"This has been the deadliest year for law enforcement in many, many years [so far]," said former Dallas police chief and ABC News contributor David Brown. While the trend appears to be on the rise this year, Brown said, he added that overall it hasn't reached the peaks of the 1970s, '80s and '90s.</p> <p>Officers in small towns are just at risk as officers in cities, Brown said. A police officer in urban Pomona, California, and an officer in rural Clinton, Missouri, were both shot dead this month.</p> <p>An especially a big fear now is police ambushes, which Brown said are increasing. The uptick has led to</p>

more officers being told to wait for cover and not quickly rush in as often when responding to crisis calls, he said.

"There's always a high degree of alert among law enforcement professionals," Groenginer said. "They never know what could be around the corner. They never know when they could be targeted just because they are in a uniform."

Police applications on the decline

"One of the most concerning things is not a lot of people are wanting to be police officers" due to police criticism and heightened dangers, Brown said.

Gomez agreed. He said one official told him departments are "struggling to get qualified candidates to apply" and Gomez thinks it's partly because of what he calls the "Ferguson effect."

In 2014, a white police officer fatally shot an African-American teen in Ferguson, Missouri, sparking large-scale protests.

Gomez said Ferguson and similar police shootings have since "continued to impact the perception of law enforcement."

"Potential candidates entering into law enforcement feel that they don't have the support of the public and of government officials," Gomez said.

Jonathan Thompson, executive director of the National Sheriffs' Association (NSA), said that five years ago, there were 100 applicants for every vacancy. Today, that number is down to the low 60s, he said.

Last year, 34-year-old New York City police officer Miosotis Familia was gunned down while she was sitting in her marked police command vehicle, writing in her memo book.

One day after the shooting, the NYPD police commissioner reassured hundreds of recruits at their swearing-in ceremony that they had "absolutely" made the right career choice.

"The work of officer Miosotis Familia is not finished," NYPD Commissioner James O'Neill said, telling the recruits that it is their job as cops to finish it.

'The profession is on edge'

What's likely contributing to the increase in deadly shootings is some officers are now hesitant to use force in dangerous situations because they feel they no longer have support from the public and the government, Gomez said.

"If you're hesitant in using force, especially deadly force, then you are putting yourself at a disadvantage in a dangerous situation," Gomez said.

According to The Washington Post's database cataloging fatal police-involved shootings, 264 people have been shot and killed by police so far this year. In 2017, 987 people were fatally shot by police, and as of last week, there have been four fewer shootings this year than at the same time last year.

Brown said he thinks there's a decrease in trust of the government and thus a decrease in trust of law enforcement as well.

"I sense a lot of anger" within officers around the country, Brown said.

Many officers feel they can only trust themselves and their partners, Brown said, "and that is not the sentiment you want for a public servant."

"I'm really concerned that the 'us against them' mentality will take over, which is not healthy for delivering the best police service."

"The profession is on edge," he said, "and that is when you make mistakes and overreact."

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Cyber Awareness

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HEADLINE	03/30 Cyberattacks 'cash-strapped' local govt.
SOURCE	https://www.denverpost.com/2018/03/30/cdot-cyberattack-local-government-preparation/
GIST	<p>ATLANTA — Atlanta police officers initially had to write reports by hand. Residents still can't pay water bills online. Municipal court dates are being reset. All are fallout from a ransomware attack last week that hobbled the city's invisible infrastructure.</p> <p>Another ransomware attack hit Baltimore's 911 dispatch system over the weekend, prompting a roughly 17-hour shutdown of automated emergency dispatching. The Colorado Department of Transportation suffered two attacks just over a month ago. And the North Carolina county that's home to Charlotte totally rebuilt its system after a December attack.</p> <p>For cash-strapped local governments, paying for robust protection against the invisible menace of a cyberattack can be a hard sell. But cyberattacks continue to proliferate, and experts say preparation and strong defensive measures are necessary to avoid the crippling effects.</p> <p>"As elected officials, it's often quite easy for us to focus on the things that people see because, at the end of the day, our residents are our customers," Atlanta Mayor Keisha Lance Bottoms said at a news conference Monday. "But we have to really make sure that we continue to focus on the things that people can't see, and digital infrastructure is very important."</p> <p>Although it's vital to make sure systems are up to date and have the latest patches, malware evolves so quickly that experts also stress the importance of comprehensive backups and a quick response when an attack does happen.</p> <p>"I don't think any security is flawless," said Craig McCullough, a vice president at security firm Commvault. "I always approach it from the standpoint of it's not a matter of if but when, and when it happens, are you prepared? Are you going to be able to get your data back?"</p> <p>Governments, public agencies and companies need to know what data they have and make sure it's backed up. Software and hardware can be replaced, but data is much more difficult, McCullough said.</p> <p>A quick response can help minimize the damage, said Dmitri Alperovitch, chief technology officer of security firm CrowdStrike. If a threat is detected immediately after it enters the network — for example, when someone clicks on a link in a phishing email or through a vulnerable server — it might be possible to stop before it spreads beyond the initially infected computer, he said.</p> <p>Atlanta officials won't say whether they'll pay the \$51,000 ransom, though Bottoms has said all options are on the table. Mike Cote, president of Secureworks, a security firm hired by Atlanta, has said they know who's behind the attack but aren't releasing that information.</p> <p>Cybersecurity experts say the attack is consistent with the SamSam group, which is known as a sophisticated attacker and negotiator, said Jake Williams, founder of security firm Rendition Infosec.</p> <p>Unlike other ransomware that might raise alarms upon infection, SamSam compromises machines without immediately locking up their files. That access is then used to spread through the network "before they</p>

press the encrypt button,” Williams said.

“They put you into an extreme pain point position where paying is actually an attractive option,” Williams said

He said he regularly tells clients they must make a business decision on whether to pay. He acknowledges that can be more difficult for governments, whose rules might block them from spending public funds on extortion.

Although Atlanta’s critical physical infrastructure — including the city’s airport, emergency response systems and water safety and treatment — were not directly affected, other departments are operating manually and some services have been suspended. Nuisances at first, issues caused by the outages could have compounded effects if they persist.

The mayor has been cautious, declining to give a timeline for when things might be up and running again after the cyberattack announced March 22. She has repeatedly said the investigation and recovery is “a marathon, not a sprint,” and her focus is on making sure the city’s network is safe moving forward.

But the road could be long.

The Colorado Department of Transportation was hit by a SamSam attack on Feb. 21 and again on March 1, and it was back to 80 percent functionality by Thursday said Deborah Blyth, the state’s chief information security officer. Luckily, they had strong backups so they didn’t even think about paying the ransom, she said.

In the weeks since the attack, they’ve implemented two-factor authentication for remote access and accelerated the implementation of other security measures that were already planned.

In Mecklenberg County, N.C., where Charlotte is located, it took a little more than 60 days for things to return to normal after a ransomware attack that began with a phishing email in December.

County officials didn’t pay the ransom after consulting with federal authorities and realizing their data was backed up so they didn’t need to pay to get it back, County manager Dena Diorio said. But the process was still tedious as they had to essentially rebuild the system.

The county has taken steps to prevent another attack, including making its email system more secure and limiting employees’ internet access. And they have more expensive plans — segmenting their data and moving to a cloud-based system — that will take about two years to implement, Diorio said.

Remembering the scary early days, Diorio had advice for her counterparts in Atlanta: “All I can say is: Don’t panic and stay focused.”

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HEADLINE	04/02 Email scams costing businesses billions
SOURCE	https://www.wvnews.com/statejournal/law/email-scams-costing-medium--to-small-sized-businesses-billions/article_b0e63460-020e-572a-b144-bb6c2c276b1a.html
GIST	<p>FAIRMONT — Thieves looking for new ways to get their hands on your money are using emails to target small- to mid-sized companies.</p> <p>The FBI says since 2013, when it began tracking so-called “business email compromise” scams, “organized crime groups have targeted large and small companies and organizations in every U.S. state and more than 100 countries around the world — from nonprofits and well-known corporations to churches and school systems.”</p>

As of January 2017, the FBI said losses were in the \$3 billion range “and climbing.”

Methods vary, but the so called, “cyber-thieves” typically identify and target employees who have access to company finances — then try to trick them into wiring money to bank accounts they think belong to trusted customers or business partners. The accounts, however, are controlled by the cyber-thieves.

Eric Huber, vice president of International and Strategic Initiatives at the National White Collar Crime Center in Fairmont, said the cyber-criminals typically study their victims, figuring out who in an organization is responsible for paying vendors and even the tone of their electronic interactions with bosses.

That person may they get an email appearing to be from the CEO telling them he or she is, for instance, boarding a plane and needs the unwitting employee to quickly and quietly wire money to some obscure destination in, say, Poland.

He said the thieves are banking on the employee following orders — not asking questions, sending the money and keeping quiet about it long enough for them to get their hands on it.

“It’s one of the big trends,” Huber said. “Bad guys used to spend a lot of time trying to hack into small- and medium-sized business computers to steal banking credentials, then use them to steal money from firms. They’ll still do that, but what they’ve discovered is that it’s easier just to ask for money. So, they’ll either do research for open source intelligence or compromise someone’s email, read it and then pretend to be the CEO or a senior executive.”

He said the cyber-thieves will “see how (the organization) communicates, who sends wires...and craft it to look like the email came from inside the organization, or in some cases they’ll take over the email.”

The thieves are banking on the employee following orders—not asking questions, sending the money as instructed and keeping quiet about it long enough for them to get their hands on it, he said.

advertisement

Huber said nowadays, employees need to take the time to verify the legitimacy of those kinds of requests before they hit the send button. He said medium-sized and smaller businesses tend to be targeted because they “don’t have as much money to throw at protecting infrastructure. They may not have anyone devoted to informational security or if they do, that person is probably overwhelmed.”

“They don’t have the resources to protect themselves,” he adds. “That’s the reason they’re targeting small- and medium-sized businesses for this sort of compromise—it’s (less believable) that the CEO of a Fortune 500 company would say ‘send this wire,’ but with small- to medium-sized businesses, it’s believable.”

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HEADLINE	04/01 Atlanta still locked-out of files
SOURCE	https://gizmodo.com/the-city-of-atlanta-is-still-locked-out-files-over-a-we-1824242001
GIST	<p>City officials in Atlanta, Georgia are still trying to recover 10 days after a ransomware attack on municipal computer systems hit at least five out of 13 departments, knocking out some city services and forcing others to revert to paper records.</p> <p>Per Reuters, over a week has passed since the SamSam ransomware began spreading throughout city computer systems, with a \$51,000 ransom payment demanded by the hackers going unpaid. While the recovery began last week, large stretches of computer systems remain encrypted by the attackers. Three city council members were sharing a single old laptop over the weekend as they tried to reconstruct records, with councilman Howard Shook telling the news agency the situation was “extraordinarily frustrating.”</p>

According to the Reuters report, numerous local officials have found their file systems corrupted, with tags like “weapologize” and “imsorry” appended to document titles. Though the ransomware was not able to corrupt everything—just eight out of 18 computers in the auditors’ office were affected, for example—it sounds like much of the information may be unrecoverable:

“Everything on my hard drive is gone,” City Auditor Amanda Noble said in her office housed in Atlanta City Hall’s ornate tower.

City officials have not disclosed the extent to which servers for backing up information on PCs were corrupted or what kind of information they think is unrecoverable without paying the ransom.

Atlanta police returned to taking written case notes and have lost access to some investigative databases, department spokesman Carlos Campos told Reuters. He declined to discuss the contents of the affected files.

The SamSam ransomware is particularly advanced and “infiltrates by exploiting vulnerabilities or guessing weak passwords in a target’s public-facing systems,” then uses techniques like the Mimikatz password recovery tool to seize control of the rest of a network, according to Wired. That means attackers don’t need to launch social engineering attacks or trick users into running malware for it to spread, and SamSam can easily spread via “remote desktop protocols, Java-based web servers, File Transfer Protocol servers, and other public network components.”

The city was just beginning to implement some of the recommendations of a cybersecurity audit released in January that found “the large number of severe and critical vulnerabilities identified has existed for so long the organizations responsible have essentially become complacent and no longer take action,” per CBS. The audit said that “departments tasked with dealing with the thousands of vulnerabilities do not have enough time or tools to properly analyze and treat the systems,” leading to a “significant level of preventable risk exposure to the city.”

“Ransomware is dumb,” Parameter Security founder Dave Chronister told Wired. “Even a sophisticated version like this has to rely on automation to work. Ransomware relies on someone not implementing basic security tenets... Not to be harsh, but looking at this their security strategy must be pretty bad.”

The FBI and Department of Homeland Security are assisting Atlanta officials, but it’s not clear to what extent they can help. As Reuters noted, the FBI “typically discourages ransomware victims from paying up,” but former DHS official Mark Weatherford said that might have been one of the few options for Atlanta to avoid so much hassle.

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HEADLINE	04/01 Data breach Saks Fifth Ave, Lord & Taylor
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/f48940efeb834144adac1b7473d2c272/Data-breach-hits-Saks-Fifth-Avenue,-Lord-&-Taylor-stores
GIST	<p>A data breach at department store chains Saks Fifth Avenue, Saks Off Fifth and Lord & Taylor has compromised the personal information of customers who shopped at the stores.</p> <p>The chains’ parent company, Canada-based Hudson’s Bay Co., announced the breach of its store payment systems on Sunday. The company said it was investigating and taking steps to contain the attack.</p> <p>The disclosure came after New York-based security firm Gemini Advisory LLC revealed on Sunday that a hacking group known as JokerStash or Fin7 began boasting on dark websites last week that it was putting up for sale up to 5 million stolen credit and debit cards. The hackers named their stash BIGBADABOOM-2. While the extent of its holdings remains unclear, about 125,000 records were immediately released for sale.</p>

	<p>The security firm confirmed with several banks that many of the compromised records came from Saks and Lord & Taylor customers.</p> <p>Hudson’s Bay said in a statement that it “deeply regrets any inconvenience or concern this may cause,” but it hasn’t said how many Saks or Lord & Taylor stores or customers were affected. The company said there’s no indication that the breach affected its online shopping websites or other brands, including the Home Outfitters chain or Hudson’s Bay stores in Canada.</p> <p>The company said customers won’t be liable for fraudulent charges. It plans to offer free credit monitoring and other identity protection services.</p> <p>There is evidence that the breach began about a year ago, said Dmitry Chorine, Gemini Advisory’s co-founder and chief technology officer. He said the prolific hacking group has previously targeted major hotel and restaurant chains.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/02 Europe plans fake news crackdown
SOURCE	https://www.thedailybeast.com/europe-plans-fake-news-crackdown-on-social-media-companies?ref=home
GIST	<p>The European Commission—worried that next year’s European elections could be vulnerable to conspiracy theories, fake news and doctored videos—is eying new powers to crack down on social media companies which spread ‘disinformation.’</p> <p>In the wake of the Cambridge Analytica data-harvesting scandal which rocked Facebook, Julian King, the European commissioner for security, wrote in a letter obtained by the Financial Times that there must be a "clear game plan" on how to deal with social media giants during election periods.</p> <p>“It is clear that the cyber-security threat we are facing is changing from one primarily targeting systems to one that is also increasingly about deploying cyber means to manipulate behavior, deepen societal divides, subvert our democratic systems and raise questions about our democratic institutions," he wrote.</p> <p>The letter adds that the alleged “psychometric targeting activities” of data analysis companies such as Cambridge Analytica are just a “preview of the profoundly disturbing effects such disinformation could have on the functioning of liberal democracies."</p>
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HEADLINE	03/30 Animal abuse site hacked; users exposed
SOURCE	https://www.hackread.com/animal-abuse-website-hacked-users-exposed/
GIST	<p>An animal abuse website or otherwise called a “bestiality” platform (whose name will not be shared here) has been hacked and as a result, personal details of over 3,000 registered users have been leaked and exposed online.</p> <p>The hack was identified by Troy Hunt, founder of HaveIbeenpwned and according to him, personal details of 3,200 users have been exposed including email addresses, passwords stored as bcrypt hashes, date of birth and most importantly IP addresses.</p> <p>On the other hand, Hunt also provided a set of leaked data to Motherboard who has confirmed that the leaked data is linked to the animal abuse forum and noted that there are hundreds of private messages containing conversations between site users.</p> <p>“Regardless of what you’re into in your personal time, this incident serves as a reminder that anything you do online may one day be leaked publicly,” Hunt told Motherboard.</p>

	<p>Laws affecting animal abuse or zoophilic activities vary across different countries and other sub-national jurisdictions. However, as of February 10th, 2018, in the United States, 45 states, and 2 territories ban such activities with animals.</p> <p>It is unclear if the targeted site is operated from the United States or the leaked accounts belonged to the users in the States. Nevertheless, should authorities decide to look into the matter, tracking users could be an easy task since their IP addresses are part of the leaked data.</p> <p>Previously, the online hacktivist group Anonymous targeted animal abuse sites under the banner of operation #OpBEAST in which two websites were compromised and one was completely deleted by the hacktivist group.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/30 India power billing system ransomware
SOURCE	https://www.hackread.com/hackers-demand-ransom-indian-power-billing-records/
GIST	<p>The AMR system (automatic meter reading system) of Uttar Haryana Bijli Vitran Nigam (UHBVN) (Haryana power utilities) in Panchkula, India became a victim of cyber-attack by unknown hackers last week.</p> <p>The New Indian Express (TNIE) reports that hackers stole billing data from UHBVN computer systems and are demanding 1 Crore Indian rupee (\$153,800) in Bitcoin from the state government for decrypting the files and restoring access to the AMR system.</p> <p>The case has already been filed in Sector 5 Police Station of Panchkula under several sections of the Indian Penal Code and the IT Act but TNIE hasn't named the sections in its report.</p> <p>UHBVN, one of the two power discoms in Haryana, monitors electricity billing of nine Haryana districts. The hack attack occurred on 21 March at exactly 17 minutes past midnight. Hackers uploaded a ransom message on the UHBVN head office computers.</p> <p>According to TNIE, On 22 March, when the computers were turned on, the ransom message got displayed on the screens narrating the demands of the hackers. Soon after the attack was identified, concerned officials, IT and cyber-security experts collectively conducted full system study and found that the database was encrypted.</p> <p>The attacked ARM system was installed, operated and managed by Tata Consultancy Services Ltd (TCS). It was installed in 2011 and since then the electricity billings of the 9 districts namely Ambala, Karnal, Kaithal, Kurukshetra, Panchkula, Panipat, Sonapat, Rohtak and Yamunanagar were managed by this system.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/30 College students turn to cryptomining
SOURCE	https://www.infosecurity-magazine.com/news/college-kids-turn-to-cryptomining/
GIST	<p>The higher-education landscape has become a fertile field for growing crypto-mining revenue. College students are crypto-mining from their dorm rooms, while outside actors are targeting their online activities for web-based attacks.</p> <p>According to Vectra's 2018 RSA Conference Edition of its Attacker Behavior Industry Report, higher education is a prime arena given that students are usually not protected by universities' open networks. These same students also do their own crypto-mining, because they get free electricity.</p> <p>"Students are more likely to perform crypto-mining personally as they don't pay for power, the primary</p>

	<p>cost of crypto-mining,” said Chris Morales, head of security analytics at Vectra. “Universities also have high-bandwidth capacity networks with a large volume of easy targets, especially as students are more likely to use untrusted sites (like illegal movies, music and software) hosting crypto-mining malware.”</p> <p>The report, which analyzed traffic and collected metadata from more than 4.5 million devices and workloads from customer cloud, data-center and enterprise environments, found that 60% of cryptocurrency mining detections occurred in higher education, followed by entertainment and leisure (6%), financial services (3%), technology (3%) and healthcare (2%). Mining overall has surged with the rising price of cryptocurrencies like Bitcoin, Monero and Ethereum.</p> <p>Colleges and universities aren’t just over-indexing in crypto-mining. The highest volume of attacker behaviors per industry were in higher education (3,715 detections per 10,000 devices) followed by engineering (2,918 detections per 10,000 devices).</p> <p>“Students are exceedingly intelligent and very enterprising,” said Daniel Basile, executive director of the Security Operations Center (SOC) at Texas A&M University. “This is a time that many of them are working with new technologies, and it is not surprising that they utilizing their machines for cryptocurrency mining. However, there is also a large increase in websites that will crypto-jack your PC while you are on their website. This new trend of mining Bitcoin for revenue instead of ads can directly affect students. With the increase in online video streaming resources, this creates a large amount of cryptocurrency mining.”</p>
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HEADLINE	03/29 ‘Fauxpersky’ malware via USB drives
SOURCE	https://www.securityweek.com/fauxpersky-credential-stealer-spreads-usb-drives
GIST	<p>A recently discovered credential stealing malware is masquerading as Kaspersky Antivirus and spreading via infected USB drives, according to threat detection firm Cybereason.</p> <p>Dubbed Fauxpersky, the keylogger was written in AutoIT or AutoHotKey, which are simple tools to write small programs for various automation tasks on Windows. AHK can be used to write code to send keystrokes to other applications, and to create a ‘compiled’ exe with their code in it.</p> <p>On systems infected with Fauxpersky, the security researchers discovered four dropped files, each named similarly to Windows system files: Explorers.exe, Spoolsv.exe, Svhost.exe, and Taskhosts.exe.</p> <p>Once executed, the malware gathers a list of drives on the machine and starts replicating itself to them, which allows it to spread to any of the connected external drives.</p> <p>Furthermore, the keylogger renames the external drives to match its naming scheme. Specifically, the drive’s new name would include its original name, its size, and the string “(Secured by Kaspersky Internet Security 2017)”.The malware also creates an autorun.inf file to point to a batch script.</p> <p>“This malware is by no means advanced or even very stealthy. Its authors didn’t put any effort into changing even the most trivial things, such as the AHK icon that’s attached to the file. However, this malware is highly efficient at infecting USB drives and collecting data from the keylogger, exfiltrating it through Google Forms and depositing it in the attacker’s inbox,” Cybereason concludes.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/30 Arrests Italy, Romania in phishing scam
SOURCE	https://www.securityweek.com/20-arrested-italy-and-romania-spear-phishing-scam
GIST	<p>Authorities this week arrested 20 individuals in Italy and Romania for their role in a banking phishing scam that defrauded bank customers of €1 million (\$1.23 million).</p>

The arrests were the result of a two-year long cybercrime investigation conducted by the Romanian National Police and the Italian National Police, with support from Europol, the Joint Cybercrime Action Taskforce (J-CAT), and Eurojust.

The arrests were made on March 28, following a series of coordinated raids. 9 of the individuals were arrested in Romania and 11 in Italy. The Romanian Police raided 3 houses, while the Italian authorities conducted 10 home and computer searches.

The hackers, Europol reveals, engaged in a banking fraud scheme that netted €1 million from hundreds of customers of 2 major banking institutions.

The group, mainly comprised of Italian nationals, sent spear phishing emails impersonating tax authorities to victims, in an attempt to harvest their online banking credentials.

Unlike common phishing scams, where millions of generic emails are sent to potential victims, spear phishing emails are highly personalized, featuring content that makes them appear as coming from a reputable source, such as the bank.

Since 2016, the investigators have been tracking the manner in which the arrested individuals have been using the stolen online banking credentials to log into their victims' accounts and transfer funds to the attacker-controlled accounts.

Next, they would withdraw the funds from Automated Teller Machines (ATMs) in Romania, using credit/debit cards linked to the criminal accounts.

The highly organized hackers pursued their criminal activities using encrypted chat applications. They also used intimidating and punitive methods towards affiliates and competitors to establish power, Europol says.

Furthermore, authorities suspect the group of money laundering, as well as drug and human trafficking, prostitution, and participation in a criminal organization.

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HEADLINE	03/30 Malware attacks leverage Office docs
SOURCE	https://www.scmagazine.com/malware-attacks-leveraging-ms-word-documents-grew-by-33-in-q4/article/754927/
GIST	<p>Amidst a major rise in zero-day malware attacks in Q4 2017, researchers have observed how hackers are increasingly using Microsoft Office documents as carriers to deliver malicious payloads in enterprise systems while using phishing techniques to trick employees into downloading and opening malicious attachments in emails.</p> <p>The latest Internet Security Report released by WatchGuard Technologies has revealed how hackers are increasingly exploiting issues within the Microsoft Office standard to execute code and to inject powerful malware into enterprise systems.</p> <p>In fact, 'macro-less malware' attacks or Dynamic Data Exchange (DDE) attacks featured in the firm's list of top-ten malware attack types for the firm time and also grew by 33 percent compared to the previous quarter. Two other hacking techniques that leveraged Microsoft Office weaknesses also featured in the list for the first time.</p> <p>Commenting on the report's findings, Andy Norton, director of threat intelligence at Lastline, told SC Magazine UK that it is quite difficult nowadays for employees to detect if a Microsoft Word document is malicious or not as cyber-criminals are using new techniques to weaponise such documents.</p>

	<p>"The attacks abuse features in MS Office documents such DDE or Scriptlets. The ruse is often "this document is protected, enable editing to view content". So, in a percentage of cases, the user enables editing and in doing so starts the infection chain.</p> <p>Corey Nachreiner, chief technology officer at WatchGuard Technologies, said that the report has reiterated how cyber-criminals are continuing to leverage sophisticated, evasive attacks and resourceful malware delivery schemes to steal valuable data.</p> <p>"Although these criminal tactics may vary over time, we can be certain that this broad trend will persist, so the risks have never been greater for small and midsize organisations with less IT and security resources," he said.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/01 Fin7 behind sale 5M credit bank cards
SOURCE	https://www.scmagazine.com/jokerstash-fin7-syndicate-posts-sale-of-5m-credit-bank-cards-likely-stolen-from-saks-lord-taylor/article/755180/
GIST	<p>The five million stolen credit and debit cards offered for sale starting March 28 by a JokerStash hacking syndicate known as Fin7 likely came from records stolen from Saks Fifth Avenue and Lord & Taylor customers between 2017 until their release last month.</p> <p>“Based on the analysis of the available data, the entire network of Lord & Taylor and 83 Saks Fifth Avenue locations have been compromised” and the majority of cards were “obtained from New York and New Jersey locations,” according to a Gemini advisory, which said around 125,000 records were for sale with the remainder of the cache, advertised on the dark web as BIGBADABOOM-2, expected to roll out in the coming months.</p> <p>Gemini expressed “a high level of confidence” that the stolen cards came that victims of the attack are Saks Fifth Avenue, its discount outlet Saks Fifth Avenue OFF 5TH, and Lord & Taylor Stores, all operated by Hudson's Bay Company (HBC), a Canadian firm.</p> <p>Fin7 has successfully hacked hotel chains like Trump Hotels and Omni Hotels & Resorts, as well as retailers like Whole Foods, Jason's Deli and Chipotle. The group last year also launched spearphishing campaigns targeting Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) filings using a fileless attack framework.</p> <p>“This incident shows once again merchants still need to protect themselves against POS system infiltration attacks targeting cardholder data. A multi-layer security strategy is necessary,” including segmenting POS networks and upping monitoring and threat detection capabilities, said Mark Cline, vice president at Netsurion. “If nothing else, dwell time of such an attack would be reduced to hours or days. After all, the report is that this attack has persisted for almost a year, just as we have seen in previous massive card breaches.”</p>
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HEADLINE	03/30 Accused Russian hacker extradited to US
SOURCE	http://www.darkreading.com/attacks-breaches/accused-linkedin-dropbox-hacker-appears-in-us-court-after-diplomatic-battle/d/d-id/1331413
GIST	<p>Yevgeniy Nikulin, the Russian hacker accused of being responsible for breaching DropBox and the 2012 LinkedIn attack that saw 117 million passwords stolen, has been extradited to the US in a process that has implications for the larger relationship between the US and Russia.</p> <p>Detained in the Czech Republic since October 2016, Nikulin had requested asylum there after warrants for his arrest were issued by both Russia and the US. The Czech government denied his bid for asylum and turned him over the US where he appeared in a federal courtroom on Friday morning.</p>

	<p>During his initial court appearance in San Francisco, Nikulin's attorney told the judge that his client has severe medical issues that require immediate attention. A medical evaluation has been ordered by the court.</p> <p>Russia's government has expressed its displeasure with the decision to turn him over to the US, saying that the Czech government reached its conclusion without considering all the available facts.</p> <p>According to a report on CNN, the Czech minister of justice made the decision after considering the seriousness of the charges leveled by the US and Russia and the two countries' intensity of desire to extradite and prosecute Nikulin.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/31 Software bug massive telephony outage
SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/software/software-bug-behind-biggest-telephony-outage-in-us-history/
GIST	<p>A software bug in a telecom provider's phone number blacklisting system caused the largest telephony outage in US history, according to a report released by the US Federal Communications Commission (FCC) at the start of the month.</p> <p>The telco is Level 3, now part of CenturyLink, and the outage took place on October 4, 2016.</p> <p>Software sees empty field as wildcard selector</p> <p>According to the FCC's investigation, the outage began after a Level 3 employee entered phone numbers suspected of malicious activity in the company's network management software.</p> <p>The employee wanted to block incoming phone calls from these numbers and had entered each number in fields provided by the software's GUI.</p> <p>The problem arose when the Level 3 technician left a field empty, without entering a number. Unbeknownst to the employee, the buggy software didn't ignore the empty field, like most software does, but instead viewed the empty space as a "wildcard" character.</p> <p>As soon as the technician submitted his input, Level 3's network began blocking all telephone calls.</p> <p>Level 3 telephony network goes down for 84 minutes</p> <p>The event had massive repercussions, affecting the entire US. For 84 minutes between 10:06 and 11:30 AM Eastern Daylight Time (EDT), Level 3's network blocked all calls, a massive number of 111 million calls, 109 million of which were VoIP-based.</p> <p>Approximately 29.4 million VoIP users and around 2.3 million wireless users were affected.</p> <p>FCC said the event had "nationwide impact" and called it "the largest [outage] reported in the Federal Communications Commission's Network Outage Reporting System (NORS)" history.</p> <p>Calls to 911 were also blocked, but due to the emergency system's redundancy, only 15 of 117 calls failed to connect to a public safety answering point (PSAP).</p> <p>The outage could have been more prolonged if Level 3 didn't have systems in place that alerted operators of abnormal activity. FCC says Level 3 became aware of the incident four minutes after it started.</p> <p>FCC blames software supplier</p>

	<p>"The technician was unaware of the consequences of leaving a field in the network management software blank," the FCC concluded in its report, absolving the employee and company of guilt. "Level 3 personnel had not previously observed or experienced this behavior in their network management software. According to Level 3, this was the first time that anti-fraud operations in network equipment caused an outage."</p> <p>The FCC report also mentions that Level 3 used "vendor-supplied network management software," but did not name the supplier.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/02 Subaru deploys facial recognition
SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/technology/subaru-deploys-facial-recognition-to-detect-driver-fatigue/
GIST	<p>Subaru has become the first car maker to deploy facial recognition inside a vehicle for the purpose of detecting driver fatigue.</p> <p>The feature, named DriverFocus, is part of the EyeSight Driver Assist Technology that will come with the fifth generation of Subaru Forester SUVs, which debuted last week at the New York International Auto Show.</p> <p>"DriverFocus is a driver monitoring system that uses facial recognition software to identify signs of driver fatigue or driver distraction," Subaru said in a press release. "DriverFocus works with Subaru's award-winning EyeSight Driver Assist Technology to reduce the chance of an accident."</p> <p>EyeSight is a powerful technology, supporting features like pre-collision braking, adaptive cruise control, lane sway warnings, and lane-keep assist.</p> <p>This means that if DriverFocus detects that the driver dozing off or moving his gaze away from the road for too much time, it automatically enables EyeSight Driver Assist to stop the vehicle.</p> <p>Facial recognition will not be used to start cars</p> <p>DriverFocus is the first fatigue detection system deployed in a consumer car. Scientists have been working on fatigue detection systems for many years, but only at a theoretical level.</p> <p>For example, scientists from the Indian Institute of Technology proposed last year a system that reads the position of a driver's eyes and mouth to detect common signs of fatigue, such as yawning, head nodding, frequent blinking, and more.</p> <p>Their system relied on a video camera installed in the car. Currently, Subaru hasn't revealed how exactly DriverFocus works but said the system wasn't designed to authenticate drivers and start a car's engine.</p> <p>Nonetheless, the system can distinguish between up to five drivers and remember presets for seat position, climate, multifunction display, and more.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/30 AutoHotKey for building malware
SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/autohotkey-malware-is-now-a-thing/
GIST	<p>AutoHotKey has now become one of the most trendy technologies for building malware, according to several reports put out by cyber-security firms and insights Bleeping Computer received from malware experts.</p>

AutoHotKey, or AHK, is an open-source scripting language developed for the Microsoft Windows operating system back in 2003.

AHK was born when its creator tried and failed to add support for keyboard shortcuts (hotkeys) in AutoIt, a similar Windows scripting language.

The failed attempt to improve the older AutoIt language spurred the AHK creator to put together a new scripting engine that later became AutoHotKey and, which, over the next several years developed into a behemoth on the Windows scripting landscape.

Besides original support for remapping keyboard shortcuts, AutoHotKey is now a powerful system that can now interact with the local filesystem, monitor or close programs, set up scheduled tasks, but also automate repetitive operations inside third-party software.

Furthermore, the AHK scripting language uses a simple syntax that even non-technical users can understand.

Because of these features, over the years, AutoHotKey became the prime technology used for the creation of aimbots and other game cheating tools. But in recent months, the language has also started catching on with some malware developers, as well.

A first report highlighting the rising number of AHK-based malware came from the security research team at Ixia, who found AHK malware samples distributing cryptocurrency miners and a clipboard hijacker towards the end of February.

Ixia's findings were doubled this month when another cyber-security firm, Cybereason, published a similar report on another AHK-based malware strain the company discovered and named Fauxpersky because it tried to imitate a Kaspersky antivirus.

But these aren't the only malware strains researchers spotted, and the list of AHK malware is getting larger by the day.

"We are still finding fresh and new samples, both in their content and their structure," Gabriel Cirlig, a security researcher at Ixia told Bleeping Computer in a private conversation.

"Every day we find the same clibankers/droppers/keyloggers that only have minor changes done to their code as well as samples that even employ complex obfuscation techniques and file structure," Cirlig said. "Even as we speak the list is growing faster and faster."

And these malware families are evolving in terms of complexity. For example, Cybereason researchers Amit Serper and Chris Black described Fauxpersky as a very simplistic and unconvincing threat.

"This malware is by no means advanced or even very stealthy," Serper and Black wrote in their report. "Its authors didn't put any effort into changing even the most trivial things, such as the AHK icon that's attached to the file."

But Cirlig says newer malware strains discovered in recent days are far more advanced, showing that crooks are slowly learning how to utilize AHK for more and more complex tasks.

"The latest that we found, and we're still analyzing, is the first one to use five different obfuscation functions that intertwine each other," Cirlig said.

The trend is clear, and that's that malware authors are increasingly looking at AHK when it comes to choosing the language for their next malware.

HEADLINE	03/27 Claim: Atlanta compromised in April 2017
SOURCE	https://www.renditioninfosec.com/2018/03/atlanta-government-was-compromised-in-april-2017-well-before-last-weeks-ransomware-attack/
GIST	<p>Last Thursday, the City Of Atlanta suffered outages from a ransomware attack. During the press conference (recorded here), city officials indicated that they were invested in cyber security. They noted that they were working with state and federal law enforcement to resolve the incident and had even been in contact with the Secret Service. Officials noted that this type of attack (and outage) were happening to many organizations. Officials attempted to convey that despite adopting cyber security best practices, the City of Atlanta was victimized. This prompts the question “Was the City of Atlanta following cyber security best practices?”</p> <p>Though little is known about the internals of the city’s cyber security posture, we quickly learned that the city had exposed remote desktop protocol (RDP) to the Internet with no multi-factor authentication*. This is extremely important because if attackers get a valid username and password combination, they can directly access your information systems if no multi-factor authentication is in place.</p> <p>*Full disclosure: We’re a little biased on the need for multi-factor authentication, Rendition Infosec installs and monitors multi-factor authentication solutions, click here to learn more.</p> <h3>Cybersecurity Hygiene</h3> <p>Leaving RDP open to the Internet is bad, but leaving SMB (windows file sharing, or Server Message Block) open to the Internet is much worse. Most readers probably remember the WannaCry ransomware campaign that shut down services at the UK’s National Health Service and elsewhere in May 2017. These attacks were powered by the leaked NSA (allegedly) exploit EternalBlue. In June, the same leaked exploit was used with the NotPetya attacks to target Ukrainian businesses (though impacts were felt worldwide). The EternalBlue exploit targets the SMB service on unpatched computers.</p> <p>Twitter user “Huy” noted that after the announcement of the ransomware attack that a number of computers apparently owned by the City of Atlanta had SMB exposed to the Internet. This is obviously a departure from best practices. However, it should be noted that just because SMB or RDP is exposed to the Internet, this doesn’t necessarily mean that these machines were compromised by attackers. It is indicative of a poor overall cybersecurity posture.</p> <p>When EternalBlue was released into the wild in April 2017, Rendition Infosec realized that this exploit was going to be a big deal. The vulnerability (MS17-010) was patched in March, 2017. But we know that many organizations don’t patch for 30-60 days or more. Further, those who are exposing services like SMB to the Internet are already displaying substandard cybersecurity hygiene, making it less likely that they’ll be patching in anything approaching a timely manner.</p> <p>To understand patterns of exploitation, Rendition began scanning for machines that were exposing SMB to the Internet. For each machine we discovered that was exposing this service, we sent a special “ping” command to communicate with the DoublePulsar malware that is temporarily installed when a computer is compromised with the EternalBlue exploit. When the DoublePulsar malware is present, the ping command returns a special response. Using this response, we can conclusively determine which machines have been compromised. With DoublePulsar running on a compromised machine, any attacker can upload malware to the machine and execute it with system privileges (no further exploitation or authentication is required).</p> <p>Because of ethical and legal concerns, Rendition did not attempt to interact any further with machines that were discovered to be running DoublePulsar. However, we can say that those machines were compromised for some reason by some third party. In most incident response cases we’ve worked at Rendition involving EternalBlue and DoublePulsar, these tools are just used to install end-stage malware (such as ransomware) on the compromised machines.</p> <p>It’s also important to note that the DoublePulsar malware disappears when a machine is rebooted. This</p>

means that our scan data is very likely incomplete. Any positive scan results should be considered an absolute indication of compromise. However, the absence of scan results does not necessarily indicate that no compromise occurred (it just means we didn't see it). A more thorough investigation (typically referred to as [threat hunting](#)) should be conducted if you have any suspicion of compromise.

Rendition performed a number of scans in late April and the first few days of May. Of course we notified our clients of any of their IP's and hostnames discovered in the scan data. However, the magnitude of the scan data prohibited reaching out to everyone compromised. Our largest scan indicated that more than 148k machines were compromised – the raw number of results simply precluded us from contacting each victim individually. We were discussing with legal counsel how to best communicate vulnerability data when WannaCry hit in mid May 2017. After WannaCry, we decided to shelve the idea of reaching out to victims, figuring most had also been hit with WannaCry (and we're not ambulance chasers). However, given the events in Atlanta, we're now seeing that this data is relevant even now and we're dusting off our data set.

The City of Atlanta Had Five Systems Compromised in April 2017

Our scan data indicates that the City Of Atlanta had the following five systems fully compromised in April 2017:

65.82.136.163 atlantaga.gov
65.82.136.220 webmail10.atlantaga.gov
65.82.136.164 atlantaga.gov
65.82.136.35 atlantaga.gov
65.82.136.79 ditweb.atlantaga.gov

Note that DNS names were resolved at the time of scans and rely on correct DNS PTR records to be supplied by atlantaga.gov's DNS server. Of these systems, the webmail10.atlantaga.gov server is probably the most concerning since an attacker could conceivably download all email (given the superuser privileges obtained with EternalBlue).

This scan data conclusively shows that the City of Atlanta was not patching its Internet facing hosts more than a month after *critical* patches were released by Microsoft. Microsoft released patches on March 14, 2017. Our scan data shows these hosts being vulnerable (and compromised by unknown attackers) on dates spanning from April 23, 2017 to May 1, 2017. After doing some searching for statements from the City or Atlanta, we can't find any indication that they were aware of this compromise at all. We reached out to let them know that they were previously compromised before this was posted publicly.

It's further worth noting that our scan data only includes machines that had SMB exposed to the Internet. We know that public facing machines tend to receive patches (especially those labeled as critical with publicly available exploits) before the rest of the network. There are an unknown number of machines in the City of Atlanta's internal network that were likely also unpatched at the time we performed our scans. In our experience, it is generally safe to infer overall cyber security hygiene from a representative sample like what we have.

Even if we don't infer overall hygiene, the fact remains that the City of Atlanta couldn't be bothered to patch at least five Internet facing servers for more than a month in April 2017 – even when there was a publicly available exploit.

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HEADLINE	03/31 Atlanta struggles to recover cyberattack
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-cyber-atlanta/with-paper-and-phones-atlanta-struggles-to-recover-from-cyber-attack-idUSKBN1H70R0
GIST	ATLANTA (Reuters) - Atlanta's top officials holed up in their offices on Saturday as they worked to restore critical systems knocked out by a nine-day-old cyber attack that plunged the Southeastern U.S. metropolis into technological chaos and forced some city workers to revert to paper.

On an Easter and Passover holiday weekend, city officials labored in preparation for the workweek to come.

Police and other public servants have spent the past week trying to piece together their digital work lives, recreating audit spreadsheets and conducting business on mobile phones in response to one of the most devastating “ransomware” virus attacks to hit an American city.

Three city council staffers have been sharing a single clunky personal laptop brought in after cyber extortionists attacked Atlanta’s computer network with a virus that scrambled data and still prevents access to critical systems.

“It’s extraordinarily frustrating,” said Councilman Howard Shook, whose office lost 16 years of digital records.

One compromised city computer seen by Reuters showed multiple corrupted documents with “weapologize” and “imsorry” added to file names.

Ransomware attacks have surged in recent years as cyber extortionists moved from attacking individual computers to large organizations, including businesses, healthcare organizations and government agencies. Previous high-profile attacks have shut down factories, prompted hospitals to turn away patients and forced local emergency dispatch systems to move to manual operations.

Ransomware typically corrupts data and does not steal it. The city of Atlanta has said it does not believe private residents’ information is in the hands of hackers, but they do not know for sure.

City officials have declined to discuss the extent of damage beyond disclosed outages that have shut down some services at municipal offices, including courts and the water department.

Nearly 6 million people live in the Atlanta metropolitan area. The Georgia city itself is home to more than 450,000 people, according to the latest data from the U.S. Census Bureau.

City officials told Reuters that police files and financial documents were rendered inaccessible by unknown hackers who demanded \$51,000 worth of bitcoin to provide digital keys to unlock scrambled files.

“Everything on my hard drive is gone,” City Auditor Amanda Noble said in her office housed in Atlanta City Hall’s ornate tower.

City officials have not disclosed the extent to which servers for backing up information on PCs were corrupted or what kind of information they think is unrecoverable without paying the ransom.

Noble discovered the disarray on March 22 when she turned on her computer to discover that files could not be opened after being encrypted by a powerful computer virus known as SamSam that renamed them with gibberish.

“I said, ‘This is wrong,’” she recalled.

City officials then quickly entered her office and told her to shut down the computer before warning the rest of the building.

Noble is working on a personal laptop and using her smartphone to search for details of current projects mentioned in emails stored on that device.

Not all computers were compromised. Ten of 18 machines in the auditing office were not affected, Noble said.

OLD-SCHOOL ANALOG

Atlanta police returned to taking written case notes and have lost access to some investigative databases, department spokesman Carlos Campos told Reuters. He declined to discuss the contents of the affected files.

“Our data management teams are working diligently to restore normal operations and functionalities to these systems and hope to be back online in the very near future,” he said. By the weekend, he added, officers were returning to digital police reports.

Meanwhile, some city employees complained they have been left in the dark, unsure when it is safe to turn on their computers.

“We don’t know anything,” said one frustrated employee as she left for a lunch break on Friday.

The Federal Bureau of Investigation, which is helping Atlanta respond, typically discourages ransomware victims from paying up.

FBI officials could not immediately be reached for comment. A Department of Homeland Security spokesman confirmed the agency is helping Atlanta respond to the attack, but declined to comment further.

Hackers typically walk away when ransoms are not paid, said Mark Weatherford, a former senior DHS cyber official.

Weatherford, who previously served as California’s chief information security officer, said the situation might have been resolved with little pain if the city had quickly made that payment.

“The longer it goes, the worse it gets,” he said. “This could turn out to be really bad if they never get their data back.”

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HEADLINE	03/31 Judge dismisses Pulse shooting lawsuit
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/03/31/us/pulse-nightclub-lawsuit/index.html
GIST	<p>(CNN)A Michigan judge on Friday dismissed a lawsuit by more than a dozen families of the Pulse nightclub shooting victims against social media companies.</p> <p>The lawsuit, filed in December 2016, accused Facebook, Twitter and YouTube (owned by Google) of knowing that ISIS recruited members online and doing nothing to stop it. Because the Pulse gunman, Omar Mateen, was able to view extremist propaganda on these social sites, the lawsuit said they were civilly liable. The complaint demanded a trial by jury.</p> <p>"Without ... Twitter, Facebook, and Google (YouTube), the explosive growth of (Islamic State in Iraq and Syria) over the last few years into the most feared terrorist group in the world would not have been possible," the complaint reads.</p> <p>CNN has reached out to Facebook, Twitter and Google, but has not received a response.</p> <p>The judge said there was no evidence that anything Mateen viewed online directly led to the June 2016 attack at Pulse nightclub in Orlando.</p> <p>The attorney for the families, Keith Altman, said his clients will appeal.</p>

	<p>"We are not surprised that the law is unsettled in the terms of holding social media companies accountable. We will absolutely appeal," Altman said. "We feel the judge didn't see the case in the right way and will continue to fight. We have just as much resolve as we did before."</p> <p>The dismissal of the lawsuit came the same day a jury acquitted Mateen's wife, Noor Salman. The Pulse victims' families did not have comment on Salman's acquittal, Altman said.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/31 Under Armour: MyFitnessPal data breach
SOURCE	http://time.com/5222015/how-to-change-myfitnesspal-password/?xid=homepage
GIST	<p>Under Armour notified users of its MyFitnessPal app of a security breach affecting 150 million users on Thursday.</p> <p>Under Armour learned on March 25 that "an unauthorized party acquired data associated with MyFitnessPal user accounts in late February 2018," the company said in a release. Four days later, Under Armour contacted MyFitnessPal users through email and the app's messaging system. The company is requiring users to change their passwords and recommended they do so as soon as possible.</p> <p>Users' usernames, email addresses and passwords were affected, but Under Armour says no payment information was affected by the data breach because it is collected and processed separately.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/31 How to minimize tracking online
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/how-youre-tracked-online-facebook-google-amazon-uber-what-you-can-do-about-it/
GIST	<p>NEW YORK -- Though Facebook gets the attention because of a recent data privacy scandal, the social network is far from alone in collecting massive amounts of data on you to help marketers sell you stuff. Google, for one, also does extensive tracking to power its advertising engines.</p> <p>Web developer Dylan Curran posted a thread on Twitter last weekend that quickly went viral. He tweeted, "Want to freak yourself out? I'm gonna show just how much of your information the likes of Facebook and Google store about you without you even realising it."</p> <p>In his series of tweets and an opinion piece in The Guardian, Curran -- who told CBSN he "was basically a nobody before this exploded" -- outlined the information Google stores on users, ranging from users' location to app usage to their YouTube history. He similarly highlighted Facebook's collection of personal information, saying the social media giant "has reams and reams of data on you, too."</p> <p>And many other websites and apps run ads sold by Facebook and Google and exchange data with them. Beyond that, plenty of services including Uber and Amazon keep detailed histories on you.</p> <p>Here are some of the ways to block or minimize such tracking -- but they come with trade-offs.</p> <p>Tracking IDs</p> <p>Websites have long used unique IDs in "cookies" -- data files stored in your browser -- to know it's you when you return a week later. Cookies also let advertising networks run by the likes of Facebook and Google connect you as you visit multiple websites. Phones and tablets have a device advertising ID that apps can use to track you.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Combating this: You can reset the cookie ID by clearing cookies periodically. Most browsers also have a private mode to limit tracking through cookies, though it's not foolproof. Companies can still link you if you've signed in, for instance. As for the device ID, you can reset that or tell

advertisers not to target ads through the phone's settings. Many browsers also let you install add-ons that block ad trackers. Notable add-ons include Ghostery or the Electronic Frontier Foundation's Privacy Badger.

- The trade-offs: You'll still get ads, just not targeted ones. And clearing cookies makes your browser forget who you are, so you'll have to sign back into any site that was saving your login. Tracker blockers can sometimes prevent websites from displaying or working properly.

Location Services

Many apps need your location to work. Mapping apps, for instance, can't tell you when to turn without knowing where you are. Video services typically have rights only in certain countries and need to verify your location. But location can be used for much more. Google, for instance, keeps a fairly detailed account of your whereabouts through a feature called Timeline.

- Combating this: You can turn off location services in the phone's settings, though for apps to work properly, it's better to turn them off for specific services that don't really need them. As for Timeline, you can pause or delete location history in Google settings.
- The trade-offs: Some apps won't work without your location. Others, such as weather apps, will require you enter your location manually. And you might miss out on recommendations such as better commuting routes via apps like Waze.

Signing In

Signing into an online account gives services a sure-fire way of tracking you. Facebook won't work at all without an account; Google merely works better with one. And you'll generally need an account with any service that charges you, although sometimes you can sign in with your Facebook or Google ID instead.

- Combating this: Resist creating an account or signing whenever you can -- such as when you're merely browsing rather than buying. Avoid using Facebook or Google IDs whenever possible, as those companies could then track you. You can also use a different email address for each account to frustrate efforts to connect you across services, although it can be a major pain.
- The trade-offs: Some services require signing in, and creating accounts on each service means more passwords to remember (though you might consider using a password manager). Whatever you do, don't reuse the same passwords across service; that makes them easy to hack.

IP Address

The Internet Protocol address lists where your phone or computer lives on the internet; it's how you get messages and load websites. But IP addresses can also help companies remember who you are and link the various devices you use, since most homes use a single IP address for the whole network. Databases can also map IP addresses to physical locations.

- Combating this: You can mask your IP address by using a secure intermediary. VPN services, common in corporate settings, will route your traffic through a separate IP address; a secure web browser called Tor automatically sends traffic through multiple third parties. You still need to avoid signing in.
- The trade-offs: Tor can slow down performance, particularly with high-data tasks such as video. And with VPNs, you need to trust the VPN operator, whether that's your boss or a private service.

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HEADLINE	03/30 US to tie visas w/social media accounts
SOURCE	https://www.yahoo.com/news/us-visa-seekers-disclose-social-media-153100492.html
GIST	Washington (AFP) - Travelers to the United States will soon have to submit their social media identities,

<p>Return to Top</p>	<p>previous telephone numbers and email addresses, a measure that could touch 10 million people per year.</p> <p>According to a State Department plan published Friday, visa seekers -- whether visitors or would-be immigrants -- will be presented with a list of social media platforms.</p> <p>Applicants will be required to identify which they use and provide "any identifiers used by applicants for those platforms during the five years preceding the date of application."</p> <p>"Other questions seek five years of previously used telephone numbers, email addresses, and international travel," the notice, published in the Federal Register, revealed.</p> <p>When these new rules were first suggested last year as part of what US President Donald Trump has called "extreme vetting" of would-be visitors, civil liberties groups sounded the alarm about privacy.</p> <p>But officials say they could identify potential extremists, such as one of the attackers in the December 2015 San Bernadino shooting -- who got a visa despite allegedly advocating "jihad" on social media.</p> <p>The measures apply both to the DS-260 "Immigrant Visa and Alien Registration Form" and the DS-160 "Application for Nonimmigrant Visa."</p> <p>In the last fiscal year, 559,536 people applied for US immigrant visas and 9,681,913 for various forms of visitor visa. Friday's announced measures will not touch diplomatic or official travelers.</p>
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Terror Conditions

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HEADLINE	04/01 Somalia: Al-Shabaab attack kills dozens
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/apr/01/al-shabaab-attack-kills-ugandan-soldiers-in-somalia
GIST	<p>Dozens of Ugandan soldiers are thought to have been killed when Islamist extremists attacked their base on Sunday in the latest of a series of bloody strikes against peacekeepers in Somalia.</p> <p>Local officials told the Guardian that as many as 46 Ugandan troops, part of the 22,000-strong regional force in Somalia, died in the attack by the al-Qaida affiliated al-Shabaab movement in the town of Bulamarer, 80 miles south-west of the capital, Mogadishu, at around 9am local time.</p> <p>Ugandan officials have said only four soldiers were killed in the attack, which was repulsed with heavy casualties among the extremists.</p> <p>Such attacks are designed to hasten the departure of Amisom, the military and policing coalition under the authority of the African Union, which has been fighting al-Shabaab for more than a decade.</p> <p>Al-Shabaab, which once controlled much of Somalia, wants to topple the western-backed government in Mogadishu.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/01 US-based ISIS plotter sentenced 20yrs
SOURCE	http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-wales-43613255
GIST	<p>A businessman who accepted payments from Cardiff firms to fund a terrorist attack in the US has been sentenced to 20 years in prison.</p> <p>Mohammed Elshinawy, 33, admitted accepting overseas payments to plan and help carry out a so-called</p>

Islamic State attack, at a court in Maryland.

FBI documents revealed Pontypridd businessman Siful Sujjan financed IS plots across the Atlantic. He died in a US-led air strike near Raqqa in December 2015.

Bangladesh-born Sujjan, 31, left Wales in July 2014 for Syria, where he became a computer hacker for IS. Following his death, a Pentagon spokesman was quoted as saying "ISIL [another name for IS] has lost a key link between networks".

Sujan allegedly used some of his south Wales companies to send military-grade surveillance equipment to Spain and to an address in Turkey close to the Syrian border, and to transfer funding to an IS supporter in the US.

FBI documents revealing the links were released following a court case in Baltimore, Maryland, in August 2017.

Elshinawy, 33, previously pleaded guilty to accepting payments from overseas to plan and help carry out a terrorist attack in the US, as well as three other terrorism-related charges.

Information published on the Maryland Attorney's website on 30 March, states that between February and December 2015, he conspired with others to provide material and resources to IS, including personnel, communication and financial services.

The attorney's office said Elshinawy described himself as a "soldier, committed to making violent jihad" and he received £6,207 (US\$8,700) from a UK-based company, believed to belong to Sujjan, to fund a terrorist attack.

He was sentenced to 20 years in prison followed by 15 years of supervised release.

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HEADLINE	04/01 Iraq: 'ISIS slaughterer' killed
SOURCE	https://aawsat.com/english/home/article/1224591/iraqi-forces-kill-'isis-slaughterer'-anbar-desert
GIST	<p>Iraqi forces announced on Sunday that they killed Abou Taha al-Tunsi, also known as the "ISIS Slaughterer," one of the terror group's most notorious members.</p> <p>The terrorist and nine of his companions were killed in a security operation in Iraq's Anbar province, revealed intelligence sources.</p> <p>The operation was initially launched after information was received that the terrorists were in the area and they were preparing to carry out attacks against security forces, they added.</p> <p>The forces discovered during their raid secret tunnels that the group was using in the Anbar desert. There, they confiscated weapons, narcotic pills and liquor.</p> <p>The operation in Anbar is part of a larger operation the armed forces are carrying out in the desert, where hundreds of ISIS members are still located.</p> <p>Head of the Iraq Sahwa Conference Sheikh Ahmed Abou Risha told Asharq Al-Awsat that in wake of battles to liberate areas that were seized by ISIS in 2014, the terrorists chose to flee instead of fighting the incoming forces.</p> <p>They consequently fled to the desert, he explained, where they remain.</p> <p>"ISIS used to fiercely fight in regions it could not escape from," he added.</p>

	<p>The Anbar desert is vast and it still feeds several other regions with ISIS cells that are carrying out various attacks using new methods, such as ambushes, said Abou Risha.</p> <p>Iraqi security expert Abou Fadel Raghif told Asharq Al-Awsat that regardless of Abou Taha al-Tunsi's death, "the truth is clear that 95 percent of the major ISIS leaderships have not engaged in battle, but chose to hide in various regions, including beyond Iraq."</p> <p>"None of these figures have been arrested," he stressed.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/02 Nigeria: Boko Haram attack kills 15
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/article/us-nigeria-security/suspected-boko-haram-militants-kill-15-in-nigerias-maiduguri-emergency-services-idUSKCN1H90L2
GIST	<p>MAIDUGURI, Nigeria (Reuters) - A suspected Boko Haram attack in the northeast Nigerian city of Maiduguri killed 15 people and wounded 68, an emergency agency official said on Monday, in the biggest strike since the government said it was in talks with the Islamist group.</p> <p>Maiduguri is the epicenter of the nine-year conflict with Boko Haram that has killed more than 20,000 people.</p> <p>President Muhammadu Buhari has prioritized improving security and previously said the group, which is trying to establish an Islamic State and split into two factions in 2016, had been defeated.</p> <p>The gun attack took place on Sunday night in Bale Shuwari, a settlement near army barracks on the edge of Maiduguri's inner city, military sources said.</p> <p>"Sixty-eight were injured and 15 innocent people were killed," said Bello Dambatta, chairman of the rapid response team for the State Emergency Management Agency (SEMA).</p> <p>It is the most significant attack on the city since the government said last week it was in talks with the insurgents with the aim of securing a permanent ceasefire.</p> <p>The government has not disclosed which elements of Boko Haram it is in discussions with, and neither was it clear which faction carried out Sunday's attack.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/01 Taliban have gone high-tech
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2018/04/01/world/asia/taliban-night-vision.html?hp&action=click&pgtype=Homepage&clickSource=story-heading&module=first-column-region&region=top-news&WT.nav=top-news
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON — Once described as an ill-equipped band of insurgents, the Taliban are increasingly attacking security forces across Afghanistan using night-vision goggles and lasers that United States military officials said were either stolen from Afghan and international troops or bought on the black market.</p> <p>The devices allow the Taliban to maneuver on forces under the cover of darkness as they track the whirling blades of coalition helicopters, the infrared lasers on American rifles, or even the bedtime movements of local police officers.</p> <p>With this new battlefield visibility, the Taliban more than doubled nighttime attacks from 2014 to 2017, according to one United States military official who described internal Pentagon data on the condition of</p>

anonymity. The number of Afghans who were wounded or killed during nighttime attacks during that period nearly tripled.

That has forced American commanders to rethink the limited access they give Afghan security forces to the night-vision devices. Commanders now worry that denying the expensive equipment to those forces puts them at a technological disadvantage, with potentially lethal consequences.

For years, American commanders have been reluctant to give night-vision equipment to rank-and-file Afghan soldiers and police officers out of concern of widespread corruption among those forces. The devices — headsets and infrared lasers — are usually given only to elite Afghan commandos and police special mission units, according to American military officials.

As some of this equipment falls into Taliban hands, the militants are joining a larger trend, said David W. Barno, a retired lieutenant general who led the war effort in Afghanistan from 2003 to 2005. Advanced equipment, such as drones and precision weapons, is being seized by other extremist groups in other global conflict zones, he said.

“It’s going to be a problem,” Mr. Barno said, “and it’s going to change how we operate.”

With the spread of the devices, infantry units on patrols have been told not to use certain marking devices that can be seen only by night-vision equipment. Helicopter crews have been made distinctly aware that their aircraft are no longer cloaked by darkness.

In one case last November, Taliban fighters wearing night-vision goggles attacked a police outpost in Farah Province, in western Afghanistan. By the time the predawn assault was over, eight Afghan officers lay dead in their beds, Haji Abdul Rahman Aka, the elder of the province’s Pule Regi area, said at the time. Only one Afghan officer survived.

The frequency and ferocity of the nighttime Taliban attacks are linked to attempts by Afghan forces, based in small checkpoints across the country, to hold territory that has been wrested away from the militants.

Previously unreported documents, obtained by The New York Times, underline concerns about the Taliban’s growing sophistication on the battlefield after 16 years of war — and American commanders’ efforts to stunt it.

The documents show that the American military has begun to send older models of night-vision hardware to regular Afghan Army units. Those headsets cost an estimated \$3,000 each, officials said.

One of the first batches of night-vision equipment for conventional units in southern Afghanistan, part of a monthslong pilot program, was sent to the embattled 215th Corps in Helmand Province in the spring of 2016.

Only 161 of the 210 devices were returned, according to the military documents obtained by The Times, and the equipment was not effectively used, in part because the forces were not properly trained to use it.

Afghan troops said the missing devices were reported as “battle losses,” but could not support that claim with any proof or records to explain where or when they were left behind, according to the documents.

At the time, the commander of the 215th Corps was Maj. Gen. M. Moein Faqir. He was later arrested on sweeping corruption charges that included misuse of food money meant for his troops.

Last year, and with better results, night-vision equipment was sent to the 205th Corps, located around Kandahar, the military documents showed.

Five devices were lost between July and December, when the program ended, according to the documents. Over the summer and fall, the Afghan National Army suffered 15 percent fewer casualties around

Kandahar than it had during the same period in 2016.

The documents credited the night-vision equipment for the marked reduction, concluding that the devices are “becoming an integral part of base defense plans.” The American military is now planning to equip the unit with roughly 2,500 night-vision goggles as part of what the documents described as a concept for a “permanent program.”

Despite those measured successes, it remains unclear if the American military will give the devices to the rest of the Afghan Army.

The American military headquarters in Kabul has said it equips only Special Operations units in the Afghan Army and police forces with night-vision technology.

Capt. Tom Gresback, a spokesman for United States forces in Afghanistan, declined to comment on the plans to distribute the devices to the Afghan National Army, as outlined in the military documents. He said American commanders would provide Afghan national defense and security forces “with the resources necessary to promote security throughout Afghanistan.”

But some American advisers closer to the ground fight are already trying to get the technology for their Afghan counterparts, according to a United States official. He said that would require a decision made through the leadership in Kabul and the Pentagon to allow American commanders to distribute the devices to even more Afghan security forces.

With the night-vision devices, Taliban fighters have been able to approach Afghan bases nearly undetected before attacking.

Initially, such ambushes were attributed to Taliban forces known as “Red Units” located in Afghanistan’s southern provinces. But over the last year, the night-vision devices have frequently turned up in the country’s north and east, according to two American military officials, signaling a widespread distribution into other groups of Taliban fighters.

Those officials said the Taliban were using both tightly controlled American-made devices and gear that is widely available for purchase. In some cases, American officials said, the equipment was left on the battlefield by United States or Afghan troops, including those who were killed in action.

In others, Afghan soldiers are believed to have sold the devices to the extremists.

That was disputed by Gen. Dawlat Waziri, who until recently served as spokesman for the Afghan Ministry of Defense. He said all night-vision equipment provided to Afghan troops by the American military had been “accounted for.”

“No case of night vision sold by our soldiers to the Taliban has been reported,” General Waziri said.

Zabihullah Mujahid, a spokesman for the Taliban, said fighters obtained night-vision devices after attacking Afghan bases or capturing members of the Afghan security forces.

Rank-and-file Afghan police officers are particularly under threat by increasing numbers of deadly nighttime attacks, said one of the American military officials. Those units are spread farther into sparsely populated areas across Afghanistan than are army soldiers.

Officers with the Afghan National Police, especially in the south, have been making desperate requests for the equipment for months, the official said. The police are part of the Ministry of Interior, which is suspected of rampant corruption.

In Helmand Province, Marine Corps advisers are helping a request by the 505th Zone of the Afghan National Police to receive night-vision devices, Col. C.J. Douglas, the head of the Marines’ police

	advising component there, said in an email. It is unclear if the Afghan police unit will get them.
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HEADLINE	04/01 Syria: rebels leaving last-held town
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/small-number-rebels-start-leave-syrias-douma-54158154?
GIST	<p>A rebel faction trapped by government forces outside the Syrian capital agreed to evacuate to northern Syria on Sunday as reports swirled of a larger agreement that would have the government retake full control of the eastern Ghouta region after seven years of revolt.</p> <p>Fighters from the Faylaq al-Rahman group left Douma on buses sent by the Syrian government to the rebel-held province of Idlib, SANA state news agency reported. Some 1,300 fighters, activists, and civilians signed up to leave the town, according to the Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights monitoring group.</p> <p>It was the first organized evacuation of fighters from Douma, one of the earliest centers of the anti-government demonstrations that swept through the country in 2011. Security forces responded by putting the town and other suburbs around Damascus under siege, bombing hospitals and residential areas, and blocking the entry of food and medical relief.</p> <p>Douma is a stronghold of the powerful Army of Islam rebel group. The town is one of the last around the capital to hold out against the government.</p> <p>Later Sunday, a media outlet linked to the Syrian military reported that the Army of Islam also agreed to leave to north Syria, effectively transferring control of Douma to Damascus.</p> <p>The deal would mark the end of a weeks-long push by the government to consolidate its control of the eastern Ghouta region just outside the capital.</p> <p>Fighters from the Army of Islam would evacuate to Jarablus, a town in the northern Aleppo province that is shared between rebel and Turkish control. Turkey, with support from rebels, is running its own military operations against a U.S.-backed Kurdish party that controls territory along the frontier.</p> <p>A local council for Douma would be formed with the approval of the central government, said the government-linked Central Military Media outlet.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/01 Syria: final evacuation deal reached
SOURCE	https://www.afp.com/en/news/205/final-evacuation-deal-reached-syrias-ghouta-doc-13j2k12
GIST	<p>A final deal has been reached for fighters and civilians to leave the last opposition-held pocket of Eastern Ghouta, a monitor said Sunday, paving the way for Syria's regime to retake the onetime rebel enclave near Damascus.</p> <p>The deal brokered by regime ally Russia would see fighters with the Jaish al-Islam rebel faction leave Ghouta's main town of Douma for opposition-held territory in northern Syria, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said.</p> <p>There was no immediate confirmation from the rebels, but pro-regime newspaper Al-Watan quoted "diplomatic sources" as saying the agreement would see fighters give up heavy weapons and leave Douma for northern Syria.</p>

	<p>The retaking of Eastern Ghouta would mark a major milestone in President Bashar al-Assad's efforts to regain control of territory seized by rebel factions during Syria's seven-year civil war.</p> <p>Backed by Russia, Assad's forces have scored a series of victories over rebel forces in recent years, often through campaigns of siege, aerial bombardment and ground offensives that have drawn widespread international condemnation.</p> <p>The Observatory, a Britain-based monitoring group, said Sunday's deal provides for Jaish al-Islam fighters and their families, as well as civilians who want, to be evacuated to rebel-held areas in the northern province of Aleppo.</p> <p>It will also see Russian military police enter the town and government institutions return to the area, the monitor said.</p> <p>Regime forces had already retaken more than 95 percent of Eastern Ghouta in a six-week air and ground blitz that forced tens of thousands from their homes.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/31 Syria army declares victory
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/state-tv-towns-syrias-ghouta-cleared-rebels-54144500
GIST	<p>The Syrian army declared victory in eastern Ghouta Saturday after opposition fighters evacuated from most of the area near the capital except for the town of Douma where negotiations are still underway for rebels there to leave or face an all-out government offensive.</p> <p>The government has given rebels in Douma — the area's largest town and stronghold of the powerful Army of Islam rebel group — an ultimatum to agree on leaving by late Saturday. Some pro-government new websites reported that the army is massing troops around Douma, adding that the ultimatum may be extended until Sunday.</p> <p>The army statement came shortly after another group of opposition fighters and their relatives left southern and western parts of eastern Ghouta Saturday afternoon, bringing President Bashar Assad's forces a step closer to eliminating threats from insurgents groups nearby.</p> <p>State TV said 38 buses left the towns of Zamalka, Ein Tarma, Arbeen and Jobar taking more than 1,700 rebels and civilians to the northwestern rebel-held province of Idlib. The channel said troops entered the towns and raised the national flag in Arbeen's main square.</p> <p>"The importance of this victory lies in restoring security and stability to the city of Damascus and its surrounding areas after the suffering of its civilians from the crimes of terrorists over several years," said the army statement, read on TV by Brig. Gen. Ali Mayhoub.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/01 Egypt: Sinai militants kill 2 soldiers
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/egypt-soldiers-killed-sinai-54157726?cid=clicksource_76_4_article%20roll_articleroll_hed
GIST	<p>Egypt's military says two soldiers have been killed in the last week in the northern Sinai Peninsula, where it is battling an Islamic State-led insurgency.</p> <p>The statement issued Sunday said another two soldiers were wounded, and that six militants were killed.</p>

The military said more than 500 suspected militants and criminals have been arrested. It said troops had dismantled more than 160 explosive devices.

It was not possible to confirm the military's claims as access to the northern Sinai is heavily restricted.

At least 22 troops have been killed since early February, when Egypt launched a wide-scale operation against Islamic extremists.

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HEADLINE	03/31 Volatile: US, Turkey on opposing sides
SOURCE	https://www.stripes.com/news/middle-east/at-volatile-syrian-front-line-us-turkey-on-opposing-sides-1.519784
GIST	<p>HALAWANJI, Syria -- Perched on a green hilltop, Kurdish and Arab fighters face a tense front line separating them from Turkish-backed forces in this part of northern Syria. Behind them, American troops drive up and down the roads. Their aim: Make their presence known to prevent bursts of gunfire from spiraling into a battle.</p> <p>Down the hill and across a stream are the rival forces: Syrian opposition fighters. They have taken positions on a crossroads in the village of Halawanji and on rooftops with views up to the hill. Beyond them, on another hill, Turkish troops have a base, ready to back up their allies if needed.</p> <p>This front line threatens to ignite at any time, with the militaries of two NATO members on opposing sides. The crowded terrain has become more combustible as Turkey ever more loudly threatens to push through these lines to attack the nearby Kurdish-Arab town of Manbij and other Kurdish-run towns further east. The presence of the Americans is a main obstacle preventing them from doing so.</p> <p>Further hiking tensions, a roadside bomb in Manbij late Thursday killed two coalition personnel, an American and a Briton. Kurdish officials accuse Turkey and its allies of carrying out acts of violence in the town to sow instability, including several recent smaller bombings, protests and an attempted assassination attempt on a Kurdish official - although there is also the possibility Islamic State group militants are behind the violence.</p> <p>Manbij is highly strategic: the main town on westernmost edge of the stretch of Syrian territory held by the U.S.-backed Syrian Kurds, running along the border with Turkey. Mixed Kurdish-Arab Syrian forces liberated Manbij from the rule of the Islamic State group in 2016 with help from the U.S.-led coalition. But Kurdish control of the town infuriated Turkey, which views the main U.S. Kurdish ally, the YPG militia, as "terrorists" linked to Kurdish insurgents on its own soil.</p> <p>U.S. troops first deployed in the area about 16 months ago, after Turkish-backed Syrian forces advanced on areas near Manbij, in a race for control of territories as IS militants collapsed. The deployment prevented repeated clashes between the two rival forces.</p> <p>The U.S.-backed Syrian fighters at Halwanji say their Turkish-backed rivals downhill increasingly open fire on them, trying to provoke a fight and create a pretext for an incursion. One commander said it happens as often as three times a week. Another said the "provocations" increased after Turkish troops and their allies successfully captured another town further west, Afrin, from the YPG. The commanders say their forces do not respond to the fire.</p> <p>On Thursday, one commander, Abu Ali Nejm, said U.S. troops have increased their presence "in a noticeable way" in the area in recent days to prevent an eruption of violence, following the capture of Afrin, Turkey's threats and a recent build-up of Turkish troops and their allies.</p> <p>"They have become part of the front line to reassure the people in Manbij and the military forces and to raise morale," said Abu Ali, who uses his nom de guerre and is a leading member of the Manbij Military</p>

Council, the joint Kurdish-Arab body leading the U.S.-allied forces here.

U.S. Col. Ryan Dillon, of the U.S.-led coalition, said there were no new U.S. bases in the area. "Our patrols move around. They are not static," he said. "The purpose of our forces is to prevent the reemergence of (IS militants)" and prevent "any type of incursion from any other group in the area."

Turkey and the United States have held talks aimed at defusing the standoff, with a round set for Friday in Washington. But a solution remains unclear: Turkey says the YPG power across northern Syria is a threat, and President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has vowed to roll back the Kurdish fighters, starting from Manbij all the way to the Iraqi border. On Friday, Erdogan angrily lashed out at French President Emmanuel Macron for meeting with Kurdish officials and offering to mediate. Erdogan said he would not negotiate with "terrorists" and brusquely said Macron was "over his head."

Meanwhile, at Halwanji, Abu Ali said the Turkish-backed fighters fired on his forces Thursday, using heavy machine guns and small arms. His troops did not respond, in accordance with orders, and instead reported the incident to U.S. troops nearby, he said.

"We inform, and they come to the front and see for themselves. They have their own contacts or coordination with the Turkish forces, something they don't have to tell us about," he said, adding that when the rival side sees the Americans they don't fire.

A team of Associated Press reporters arrived to the scene soon after the incident. A convoy of U.S. troops was seen on the road. All was quiet and all sides returned to their positions. But as the AP team drove away, new shooting rang out in the distance.

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HEADLINE	03/31 Military seeks Afghanistan progress
SOURCE	https://www.stripes.com/news/middle-east/in-afghanistan-us-military-sprints-to-prove-it-can-reverse-insurgent-tide-1.519789
GIST	<p>BAGRAM AIR BASE, Afghanistan - The U.S. military is racing to demonstrate it is making progress in Afghanistan during a critical period that will test President Donald Trump's strategy and, potentially, political support for the war.</p> <p>Military leaders say the arrival of new troops and aircraft, along with a renewed mission to advise local operations more closely, will help reverse a Taliban resurgence that has exposed the fragility of the long American project in Afghanistan.</p> <p>"This is not another year of the same thing we've been doing for 17 years," Gen. Joseph Dunford Jr., chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said during a tour of military facilities across Afghanistan last week. "This is a fundamentally different approach."</p> <p>With an increased U.S. force of about 15,000, focused largely on efforts to ensure Afghan troops can launch offensives against the Taliban, Dunford said that "the right people at the right level with the right training" are in place ahead of the 2018 fighting season, a sentiment repeated by other commanders.</p> <p>Yet looming over the battlefield push are questions about how long support can be sustained, given skepticism in Europe about an open-ended military effort and ambivalence from Trump about involvement in foreign wars.</p> <p>The stepped-up campaign comes as the architect of Trump's Afghanistan strategy, national security adviser H.R. McMaster, prepares to exit the White House. His successor, John Bolton, may be a less ardent proponent of a muscular U.S. campaign.</p> <p>Ronald ENeumann, who served as U.S. ambassador to Afghanistan under President George W. Bush, said</p>

the questions swirling in Western capitals were impossible for U.S. commanders to ignore. "That's what's driving the sense of speed" in large part, he said. "They don't know how much firmness we have in our own project."

In a sign of the renewed Pentagon focus on Afghanistan, Dunford's tour was one of several high-level visits in recent weeks, including stops by Defense Secretary Jim Mattis and Gen. Joseph Votel, who heads U.S. Central Command.

Over four days, generals and advisers traveling with Dunford fanned out across the country to gather information on the readiness of Afghan forces and their foreign advisers.

Officials said Afghan forces are demonstrating an improved ability to employ their own air power - with newly trained pilots, combat-ready helicopters and small-scale drones - and are coordinating maneuvers with the army, police and elite commandos.

If sustained, it would be a major change from the period following the end of U.S. combat operations in 2014, when once-secure districts fell to the Taliban and Afghan forces made desperate appeals for American air power, then limited by a smaller U.S. force and a narrower mission. The message from Washington during those years was, in some officials' rueful characterization, "Don't lose."

Now, with a re-energized air campaign and new advisory units placed with Afghan army battalions, U.S. officials are trying to build confidence among local units.

As an example of the kind of momentum Pentagon leaders hope will break the cycle of dependence on foreign forces, U.S. advisers described a recent operation to clear Taliban forces from a district of Laghman province, to the east of Kabul.

Aided by intelligence gathered by Afghanistan's spy agency, local commandos conducted raids in narrow valleys abutting the Alingar River that officials said the Taliban used to launch attacks on Afghan checkpoints and lob rockets or artillery at nearby bases. Then Afghan police and army troops from the 201st Corps pushed into the area, backed by U.S. and Afghan aircraft.

When the operation was over, the provincial governor arrived in the area in an attempt to cement government control.

But the Taliban has a stronger grip in southern strongholds, vast parts of which remain no-go zones for security forces.

In an echo of previous years, U.S. Marines in Helmand province are advising the Afghan army's 215th Corps as it seeks to clear roads around towns and cities that are hotbeds for insurgent activity.

While U.S. advisers report growing autonomy among Afghan units, they acknowledge that many areas will remain outside government's grip for the foreseeable future.

Operations in the south are "now based on what the Afghan army wants to do, where do they really think they need to have security," said Lt. Col. Ryan Benson, a Marine adviser at Camp Shorab. "They know what they can hold, and they know what's less important."

A key aspect of the strategy centers on the newly formed Security Force Assistance Brigade, which will advise battalion-level units and, sometimes, accompany them into the field. Pentagon leaders say the Obama administration's decision to end the practice of embedding advisers with lower-level Afghan army units, part of its plan to extricate the United States from the war, set the stage for the Taliban comeback after 2014.

Dunford said the Afghan government is gradually gaining ground, expanding its control of populated areas from 64 percent late last year to close to 70 percent today. The government hopes to add 10 percent more

this year, he said.

Whether Afghanistan can hold parliamentary elections without major violence will help Pentagon officials gauge the strategy's success in coming months, as will the number of Afghan military casualties. While the Afghan government does not disclose exact figures, U.S. officials say combat losses remain in the thousands each year.

Officials also hope to see a payoff from changes initiated by Afghan President Ashraf Ghani, including a plan to retire thousands of politically connected senior officers. Until recently, U.S. officials like to say, the average age of corps commanders exceeded Afghanistan's life expectancy by a decade.

Some experts remain skeptical the new approach can succeed where President Barack Obama's 2010-2011 surge, with far more troops, could not.

The Afghan forces would have to become "so capable and lethal" that they could defeat the Taliban in battles with little help, said retired Lt. Gen. David Barno, who commanded U.S. and NATO forces in Afghanistan from 2003 to 2005. "I am not optimistic we are going to see that happen anytime soon."

Gen. John Nicholson Jr., commander of international forces in Afghanistan, said the strategy includes pressing Pakistan to shut down Taliban safe havens and squeezing the Taliban diplomatically after a recent peace initiative put forward by Ghani.

In more emphatic terms than ever before, military leaders are calling for a negotiated end to the war. The new urgency reflects an awareness of the Taliban's ability to regenerate and an acknowledgment that the United States and NATO are unlikely to provide high levels of resources indefinitely.

"The No. 1 metric is how are we doing toward reconciliation," Nicholson told reporters during Dunford's visit.

While there have been episodic efforts to foster peace talks since 2001, the prospect of negotiations with a group responsible for killing thousands of Americans has been met with resistance at the Pentagon in the past.

Now, in a twist, the new push for peace lacks equal high-level support outside the military. In January, Trump rejected talking to the Taliban after a bloody suicide attack. The State Department, which has led reconciliation efforts in the past, has not appointed a senior official to work on that subject and recently laid off the few staff members involved.

Military leaders are also seeking to get more lower-level fighters to lay down their arms. Such efforts have taken place previously without recruiting a critical mass of fighters.

David Sedney, a top Pentagon official for Afghanistan during the Obama administration and now a senior fellow at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, said important Taliban figures in Pakistan continue to believe that military victory is possible.

"However, among Taliban fighters in Afghanistan, the growing disillusionment with those Pakistan-based leaders is fueling a rising interest in peace," he said. "It is too soon to say whether this will result in peace talks this year, but the possibility exists where it did not a year ago."

Adding urgency to the complicated U.S. mission is the unpredictability of a commander in chief who acknowledged as he unveiled his plan to redouble the Afghanistan effort that his original instinct had been withdrawal.

"I share the American people's frustration . . . over a foreign policy that has spent too much time, energy, money and, most importantly, lives," Trump said last year.

	<p>It's not yet clear how Trump's ambivalence will be affected by the arrival of Bolton, who has voiced distrust in nation-building overseas and appears more focused on North Korea and Iran than Afghanistan.</p> <p>Andrew Wilder, an Afghanistan scholar at the U.S. Institute for Peace, said that signaling continuity in U.S. plans would be crucial. "With the new leadership, it's important to be messaging that the strategy remains in place and the U.S. is committed to it, or its biggest advantage, which is that it's not time-based, is lost," he said.</p> <p>Reassuring European nations is equally important. While several NATO nations recently announced increased troop levels, there are signs of growing resistance.</p> <p>Ian Lesser, vice president of the German Marshall Fund, a think tank, said NATO leaders were increasingly focused on threats from a resurgent Russia and terrorism groups on Europe's eastern and southern borders. Adding to that, low public support for Afghanistan means that "the political pressure is definitely on," he said.</p> <p>"The fact that allies were able to make modest new investments reflects the fact that they didn't want to get off on the wrong foot with the United States," Lesser said. But he added, "For different reasons all around the alliance, people are going to have an increasingly hard time justifying this as an open-ended commitment."</p>
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HEADLINE	03/31 Syria: most eastern enclave regained
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-syria-ghouta/syrian-army-command-says-it-has-regained-most-of-eastern-ghouta-idUSKBN1H70IX
GIST	<p>AMMAN (Reuters) - The Syrian army command said on Saturday it had regained most of the towns and villages in eastern Ghouta and was pressing its military operations in the last rebel bastion of Douma.</p> <p>In a televised statement, the Syrian army spokesman said the weeks-long military campaign had now brought security to the Syrian capital Damascus and also secured its main links to other parts of the country, stretching north and all the way to the Iraqi border to the east.</p> <p>The army command said military operations were continuing in the outskirts of the city of Douma, controlled by the Jaish al-Islam rebel group, the last patch of eastern Ghouta still held by insurgents.</p> <p>Douma's fall would seal the rebels' worst defeat since 2016, driving them from their last big stronghold near the capital, and would also carry potent symbolism. The town was the main center of street protests in the Damascus suburbs against President Bashar al-Assad's rule that ignited the conflict seven years ago.</p> <p>The army said hundreds of rebels had been killed in the ferocious offensive. The opposition says a relentless air campaign was waged in which where the army used napalm, chlorine and incendiary bombs to demoralize rebels by targeting civilian areas.</p> <p>The rebels say the indiscriminate bombing forced them to capitulate and agree to surrender deals that force them either to make peace or leave to rebel held areas after weeks of bombing and sieges that prevented food from reaching the enclaves.</p> <p>The Syrian army has repeatedly said regaining control over rebel-held suburbs would stop rocket attacks on the capital.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/31 Jury foreman on shooter's wife acquittal
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SOURCE	http://www.foxnews.com/us/2018/03/31/jury-convicted-noor-salman-knew-pulse-nightclub-attack-but-had-no-option-but-to-acquit-foreman-says.html
GIST	<p>The jury foreman in the concluded trial of Noor Salman -- widow of Pulse nightclub gunman Omar Mateen – said jurors were “convinced” she knew of the attack beforehand, but had “no option but to return a verdict of not guilty.”</p> <p>In a statement provided to the Orlando Sentinel, the juror -- who requested to remain anonymous -- said “a verdict of not guilty did NOT mean that we thought Noor Salman was unaware of what Omar Mateen was planning to do,” rather that the jury was “not tasked with deciding if she was aware of a potential attack.”</p> <p>“On the contrary we were convinced she did know,” the statement continued. “She may not have known what day, or what location, but she knew.”</p> <p>Mateen killed 49 people and wounded 58 others at the Pulse nightclub in Orlando, Fla., on June 12, 2016, before he was killed by police.</p> <p>Salman avoided a potential life sentence Friday after she was found not guilty on charges of obstruction and aiding and abetting by attempting to provide material support to a terrorist organization – a controversial decision that left survivors frustrated and angry.</p> <p>Such negative reactions to the verdict prompted the jury foremen to issue the statement to the newspaper.</p> <p>“I felt compelled to at least clarify several misconceptions,” expressing “sympathy to family and friends of the victims of this senseless tragedy,” the foreman said.</p> <p>“I understand the desire to hold someone accountable for this heinous act of violence. Omar Mateen is dead. He cannot be punished,” the statement read. “It is only logical the world would look next to Noor Salman.”</p> <p>The juror also acknowledged “there were several significant inconsistencies with the written summaries of her statements,” as the FBI did not record its interviews with Salaman following the attack, according to the paper.</p> <p>However, the statement credited both the prosecution and defense for “an excellent job presenting their case.”</p> <p>“The bottom line is that, based on the letter of the law, and the detailed instructions provided by the court, we were presented with no option but to return a verdict of not guilty,” the statement read.</p> <p>Salman did not testify in her defense.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/31 US freezes \$200M Syria recovery funds
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/president-donald-trump-freezes-200-million-in-funds-earmarked-for-syria-recovery/
GIST	<p>President Trump's administration has frozen \$200 million earmarked for Syria recovery efforts, CBS News' Margaret Brennan and Kylie Atwood confirmed. The development comes after Mr. Trump said this week the U.S. will be pulling out of Syria "very soon."</p> <p>Atwood reports the decision was relayed to the State Department Friday in a call that White House chief of staff John Kelly made to Deputy Secretary of State John Sullivan. There is some recovery funding that will continue for the next few weeks, but all future money is on hold.</p> <p>The money -- to have been spent by the State Department for infrastructure projects like power, water and</p>

roads -- had been announced by fired Secretary of State Rex Tillerson at an aid conference last month in Kuwait.

The State Department has been asked to provide the White House with more information on the Syria recovery funding, Atwood reports -- such as specific projects to be laid out. Mr. Trump wants other countries to step up to the plate, and do and pay more. The freeze does not impact Department of Defense operations.

Brennan reports the president has it in his mind that he wants to get out of Syria, but also told Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan on Friday that the U.S. is not done fighting the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS). In short, Brennan reports, the president's remarks -- and this freeze -- contradict policy that had been in place under Tillerson.

Meanwhile, U.S. Central Command and the State Department are scheduled to host an event Tuesday about rebuilding Syria and Iraq after ISIS. Secretary of Defense James Mattis, Brennan reports, has been consistent that the military needs to gradually, and not suddenly, hand matters off to diplomats. Mr. Trump's pivot also makes the fate of Syrian president Bashar al Assad unclear.

Mr. Trump described his intent to get out of Syria in a speech to union workers Thursday in Ohio -- a speech that was billed as an infrastructure plan pitch.

"Things are changing, folks," Mr. Trump told the crowd. "But now is the time to rebuild our country, to take care of our people, and to fight for our great American workers for a change. ... We'll be coming out of Syria, like, very soon. Let the other people take care of it now. Very soon. Very soon, we're coming out. We're going to have 100 percent of the caliphate, as they call it -- sometimes referred to as 'land.' We're taking it all back quickly. Quickly. But we're going to be coming out of there real soon. We're going to get back to our country, where we belong, where we want to be."

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HEADLINE	03/30 Syria bomb kills US, UK troops
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/syrian-official-roadside-bomb-explodes-tense-manbij-town-54117901?
GIST	<p>A roadside bomb in northern Syria killed two coalition personnel, an American and a Briton, and wounded five others in a rare attack since the U.S.-led coalition sent troops into the war-torn country, the U.S. and British militaries and a U.S. defense official said Friday.</p> <p>The military did not say where the attack took place or give the nationalities of the other casualties but it came hours after a local Syrian official said that a roadside bomb exploded in the tense, mixed Arab-Kurdish town of Manbij that is not far from the border with Turkey.</p> <p>Manbij is under threat of a Turkish military operation. Ankara says Syrian Kurdish militiamen it views as "terrorists" and an extension of Kurdish insurgents inside Turkey are in control of the town.</p> <p>The U.S. military statement said the attack happened Thursday night and that the wounded were being evacuated for further medical treatment. The statement said details were being withheld pending further investigation.</p> <p>A Department of Defense official in Washington said one of the two killed was an American service member and the other was of another nationality.</p> <p>No other information about the deceased American was immediately available. The official spoke on condition of anonymity because details had not yet been publicly released.</p> <p>A U.K. defense ministry spokesman said the British armed forces member was killed during an operation</p>

against the Islamic State group. The spokesman added that an improvised explosive device killed the service member who was embedded with U.S. forces on Thursday.

No details on the casualty's service branch, unit or gender were immediately provided.

The U.S. military member killed was the fourth American who has died in Syria since the U.S. began attacking Islamic State militants there in September 2014, according to the Pentagon's Defense Casualty Analysis System.

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HEADLINE 03/30 UK ISIS members: beheadings 'mistake'

SOURCE <http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/notorious-members-revoking-uk-citizenship-unfair-54126797>

GIST

Two British militants believed to have been part of an Islamic State group cell notorious for beheading hostages in Syria were unapologetic in their first interview since their capture, denouncing the U.S. and Britain as "hypocrites" who will not give them a fair trial.

The men, along with two other British jihadis, allegedly made up the IS cell nicknamed "The Beatles" by surviving captives because of their English accents.

The nickname belied the cell's brutality. In 2014 and 2015, it held more than 20 Western hostages in Syria and tortured many of them. It beheaded seven American, British and Japanese journalists and aid workers and a group of Syrian soldiers, boasting of the butchery in videos released to the world.

Speaking to The Associated Press at a Kurdish security center, the two men, El Shafee Elsheikh and Alexandra Amon Kotey, repeatedly refused to address allegations they were part of the cell — clearly having a future trial in mind. They complained that they could "disappear" after Britain reportedly revoked their citizenship.

They were captured in January in eastern Syria by the Kurdish-led, U.S.-backed Syrian Democratic Forces amid the collapse of IS. Their detention has set off a debate in the U.S. and Europe over how to prosecute their citizens who joined IS — as the Kurds pressure the West to take them back to relieve overcrowding in prisons.

The two said the killings of the captives were a mistake — but for tactical reasons.

Many in IS "would have disagreed" with the killings "on the grounds that there is probably more benefit in them being political prisoners," Kotey said.

"I didn't see any benefit (in killing them). It was something that was regrettable." He also blamed Western governments for failing to negotiate, noting that some hostages were released for ransoms.

Elsheikh said the killings were a "mistake" and might not have been justified. But, he said, they were in retaliation for killings of civilians by the U.S.-led coalition fighting IS. He said the militants shouldn't have initially threatened to kill the hostages because then they had to go ahead with it or else "your credibility may go."

The beheadings, often carried out on camera, horrified the world soon after IS took over much of Iraq and Syria in 2014. The group also committed widescale atrocities including massacring thousands of Iraqi troops and civilians and taking sex slaves.

The leader of the cell, Mohammed Emwazi, was dubbed "Jihadi John" in the British media after he appeared, masked, in the videos, sometimes performing the butchery. He was killed in a U.S.-led coalition drone strike in 2015 in the Syrian city of Raqqa, the de facto IS capital. Another member, Aine Lesley

Davis, was arrested in Turkey and convicted there in 2017, sentenced to seven years in prison.

Elsheikh, whose family came to Britain from Sudan when he was a child, was a mechanic from White City in west London.

He traveled to Syria in 2012, initially joining al-Qaida's branch before moving on to IS, according to the U.S. State Department's listing of the two men for terrorism sanctions. It said he "earned a reputation for waterboarding, mock executions and crucifixions while serving as an (IS) jailer."

Kotey, who is of Ghanaian and Greek-Cypriot descent and converted to Islam in his 20s, is from London's Paddington neighborhood.

Serving in the IS cell as a guard, he "likely engaged in the group's executions and exceptionally cruel torture methods," the State Department said. It also said he was an IS recruiter who brought other Britons into the group.

Elsheikh and Kotey spoke to the AP at a Kurdish security building in the town of Kobani, where they were brought, initially in handcuffs and face covers that were removed. They appeared to speak openly with no signs of duress and were friendly with SDF security who came in and out of the room.

They were both initially confrontational but over the interview became more conversational. Kotey often cracked jokes — when asked whether IS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi was alive, he joked that some people thought Elvis never died and Tupac Shakur is still alive. Elsheikh was straightlaced and reserved, referring more often to Islamic texts.

They were unrepentant about belonging to IS — though they said they did not agree with everything it did. Kotey said he did not think suicide bombings were permissible in Islam. Elsheikh said IS's killing of a captured Jordanian pilot by burning him alive in a cage was "atrocious."

But they seemed dismissive of the idea that IS was egregious in brutality.

"I am not here to justify or shun every act IS did," Elsheikh said, arguing that nationals of a country can't be held responsible for crimes by the state.

The U.S. has been pressing for the home countries of foreign jihadis in Iraq and Syria to take their nationals for trial. Britain's defense secretary has said they should not be allowed back into the country. Former captives of the cell and families of its victims have called on Elsheikh and Kotey to be given a fair trial, whether in the United States or Britain, arguing that locking them away in a facility like Guantanamo Bay would only fuel further radicalism.

Kurdish officials complain they are being left to deal with the IS legacy, including overburdened prisons full of militants, including foreign fighters whose home countries don't want to take them back.

Elsheikh and Kotey are held in an undisclosed location. Kotey said he shares a cell with 70 others, all but four of them Syrians, and that they are sleeping like "sardines, literally head to toe, head to toe." Despite the overcrowding, he said, they get fresh air, play games and have classes.

Kotey said the U.S. and Britain were not upholding their own laws of due process. "Where are they now or are they just applicable when they suit you?" he said. "It just looks very hypocritical, double standards."

The two denounced as "illegal" the British government's reported decision in February to strip them of citizenship. The decision was widely reported in British media, though officials have not confirmed or denied it, citing privacy rules.

The revocation exposes them to "rendition and torture," Elsheikh said.

HEADLINE	03/30 Wife Pulse nightclub shooter acquitted
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/US/pulse-nightclub-shooters-wife-found-guilty/story?id=54122947&cid=clicksource_4380645_1_hero_headlines_headlines_hed
GIST	<p>Noor Salman, the wife of Pulse nightclub shooter Omar Mateen, was declared not guilty on all counts Friday morning.</p> <p>She faced charges of obstruction and providing material support to a terrorist organization. She faced life in prison if convicted.</p> <p>"The family is elated," said Susan Clary, a family spokeswoman, outside of court after the verdict. "Noor can go home now to her son ... resume her life and try to pick up the pieces from two years in jail."</p> <p>Prosecutors and defense attorneys painted radically different pictures of Salman over the course of the trial: on the one hand, helping her husband prepare for the attack and on the other, an abused woman who "married a monster."</p> <p>John Mina, the chief of the Orlando Police Department, released a statement following the verdict, saying he believes in the criminal justice system and is thankful for the hard work of the jurors, attorneys and the FBI involved in the case.</p> <p>"Nothing can erase the pain we all feel about the senseless and brutal murders of 49 of our neighbors, friends, family members and loved ones," Mina said in the statement.</p> <p>"Our community is strong, and the men and women of the Orlando Police Department stand ready to put themselves in harm's way to protect our residents and visitors," he said.</p> <p>However, Orange County Sheriff Jerry Demings said he was "disappointed."</p> <p>"I am disappointed in the outcome of the trial and know that the victims and/or their families are more disappointed," Demings said in a statement.</p>
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Suspicious, Unusual

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HEADLINE	03/31 India: car crash 'causes' hotel collapse
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/apr/01/at-least-10-killed-after-car-crash-causes-hotel-collapse-in-india
GIST	<p>A four-storey rickety hotel building collapsed in central India, killing at least 10 people and injuring another three, police said Sunday.</p> <p>Rescuers working through the night with sledgehammers and chainsaws pulled alive 10 people from the debris of the building that came crashing down in Indore, a city in Madhya Pradesh state, on Saturday night, said police officer Sanju Kamle.</p> <p>Up to five people may still be trapped under the rubble, said Nishant Warwade, the district collector.</p> <p>The Times of India newspaper said the dilapidated building collapsed after a car smashed its front portion.</p> <p>The hotel with 25 rooms was located in the commercial hub of Indore, close to railway and bus stations. Indore is nearly 900 kilometres (560 miles) south of New Delhi.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/01 Military families w/deportation issues
SOURCE	https://www.militarytimes.com/news/your-military/2018/04/01/as-many-as-11800-military-families-face-deportation-issues-group-says/
GIST	<p>As many as 11,800 currently serving in the U.S. military are dealing with a spouse or family member who is facing deportation, a national immigration advocacy group announced Friday.</p> <p>No previous estimate, official or unofficial, has been available on just how many of the 1 million married military members currently on active duty, National Guard or Reserve status may be dealing with the stress of having a spouse, dependent or parent deported.</p> <p>It's also not a number that can be easily checked, or verified, because neither DoD, the Department of Homeland Security nor U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement tracks military status in immigration proceedings.</p> <p>American Families United, a non-profit immigration advocacy group, calculated the estimate using 2011 U.S. Census statistics, which found that 6.3 percent of the 129 million married Americans are married to foreign-born spouses. The Pew Research Center found that one in four of those foreign-born spouses are in the country illegally. About 75 percent of that population comes from countries like Mexico, where if they entered illegally, they have a harder time obtaining legal status, as opposed to a person from Europe who might have overstayed a visa, said American Families United President Randall Emery.</p> <p>“So we derived the total of military (active and reserves) married to people with inadmissibility-type immigration issues by taking the total (1 million), multiplying by the national percentage of foreign-born (6.3 percent, so 63,000 current U.S. military are married to immigrants), and then the 25 percent of the total which have problems with immigration law: 15,750. Of that, Pew’s data indicates 75 percent are from sources characterized by entry without inspection and similar issues, that would be about 11,800,” Emery said.</p> <p>While it may not be exact, AFU generated the military estimate to “create awareness and get some of these legislators who say they support the military to actually act on it” and recognize that this is a bigger military problem than previously thought, said Nancy Kuznetsov, the group’s military liaison.</p> <p>While the active duty members themselves are protected — because in order to enlist a service member has to show proof that they are in the country legally — their undocumented spouses are not.</p> <p>An earlier “parole in place” program that was previously championed by Vice President Mike Pence to give relief to military families is no longer being utilized due to stricter enforcement of deportation proceedings under Trump.</p> <p>That’s meant more military families calling the group for assistance, Emery said.</p> <p>“Recently, we’ve seen an increase in cases of both active-duty personnel and veterans who have been failed by immigration law,” Emery said. “These estimates give us perspective on the problem.”</p> <p>When asked, neither DoD, DHS nor ICE could say how many military families are facing deportation proceedings, because it’s not data they track or report,</p> <p>While an ICE official said the agency “respects the service and sacrifice of those in military service, and is very deliberate in its review of cases involving U.S. military veterans,” the agency does not track military status in its removal statistics, the official said.</p> <p>ICE referred queries on how many military families were facing removal proceedings to the Department of Justice’s Executive Office for Immigration Review.</p>

	But that court “does not track military status among respondents or their spouses,” when prosecuting immigration cases, said spokesman Devin O’Malley, so there’s no way to know how many military family members were among those persons removed last year.
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HEADLINE	04/01 NKorea Kim attends K-pop concert
SOURCE	http://time.com/5223877/kim-jong-un-k-pop-stars/?xid=homepage
GIST	<p>(SEOUL) — South Korean media say North Korean leader Kim Jong Un has watched a rare performance by South Korean pop stars visiting Pyongyang.</p> <p>A South Korean artistic group including K-pop singers flew to Pyongyang on Saturday for performances in the North Korean capital amid thawing ties between the rivals. The leaders of the Koreas are to meet at a border village on April 27.</p> <p>South Korean media pool reports from Pyongyang say Kim and his wife, Ri Sol Ju, watched Sunday’s performance by the South Korean group.</p> <p>The reports say Kim clapped his hands during the performance at the East Pyongyang Grand Theater. Kim shook hands with South Korean performers and took a group photo with them after their performance.</p> <p>It hadn’t been known whether Kim would attend the performance.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/01 First sperm whale seen inland waters
SOURCE	http://mynorthwest.com/944256/first-sperm-whale-recorded-in-washington-state-inland-waters/
GIST	<p>SEATTLE (AP) — The Pacific Whale Watch Association says it has recorded its first sighting of a sperm whale in inland waters in Washington state.</p> <p>KOMO-TV reported Sunday that the association says its members captured photos and hydrophone audio of the whale — the first of its kind seen by whale watching tours in the Salish Sea.</p> <p>The photos were captured in the Haro Strait just off Turn Point on Stuart Island in the San Juan Islands.</p> <p>The whale was named Yukusam when it first appeared in Johnstone Strait in British Columbia in February 2018.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/29 San Diego unique approach to homeless
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2018/mar/29/san-diego-homelessness-big-tents
GIST	<p>Bob McElroy strode through the busy entrance of the vast, gleaming-white tent, greeting people right and left. The prominent homeless services provider calls the new structure, located on the outskirts of downtown San Diego, “the Rolls-Royce of tents”.</p> <p>It is double-insulated and has wifi. And it is the sunny seaside destination’s millionaire-funded attempt to get a grip on an emergency that sees thousands of homeless people sleep on its streets every night.</p> <p>The industrial-sized tent holds 324 people in neatly spaced, numbered bunks. People can bring their pets, and 70 dogs also live in the shelter. It offers a bed and services – from healthcare to employment assistance to showers and laundry – while people wait for a place of their own. In appearance, it evokes a military installation or a refugee camp.</p>

“You come in here with nothing and they provide everything,” said Sylvia Saliman, 58.

Saliman sat on her top bunk with Daisy, her American blue nose pitbull, who was napping after a long walk. Saliman said she had been homeless for 16 months and in the shelter for two. She said she’d lost everything except her dog. Thanks to the tent, “I’m doing great right now,” she said.

Cities throughout the western and southern US, such as San Diego, face a dilemma: they are grappling with visible, intransigent street homelessness, and the supply of affordable housing is meager and increasing only slowly. This tent, along with two others built by the city, fills the gap – it is known as a “bridge” shelter.

Officials from California cities large and small, including Los Angeles, San Francisco, Fresno and Oxnard, have come to tour the structures. The Fresno city council member Steve Brandau brought a group to San Diego in February and said a huge tent could be the solution for his city’s shortage of about 150 beds. “We like the San Diego structure,” he said, “the feel of it, the types of services provided.”

It is not the first time San Diego has housed people in large tents. For nearly three decades, two such structures, one for veterans and one for adults, went up during winter months. But that program was scrapped in 2015.

“In the communities where they’re solving homelessness, they’re not doing it with tents,” the then city council member Todd Gloria told the San Diego Union-Tribune.

A spike in homelessness, especially downtown, and, last year, a deadly outbreak of hepatitis A that killed 20 people and had the city washing its sidewalks in bleach, forced city leaders to reconsider. Two wealthy San Diego businessmen, Dan Shea, a restaurateur, and Peter Seidler, managing partner of the San Diego Padres baseball team, told Mayor Kevin Faulconer they would put up \$1.5m for new tents if the city would fund the operations for at least two years.

Shea and Seidler say they represented a larger San Diego business community frustrated by a lack of action on the part of elected officials. It will take years to build the necessary housing, Shea said in an interview with KPBS radio. “Do we just leave those people on the street for five years, seven years, 10 years waiting for housing to be built?”

Beds are prioritized for people with mental or physical disabilities who qualify for housing subsidies. They are also available for people who just need a few months of respite to get back on their feet. Everyone in the shelter is paired with a housing “navigator” whose job is to find appropriate housing as quickly as possible. Altogether, the three tents have almost 700 beds.

“Without this, can you imagine how hard it is to find a client on the streets?” said Amy Gonyeau, chief operating officer for Alpha Project, the service provider that runs the tent for adults. “Now we know where they are – well, at least 700 of them.”

The goal is for providers to move about two-thirds of shelter residents into permanent housing within four months, yet early data shows meeting this goal might prove challenging. During its first four months of operation, 44 people from the largest tent, with its capacity of more than 300, moved into permanent housing. Another 15 exited to other programs or moved in with family or friends.

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HEADLINE	04/01 Claim: World Cup drone attack plot
SOURCE	https://www.mirror.co.uk/sport/football/news/isis-planning-terror-attacks-using-12285487
GIST	ISIS terrorists are preparing for attacks at the World Cup in Russia using drones, it has been claimed. Sick propaganda has been shared a number of times implying the terror group will target the tournament

due to take place in June.

Now chilling images have been shared on the messaging app Telegram which reportedly show preparations for attacks.

They show drones being armed with grenades, missiles and mortars that can be dropped on targets.

Weaponised drones are already being used by ISIS fighters in Syria and Iraq.

They are the cheap kind normally used by filmmakers and hobbyists, but with deadly bombs attached.

It comes after ISIS supporters previously spread images of a terrorist brandishing a sub machine gun and a bomb, with the Volgograd Arena in Southern Russia in the background.

England are set to play one of their World Cup matches at the stadium.

The words 'Wait for Us' are underneath the sinister figure.

The stadium will host Gareth Southgate's side when they face Tunisia on June 18.

Although Volgograd is not an area which the Home Office advises football fans not to visit, it has urged supporters travelling to watch the tournament to see travel advice before travelling.

The image, shared throughout pro-ISIS channels on the encrypted messaging application Telegram, featured an excerpt of a Quranic verse manipulated by the ISIS followers to urge fellow jihadis to take every opportunity to conduct deadly attacks in the U.S. and Russia.

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HEADLINE	04/02 Source: Kremlin approved spy poisoning
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/04/02/europe/skripal-poisoning-uk-kremlin-approval-intl/index.html
GIST	<p>(CNN)British authorities examining the poisoning of former Russian spy Sergei Skripal believe the daring placement of the nerve agent on his door shows a sophistication that likely had the approval of the Kremlin, a source briefed on the investigation has confirmed to CNN.</p> <p>Skripal, 66, and his daughter Yulia, 33, were poisoned on March 4 after being exposed to what the British government says was a military-grade nerve agent.</p> <p>British officials believe an attack of this type could only be carried out by a person (or more than one person) with key training involving Novichok, the substance used in the attack.</p> <p>There are doubts that rogue agents could have carried out the attack without approval from the top levels of Russian government.</p> <p>The New York Times first reported this latest theory regarding responsibility.</p> <p>Last week, Russia again denied any involvement in the poisoning, with Russian Foreign Minister spokeswoman Maria Zakharova accusing the UK government of seeking to "bring about a totally absurd situation."</p> <p>The UK government has long pointed fingers at Russia for the March 4 nerve agent attack against the former double agent and his daughter on British soil.</p> <p>In a speech before parliament one week after the attack, British Prime Minister Theresa May said it was "highly likely" that the attack constituted "an unlawful use of force by the Russian state against the United</p>

	Kingdom." Officials believe this type of nerve agent attack is also meant to send a strong warning to Russian dissidents in the West, the source said.
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HEADLINE	04/02 Police probe if SUV crash 'intentional'
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/04/02/us/family-suv-pacific-coast-crash/index.html
GIST	<p>(CNN)A family's SUV found at the bottom of a California cliff last week may have been deliberately driven off the road, police told media Sunday.</p> <p>The bodies of Jennifer and Sarah Hart, both 38, were discovered inside their overturned SUV near a remote stretch of Highway 1 in Northern California last Monday. Emergency responders found the bodies of three of their six children -- Markis, 19, and Jeremiah and Abigail, both 14 -- outside the car.</p> <p>Their other children -- Hannah, 16, Devonte, 15, and Sierra, 12 -- are missing. Nobody reported seeing the crash, so authorities don't know exactly when or how it happened and it is unclear whether the three missing children were in the SUV when it fell 100 feet into the sea.</p> <p>Police said that preliminary information suggested the car may have been intentionally driven straight off the edge of the cliff.</p> <p>Data from the vehicle's air bag module and software indicated that the car had stopped at the pull out and then accelerated off the road, said Greg Baarts, acting assistant chief of the California Highway Patrol's Northern Division.</p> <p>"At this point in our investigation, that is the direction we are going," Baarts said.</p> <p>Preliminary data from the car suggested that there had been approximately 70 feet of continuous acceleration from the last moment the brakes were applied before the SUV went over and hit the ocean floor, Baarts said.</p> <p>There was also no evidence to suggest the car had been driving at an angle when it left the road, he said. Baarts stressed that investigators were still verifying the information, but that authorities believed that a felony had been committed.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/02 What happens for lying on census?
SOURCE	https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/white-house/are-you-citizen-here-s-what-happens-if-you-lie-n861841
GIST	<p>Article I, Section 2, of the Constitution requires the enumeration of people in the U.S. every 10 years for the purpose of apportioning congressional representatives.</p> <p>The "Census Clause" also requires that representatives be apportioned among the states "according to their respective Numbers." Section 2 of the 14th Amendment further provides that House representatives "shall be apportioned among the several States according to their respective numbers, counting the whole number of persons in each State." The Census Act of 1790 provides for the enumeration of the "inhabitants of the United States."</p> <p>Federal law requires that the secretary of commerce take a census of "population" — not citizens — and the same law authorizes the secretary to "obtain such other census information as necessary."</p>

The Constitution says "persons" — not "citizens" or "green card holders." That's why the Trump administration's move to include a citizenship question on the census is meeting such intense opposition; there are concerns that it will deter participation and lead to an inaccurate population count.

Federal law provides that anyone who refuses to answer or willfully neglects to answer any of the questions in connection with any census or survey shall be fined a maximum of \$100, or a maximum of \$500 if the person gives false information.

In theory, noncitizens should not fear answering census questions. Surveys are mailed to addresses, rather than to specific individuals. Not including individual names on the address label is meant to protect the confidentiality of the participating households.

Additionally, federal law provides immunity for persons who give answers to census questions. Information furnished cannot be "used to the detriment of the persons to whom such information relates." Census reports may not be admitted as evidence or used in any action or proceeding, without consent.

These laws are designed to deter someone from refusing to answer questions on the census claiming a Fifth Amendment privilege against self-incrimination.

Practically speaking, though, anyone who is concerned about their legal status may not want to volunteer this to the same federal government that could deport them. It's hardly a sentiment limited only to noncitizens. In past enumerations, some Republican leaders have all but encouraged open defiance of the law.

Then-Sen. Trent Lott, a Mississippi Republican, once advised constituents to fill out "the basic census information" but added that if they felt "their privacy is being invaded by those (additional) questions, they (could) choose not to answer those questions."

And George W. Bush, then a candidate for president, said he "(understood) why people don't want to give over that information to the government."

Prosecutions for failure to participate in the census are rare; most significant court cases dealing with these crimes date back to the 1970s.

The perceived risk of answering remains greater than the virtually nonexistent risk of not answering because the Justice Department is not likely to start prosecuting offenders for refusing to answer.

Attorney General Jeff Sessions has indicated that illegal immigration will be a priority for the DOJ under his command, but going after noncitizens who refuse to answer census questions, motivated by fear of being removed from the country, would contradict the overall message the census is trying to send: It is here to count you, not to hurt you. Plus, courts have indicated in the past that purposeful discrimination by census authorities can give rise to a defense of selective prosecution.

Ultimately, the refusal to answer census questions is a federal crime, but not really.

Some categories of federal criminal statutes are heavily enforced. Drug crimes and immigration crimes make up over 50 percent of the federal prosecution caseload.

Then there are those federal crimes that are technically crimes, but not really. For example, it's a federal crime for a peanut dealer to refuse to tell the government how many peanuts he has. It's also a federal crime to mail a package of dead bees without writing "DEAD BEES" on every side of the box, using black letters at least an inch tall.

There are a lot of federal crimes. Not all of them are enforced. Refusing to answer the census or lying on it will likely remain in that second category — a crime, but not really.

HEADLINE	04/01 UK uses doctors' info to find migrants
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/Health/wireStory/medical-ethics-uk-data-doctors-find-migrants-54157725
GIST	<p>To track down people in Britain who may have broken immigration rules, the government is turning to a new and controversial source of information: doctors.</p> <p>Doctors who work with refugees and asylum-seekers have described the move as a major breach of medical ethics, saying it isn't up to physicians to enforce immigration rules.</p> <p>In letters recently made public, politicians sparred with immigration officials over a data-sharing agreement quietly signed in 2016 that gives the government access to personal information collected by the country's family doctors. Medical details are excluded.</p> <p>A parliamentary health committee condemned the situation as "unacceptable," calling for the agreement to be suspended.</p> <p>But Britain's immigration department has dismissed those concerns, arguing that such data sharing allows the U.K. to remove people "who might pose a danger to the public."</p> <p>Medical workers back the health committee's viewpoint.</p> <p>"We understand the government has a job to do, but going into health records to get patient information is not OK," said Lucy Jones, director of programs at Doctors of the World U.K. "The idea that any patient information is being shared with a government body immediately breaks their trust in a doctor-patient relationship."</p> <p>Several leading medical organizations, including the Royal College of General Practitioners, Public Health England and the General Medical Council, have all slammed the data-sharing deal, saying it could worsen the health of vulnerable people and drive disease outbreaks underground, hurting health care for all.</p> <p>Dr. Kitty Worthing, a London-based doctor with the group Docs Not Cops, said "the cornerstone of the doctor-patient relationship is confidentiality and this data-sharing is a direct breach of that." She said when she's advised people that their personal information could be shared with immigration officials "their reaction is always fear."</p> <p>Elsewhere in Europe, many countries have a strict firewall that stops information gathered by health services from being disclosed to other government agencies. Germany's data protection office said regulations prohibit any blanket sharing of such information. In France, no data obtained by doctors is shared with the Interior Ministry.</p> <p>Some health experts said it was critical that some types of health care are available to everyone in the U.K., regardless of their immigration status.</p> <p>"With HIV treatment, it makes much more sense to treat everybody with HIV, because treatment lowers the level of virus in your blood so you can't pass it on," said Kat Smithson of the National AIDS Trust. "If people are not diagnosed because they're not accessing health care, they're not aware they're living with HIV, which means they're far more likely to pass it on to somebody else."</p> <p>The British government, however, says protecting its borders outweighs those concerns.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/01 SUV cliff plunge: 'felony committed'
SOURCE	http://www.foxnews.com/us/2018/04/01/death-plunge-vehicles-speedometer-pinned-at-90-mph-

	authorities-say.html
GIST	<p>The speedometer of a Washington state family's SUV was "pinned" at 90 mph when the vehicle was found Monday afternoon, crushed along the rocks of a Northern California shoreline, court documents say.</p> <p>Authorities included the information in an affidavit for a search warrant for the home of Jennifer and Sarah Hart, adoptive parents of six children -- all of whom are believed to have perished when the vehicle plunged off the Pacific Coast Highway, Fox 12 Oregon reported.</p> <p>The two women and three of the children were found dead at the crash site Monday, but it was unclear how much time had elapsed between the accident and the discovery.</p> <p>Three other children are missing and may have been carried out to sea, authorities have said.</p> <p>The family had been living in Oregon until last year when they moved to Woodland, Wash.</p> <p>Meanwhile, law enforcement officers believe "a felony has been committed" in the case, the court documents say.</p> <p>The exact nature of the suspected felony was not known, but according to the documents, "Based upon the California Highway Patrol investigation, it is their belief 'a felony has been committed,'" Fox 12 Oregon reported.</p> <p>However, authorities maintain there's no evidence to suggest the crash was intentional, the Oregonian reported.</p> <p>The court documents indicate that CHP investigators found no "acceleration marks, tire friction marks or braking furrow marks" at the scene, and there was no evidence the car collided with the embankment as it "traversed towards the tidal zone below," Fox 12 reported.</p> <p>According to the Oregonian, friends' depictions and social media posts of the Hart family are at odds with police records.</p> <p>According to accounts of the family's neighbors in Washington state, one child had shown up at a neighbor's doorstep alleging abuse while another had asked neighbors for food because it was supposedly being withheld as punishment.</p> <p>Another child reportedly told police that Sarah Hart had hit her repeatedly with a closed fist and put her in a cold bath. According to the Oregonian, Hart pleaded guilty to the abuse in April 2011 and was sentenced to a year of probation. In another July 2013 incident, authorities responded to a call at the family's residence.</p> <p>Days before the fatal crash, the Washington State Department of Social and Health Services opened a case into the family because the children had been identified as "potential victims of alleged abuse or neglect," the Oregonian reported. The agency had attempted to contact the family but they had reportedly left home that day.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/30 Doubts w/Hanford plant reopening 2022
SOURCE	http://www.king5.com/article/news/local/doubts-raised-that-massive-hanford-plant-could-open-by-2022/281-533730951
GIST	<p>The U.S. Department of Energy has doubts that a massive nuclear waste treatment plant at the Hanford Nuclear Reservation can open by a 2022 deadline.</p> <p>But the agency has not notified the state of Washington that legal deadlines for the project are at risk.</p>

	<p>Instead, the Tri-City Herald reports the agency has directed contractor Bechtel National to improve its performance.</p> <p>Bechtel is building the \$17 billion plant intended to turn liquid nuclear wastes into glass-like logs for burial. The project has been plagued by safety and design issues.</p> <p>Hanford is located near Richland and for decades made plutonium for nuclear weapons. The site contains a huge volume of radioactive wastes.</p> <p>Bechtel's contract requires it to start treating radioactive waste by 2022. Construction on the plant started in 2002.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/30 Cancer experts, studies: coffee is safe
SOURCE	http://www.foxnews.com/health/2018/03/30/cancer-experts-say-coffee-is-safe-despite-californias-new-warning-label-requirement.html
GIST	<p>A California court judge's ruling ordering coffee companies to put cancer warning labels on their products is not changing the minds of scientists and health professionals who say there is no credible evidence to warrant the dramatic move.</p> <p>Some say that despite any well-meaning intention that may have prompted the ruling by Superior Court Judge Elihu Berle on Wednesday, it could end up unnecessarily confusing and even frightening people.</p> <p>Many studies tying a chemical, acrylamide – which is formed when coffee beans are roasted – to cancer were conducted using animals who were given quantities much larger than a human would consume, J. Leonard Lichtenfeld, the deputy chief medical officer for the American Cancer Society, told Fox News.</p> <p>“The substance is present in many of our foods, not just coffee,” said Lichtenfeld, who has worked in oncology for decades. “There was a minor scare about it being in French fries, and foods that are cooked in higher temperatures. Demonstrating a direct cause to cancer is very difficult. You always have to put a [suspected] risk into perspective.”</p> <p>“I’m going to come right back and say we have other areas we need to put more attention to,” he said. “Smoking and obesity are some of those [risky] areas.”</p> <p>A judge recently ruled that coffee sellers in California must post warnings that coffee may pose a cancer risk. But coffee is not the only item the state has imposed restrictions on. Proposition 65 requires businesses to provide a warning about exposures to hundreds of harmful chemicals in our food.</p> <p>The Council for Education and Research on Toxics, a nonprofit group, sued Starbucks and about 90 other companies, including grocery stores and retail shops, under a state law that requires warnings on a wide range of chemicals that can cause cancer. One of those chemicals is acrylamide, present in coffee.</p> <p>The Metzger Law Group, which filed the suit, says on its website: "Acrylamide is an industrial carcinogen which, in recent years, has unfortunately been recognized as a substantial constituent of many foods we eat."</p> <p>"In 2002, Swedish researchers published an important study showing that potatoes and certain other foods heated at high temperatures contain very high levels of acrylamide," it added. "The highest levels of the carcinogen were found in french fries and potato chips, but high levels of acrylamide have also been found in cereals, breads, and coffee."</p> <p>The coffee industry had claimed the chemical was present at harmless levels and should be exempt from</p>

	<p>the law because it results naturally from the cooking process necessary to make the beans flavorful.</p> <p>The ruling came despite eased concerns in recent years about the possible dangers of coffee, with some studies finding health benefits.</p> <p>In 2016, the International Agency for Research on Cancer — the cancer agency of the World Health Organization — moved coffee off its “possible carcinogen” list.</p> <p>Studies indicate coffee is unlikely to cause breast, prostate or pancreatic cancer, and it seems to lower the risks for liver and uterine cancers, the agency said. Evidence is inadequate to determine its effect on dozens of other cancer types.</p> <p>Kathryn M. Wilson, a cancer epidemiologist at Harvard University who has studied the impact of acrylamide on human, told the newspaper: "I think the evidence that acrylamide makes a difference for human cancer risk is pretty weak...It's a lot more helpful to look at coffee as a food."</p> <p>She noted, for instance, that coffee is a source of antioxidants, and has been shown in credible studies to have significant benefits, such as reducing the likelihood of liver cancer and Type 2 diabetes.</p> <p>Critics of the lawsuit and, now, ruling, say it feeds further into California’s penchant for regulations over what they say are trivial and even questionable issues.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/31 Olympics: NKorea in 2020, 2022 Games
SOURCE	https://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/ioc-chief-says-north-korea-committed-tokyo-2020-olympic-games-n861691
GIST	<p>PYONGYANG, North Korea — International Olympic Committee President Thomas Bach met with Kim Jong Un in Pyongyang on Friday and said the North Korean leader is committed to having his country participate in the 2020 Tokyo Summer Olympics and the Beijing Winter Games in 2022.</p> <p>"We had a very fruitful meeting where it became clear that the supreme leader has a clear vision of the role that sport can play in a society with regard to education, with regard to health," Bach said after the two met on Friday for a 30-minute formal meeting followed by a 45 minutes of casual conversation while watching a football match at Pyongyang's May Day Stadium.</p> <p>He added that Kim told him the North's participation in the Pyeongchang games and marching together with South Korean athletes were an "important contribution to a peaceful dialogue."</p> <p>Bach, who also met with North Korea's sports minister, said he received a commitment from the county's National Olympic Committee to participate in Tokyo in 2020 and Beijing in 2022, along with competing in the respective youth Olympic Games.</p> <p>"This commitment has been fully supported by the supreme leader Kim Jong Un in a meeting we had this afternoon," he said. "He explained that sport is a pillar in his policy for the future development of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea."</p>
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HEADLINE	03/30 Illinois officials warn synthetic pot users
SOURCE	https://www.nbcnews.com/health/health-news/illinois-reports-rash-severe-bleeding-among-synthetic-pot-users-n861596
GIST	Illinois public health officials are warning users of synthetic pot about the ultimate buzz kill — a rash of cases of severe bleeding that are believed to be linked to contaminated drugs.

As of Friday, 32 cases have been reported across the state since the outbreak began on March 7, half of which were in the Chicago metropolitan area, according to the Illinois Department of Public Health.

The agency warns that authorities have not traced the source of the contamination, and affected users have reported obtaining their synthetic cannabinoids from friends, dealers and even convenience stores.

"Synthetic cannabinoids have become popular because users often believe that it's legal and safe, but that's just not the case," department spokeswoman Melaney Arnold told NBC News. The narcotics are often marketed as K2 or Spice.

"They're certainly not safe, and in many cases they're actually banned."

Arnold said symptoms of the outbreak have included severe bloody noses, coughing up blood, bleeding gums and blood in urine.

While the synthetic drugs are dubbed "cannabinoids" because they affect the same brain cell receptors as marijuana, they are actually potentially made up of hundreds of chemicals — many of which can be toxic.

In three of the patients tested, traces of brodifacoum, a chemical used in rat poison, have been found, said Arnold.

"This bleeding is not expected, at least in such a significant population so quickly," Dr. Melissa Millewich, an emergency room physician at Advocate Good Samaritan Hospital in Downers Grove, Illinois, told The Chicago Tribune.

But she added that users of synthetic pot have been treated at the hospital in previous cases for kidney failure and psychosis.

"People don't realize how dangerous this is," said Millewich.

The Department of Public Health is urging any users in the state experiencing abnormal bleeding to seek medical treatment immediately and to avoid using any synthetic cannabinoids bought in the last month.

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HEADLINE	03/30 Undersea cables target for sabotage?
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/c2e7621bda224e2db2f8c654c9203a09/Could-enemies-sabotage-undersea-cables-linking-the-world
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON (AP) — Russian ships are skulking around underwater communications cables, causing the U.S. and its allies to worry the Kremlin might be taking information warfare to new depths.</p> <p>Is Moscow interested in cutting or tapping the cables? Does it want the West to worry it might? Is there a more innocent explanation? Unsurprisingly, Russia isn't saying.</p> <p>But whatever Moscow's intentions, U.S. and Western officials are increasingly troubled by their rival's interest in the 400 fiber-optic cables that carry most of world's calls, emails and texts, as well as \$10 trillion worth of daily financial transactions.</p> <p>"We've seen activity in the Russian navy, and particularly undersea in their submarine activity, that we haven't seen since the '80s," Gen. Curtis Scaparrotti, commander of the U.S. European Command, told Congress this month.</p> <p>Without undersea cables, a bank in Asian countries couldn't send money to Saudi Arabia to pay for oil. U.S. military leaders would struggle to communicate with troops fighting extremists in Afghanistan and</p>

the Middle East. A student in Europe wouldn't be able to Skype his parents in the United States.

All this information is transmitted along tiny glass fibers encased in undersea cables that, in some cases, are little bigger than a garden hose. All told, there are 620,000 miles of fiber-optic cable running under the sea, enough to loop around the earth nearly 25 times.

Most lines are owned by private telecommunications companies, including giants like Google and Microsoft. Their locations are easily identified on public maps, with swirling lines that look like spaghetti. While cutting one cable might have limited impact, severing several simultaneously or at choke points could cause a major outage.

The Russians "are doing their homework and, in the event of a crisis or conflict with them, they might do rotten things to us," said Michael Kofman, a Russian military expert at nonprofit research group CNA Corp.

It's not Moscow's warfighting ships and submarines that are making NATO and U.S. officials uneasy. It's Russia's Main Directorate of Deep Sea Research, whose specialized surface ships, submarines, underwater drones and mini subs conduct reconnaissance, underwater salvage and other work.

One ship run by the directorate is the Yantar. It's a modest, 354-foot oceanographic vessel that holds a crew of about 60. It most recently was off South America's coast helping Argentina search for a lost submarine.

Parlamentskaya Gazeta, the Russian parliament's publication, last October said the Yantar has equipment "designed for deep-sea tracking" and "connecting to top-secret communication cables." The publication said that in September 2015, the Yantar was near Kings Bay, Georgia, home to a U.S. submarine base, "collecting information about the equipment on American submarines, including underwater sensors and the unified (U.S. military) information network." Rossiya, a Russian state TV network, has said the Yantar can not only connect to top-secret cables, but could cut them and "jam underwater sensors with a special system."

Russia's Defense Ministry did not respond to a request for comment.

There is no hard evidence that the ship is engaged in nefarious activity, said Steffan Watkins, an information technology security consultant in Canada tracking the ship. But he wonders what the ship is doing when it's stopped over critical cables or when its Automatic Identification System tracking transponder isn't on.

Of the Yantar's crew, he said: "I don't think these are the actual guys who are doing any sabotage. I think they're laying the groundwork for future operations."

Members of Congress are wondering, too.

The Yantar's movements have previously raised eyebrows.

On Oct. 18, 2016, a Syrian telecom company ordered emergency maintenance to repair a cable in the Mediterranean that provides internet connectivity to several countries, including Syria, Libya and Lebanon. The Yantar arrived in the area the day before the four-day maintenance began. It left two days before the maintenance ended. It's unknown what work it did while there.

Watkins described another episode on Nov. 5, 2016, when a submarine cable linking Persian Gulf nations experienced outages in Iran. Hours later, the Yantar left Oman and headed to an area about 60 miles west of the Iranian port city of Bushehr, where the cable runs ashore. Connectivity was restored just hours before the Yantar arrived on Nov. 9. The boat stayed stationary over the site for several more days.

Despite the relatively few publicly known incidents of sabotage, most outages are due to accidents.

Two hundred or so cable-related outages take place each year. Most occur when ship anchors snap cables or commercial fishing equipment snags the lines. Others break during tsunamis, earthquakes and other natural disasters.

But even accidental cuts can harm U.S. military operations.

In 2008 in Iraq, unmanned U.S. surveillance flights nearly screeched to a halt one day at Balad Air Base not because of enemy mortar attacks or dusty winds. An anchor had snagged a cable hundreds of miles away from the base, situated in the “Sunni Triangle” northwest of Baghdad.

The severed cable had linked controllers based in the United States with unmanned aircraft flying intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance missions for coalition forces in the skies over Iraq, explained Ret. Air Force Col. Dave Lujan of Hampton, Virginia.

“Say you’re operating a remote-controlled car and all of a sudden you can’t control it,” said Lujan, who was deputy commander of the 332nd Expeditionary Operations Group at the base when the little-publicized outage lasted for two to three days. “That’s a big impact,” he said, describing how U.S. pilots had to fly the missions instead.

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HEADLINE **03/30 Study: plastic swallowed w/ every meal**

SOURCE <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-5563435/How-swallow-114-pieces-plastic-meal.html>

GIST We could be swallowing more than 100 tiny plastic particles with every main meal, a shocking study reveals.

The plastic, which can come from soft furnishings and synthetic fabrics, gets into household dust which falls on plates and is consumed.

UK scientists made the discovery after putting Petri dishes containing sticky dust traps on the table next to dinner plates in three homes at meal times.

Up to 14 pieces of plastic were found in the Petri dishes at the end of a 20-minute meal – the equivalent of 114 plastic fibres falling on the average dinner plate given their much larger size.

The scientists, from Heriot-Watt University in Edinburgh, concluded that the average person swallows up to 68,415 potentially dangerous plastic fibres a year simply through sitting down to eat.

The study confirms the alarming spread of plastic in the air which was recently uncovered by the Daily Mail.

An investigation by this newspaper, which has run a longstanding Turn The Tide on Plastic campaign, revealed earlier this month that fillets of fresh fish from open counters at major supermarkets contain up to 139 pieces of plastic for every 240g.

The particles were too large to have passed from the gut into the flesh of the fish so the University of Portsmouth scientists who oversaw our investigation believe the plastics came from airborne contamination.

Experts warn that ingesting plastic particles can damage lungs, poison kidneys and interfere with hormones.

It had previously been thought the risk to human health was largely from eating fish polluted by plastic waste in the oceans. But the Edinburgh scientists set out to compare plastic fibres found in mussels with

	<p>the amount in the average household meal.</p> <p>They found fewer than two microplastics in each mussel, which could be linked to the marine environment, and conclude that the average person can expect to consume 100 plastic particles a year through eating the shellfish.</p> <p>But they will ingest anything from 13,731 to 68,415 fibres in a year during meals because of household dust.</p> <p>Dr Ted Henry, senior author of the study and professor of environmental toxicology at Heriot-Watt University, said: ‘These results may be surprising to some people who may expect the plastic fibres in seafood to be higher than those in household dust.</p> <p>‘We do not know where these fibres come from, but it is likely to be inside the home and the wider environment.’</p> <p>The plastic fibres found in the home-cooked meals did not come from the food or the cooking environment, but household dust, the authors believe.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/30 Dalai Lama caught in middle India, China
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/03/30/asia/india-tibet-china-dalai-lama-intl/index.html
GIST	<p>New Delhi (CNN)Is India distancing itself from the Tibetan exile community six decades after the Dalai Lama fled to the country?</p> <p>That's the question many are asking after celebrations to mark the 60th anniversary of the spiritual leader's arrival in India have been moved or canceled, as Beijing and New Delhi seek to reboot ties in the wake of a tense year in bilateral relations.</p> <p>From March 31, Tibetans in India are holding a year-long "Thank You India" event as a prelude to celebrating the Dalai Lama's time in the country and to show gratitude to the Indian government and its people for their support of Tibetan refugees.</p> <p>But what should have been a moment of joy has been overshadowed by a flurry of speculation about the future of the exiled Tibetan community -- and especially the freedom they have enjoyed in India since the late 1950s.</p> <p>"It looks like the Government of India is changing its policy," said Claude Apri, an India-based expert on Tibet and author of several books on Tibetan issues.</p> <p>After an unsuccessful revolt against the Chinese occupation of Tibet, the 14th Dalai Lama, Tibet's spiritual leader, fled the capital Lhasa in secret.</p> <p>He crossed into India on March 31, 1959 and has made India his home ever since.</p> <p>A living god-like figure for millions of Buddhists, India officially calls him "the most esteemed and honored guest of India." China accuses of him of being a "a wolf in monk's robes," engaged in "anti-China separatist activities under the cloak of religion with the aim of breaking Tibet away from China."</p> <p>In early March, news emerged that the Indian Foreign Secretary penned a classified advisory asking senior leaders and government officials to refrain from attending events planned by exiled Tibetans in India. The note reportedly said the events, in March and April, came at a "very sensitive time in the context of India's relations with China."</p>

A week later, the Tibetan Central Administration -- the government in exile -- decided to move a major cultural event that was originally planned to be held in the Indian capital New Delhi with a speech by the Dalai Lama, to Dharamsala, where the exiled community is based.

A Dalai Lama-led inter-faith prayer ceremony was also scrapped, the Tibetan Central Administration said, as was the Seventh World Parliamentarians Convention on Tibet that was meant to be held on April 26-28 in Delhi.

The Tibetan Parliament-in-exile, the organizers of the convention, declined to give a reason for the cancellation of the high-profile event.

Sonam Dagpo, a spokesman for the Tibetan Central Administration said that there has been no direct communication from the Indian authorities and that the plans were changed out of respect to the Indian government's position.

"Once we (heard about the note), we decided to shift the venue," he said. "There are no ill feelings. If you weigh what the Indian government has done for us, that is far more than this."

The Indian foreign ministry issued a statement this month saying there is no change in India's position, and that "His Holiness is accorded all freedom to carry out his religious activities in India."

Recent statements from Beijing and Delhi show the two governments are seeking to mend ties after a turbulent year in bilateral relations.

Last year, troops from both countries were involved in a months-long border standoff in Doklam, up in the Himalayas near Bhutan.

India boycotted China's flagship summit in Beijing last May on its Belt and Road Initiative, an ambitious global trade plan. The Dalai Lama's visit in April to the northeastern Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh -- a territory that China claims as its own -- also sparked diplomatic tensions between Beijing and New Delhi.

At a press conference last month, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi said the two countries leaders "have developed a strategic vision for the future of our relations: the Chinese 'dragon' and the Indian 'elephant' must not fight each other, but dance with each other."

India's Foreign Secretary Vijay Gokhale visited Beijing in February, where he said both sides noted the need to "address differences on the basis of mutual respect and sensitivity to each other's concerns, interests and aspirations."

Manoj Joshi, a fellow at the Observer Research Foundation, said India is keen to keep ties balanced, especially with China growing closer to rival Pakistan.

Tibetans may be the big losers if India and China do mend things up, said Tshering Chonzom Bhutia, associate fellow at the Institute of Chinese Studies in New Delhi.

"If policymakers in India continue to be guided by the perception that serving up the Tibet issue on the diplomatic plate to China is the most efficient way to improve India-China relations, then we can anticipate more restrictions on Tibetan activities in India," she said.

Against the backdrop of China's rising dominance in India's neighboring countries, Tibet is a minor issue for Delhi, said Tsering Shakya, a Tibet scholar and research chair at the University of British Columbia in Canada.

"India is sensing Tibet's appeal in the West is declining," Shakya said, freeing Delhi to play to Beijing's feelings on the issue.

	<p>Adding to all this uncertainty is the confusion of what happens after the Dalai Lama dies.</p> <p>In 2011, in a move to democratize the system of government, the Dalai Lama gave up his political and administrative powers and chose to remain as just a spiritual leader, but he is still far and away the community's most influential figure.</p> <p>The 82-year-old recently decided to cut down on his travels citing age and exhaustion. It remains unclear who will be the next Dalai Lama, how that person will be picked, or whether there will be another Dalai Lama.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/30 Judge: coffee requires cancer warning
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/Health/wireStory/california-judge-rules-coffee-requires-cancer-warning-54117433?cid=clicksource_26_2_hero_headlines_headlines_hed
GIST	<p>Scientists haven't rendered a verdict on whether coffee is good or bad for you but a California judge has. He says coffee sellers in the state should have to post cancer warnings.</p> <p>The culprit is a chemical produced in the bean roasting process that is a known carcinogen and has been at the heart of an eight-year legal struggle between a tiny nonprofit group and Big Coffee.</p> <p>The Council for Education and Research on Toxics wanted the coffee industry to remove acrylamide from its processing — like potato chip makers did when it sued them years ago — or disclose the danger in ominous warning signs or labels. The industry, led by Starbucks Corp., said the level of the chemical in coffee isn't harmful and any risks are outweighed by benefits.</p> <p>Los Angeles Superior Court Judge Elihu Berle said Wednesday that the coffee makers hadn't presented the proper grounds at trial to prevail.</p> <p>"While plaintiff offered evidence that consumption of coffee increases the risk of harm to the fetus, to infants, to children and to adults, defendants' medical and epidemiology experts testified that they had no opinion on causation," Berle wrote in his proposed ruling. "Defendants failed to satisfy their burden of proving ... that consumption of coffee confers a benefit to human health."</p> <p>The suit was brought against Starbucks and 90 companies under a controversial law passed by California voters in 1986 that has been credited with culling cancer-causing chemicals from myriad products and also criticized for leading to quick settlement shakedowns.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/01 Police stepping up E-DUI patrols
SOURCE	http://q13fox.com/2018/04/01/put-down-that-phone-police-stepping-up-e-dui-patrols-in-april/
GIST	<p>OLYMPIA, Wash. — Tempted to grab your cellphone while behind the wheel? Don't!</p> <p>Beginning Monday, over 150 extra law enforcement agencies will be looking for distracted drivers. The statewide initiative goes through April 14, according to the Washington Traffic Safety Commission.</p> <p>Under the "Driving Under the Influence of Electronics" (E-DUI) law, drivers may not hold cell phones or watch videos while they are driving, stopped in traffic, or at a stop light. This includes tablets, laptops, games, or any hand-held electronic devices. The law restricts hands-free use to a single touch.</p> <p>"Our goal is to raise public awareness about the dangers of distracted driving," said Erika Mascorro,</p>

	<p>program manager for Washington Traffic Safety Commission. “Research shows that drivers are three times more likely to crash when talking on the phone, and 23 times more likely to crash when entering information into their phone.”</p> <p>A statewide survey of Washington drivers found that 96 percent agree that using a cell phone while driving is dangerous, 88 percent said they don’t check social media while driving and most said they do not read incoming texts. Only one percent felt comfortable being a passenger in a car with a driver who was texting.</p> <p>Nearly 1,500 drivers have been ticketed each month since Washington’s new E-DUI law began in July 2017. The first E-DUI ticket will cost drivers \$136. If the driver incurs a second ticket within five years, the fine increases to \$234.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/01 Miami: drive by shooting kills 4yr-old
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/nation-world/police-4-year-old-fatally-shot-in-miami-drive-by-shooting/
GIST	<p>MIAMI (AP) — Police say a 4-year-old girl was fatally shot in a drive-by shooting in Miami.</p> <p>In a statement, police spokesman Michael Vega said officers were called to Miami’s Liberty Square housing complex Saturday morning about a child that had been shot.</p> <p>The 4-year-old had already been taken to a hospital by her mother by the time officers arrived. Vega said the girl died at the hospital.</p> <p>Police said another child and an adult were injured at the scene by shattered glass.</p> <p>Vega said a male suspect who fled the scene later turned himself in at a police station.</p> <p>Police have not released the names of either the girl or the suspect.</p> <p>Vega said the motive for the shooting remained unclear.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/01 Austin PD bomb squad grueling toll
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/nation-world/austin-bombings-put-police-squad-under-emotional-strain/
GIST	<p>AUSTIN, Texas (AP) — After a 16-hour workday investigating the Austin bombings, police Lt. Courtney Renfro arrived home to find Amazon packages on his doorstep.</p> <p>Renfro paused, even though he had ordered the packages himself.</p> <p>Members of the Austin police bomb squad investigated a series of explosions that killed two people and injured several others over a three-week period. They also dealt with the grueling toll of chasing thousands of reports of suspicious packages, and trying to locate a suspected bomber who turned out to have no criminal history.</p> <p>Renfro told the Austin American-Statesman that the series of attacks left him “in utter shock that this was happening in our city.”</p> <p>“I have always told the guys to be prepared, but something told me it’s never going to happen in little Austin,” he said.</p>

As the bombings were occurring, bomb technicians responded to more calls during one key week than they had the entire year before. One day, Renfro said he found a fellow officer, Cpl. Jesse Carrillo, sleeping on the floor of his office.

“They were sleeping in their cars, sleeping in their offices, getting an hour here or there,” Renfro said.

Every explosion generated many more calls to police about suspicious packages or offering leads on the bomber.

“When a blast would happen, we would all have to respond,” Carrillo said. “Just as things would slow down, there would be another explosion.”

Beginning on March 2, police say 23-year-old Mark Anthony Conditt planted bombs in different parts of Austin, killing two people and severely wounding four others.

Authorities say he began by placing explosives in packages left overnight on doorsteps, killing 39-year-old Anthony Stephan House and 17-year-old musician Draylen Mason. He then rigged an explosive to a tripwire along a public trail, injuring two young men who crossed it. Finally, he sent two parcels with bombs via FedEx, one of which exploded and injured a worker at a distribution center near San Antonio.

Investigators say Conditt used one of his own devices to blow himself up as authorities approached his SUV before dawn on March 21.

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HEADLINE	04/01 Anatomy bomb investigation: ATF lab
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2018/04/01/us/atf-bomb-lab-beltsville.html
GIST	<p>BELTSVILLE, Md. — About an hour outside Washington, tucked in a cinder-block building run by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, orderly piles of charred and twisted matter are spread across a secure laboratory.</p> <p>Inside is evidence from Austin, Tex., where Mark Conditt, 23, terrorized the city for three weeks in March by setting off a half- dozen homemade explosives before blowing himself up.</p> <p>The collections in the Maryland lab look more suited to a landfill than to a secure government facility. Though law enforcement officials would not discuss specifics or allow photographs of evidence, each jumble would be tested and prodded, with technicians hoping to unlock insight into Mr. Conditt and the small but active group of people like him: America’s domestic bombers.</p> <p>Evidence from hundreds of domestic bombing cases passes through A.T.F. labs every year. A few, like the one in Austin, attract widespread attention. The majority prompt no headlines: husbands trying to kill wives with amateur car bombs, rival motorcycle gangs lobbing improvised explosive devices, a mischievous student who accidentally blows up a mailbox.</p> <p>“Each explosive investigation is going to be different,” said Matt Farr, section chief of the DNA analysis division at the laboratory here. “It’s very scene- and device-specific.”</p> <p>Few domestic bombings are the same. Deconstructing them requires a combination of logistical skill — physically analyzing explosives and their components — and creative psychology, involving analysis of the motivation and patterns of the bombers. And the digital age has made it increasingly easy to experiment with amateur devices.</p> <p>“There’s a lot of information available on the internet now,” said Doug Klapec, the chief of the arson and explosive division in Beltsville. “People used to have to go to the library and check out ‘Anarchist</p>

Cookbook.”

In the post-9/11 era, the notion of bombings has become almost inextricably linked to Islamic extremist terrorism, which the F.B.I. investigates. But the majority of bombings in the United States bear no nexus to Islamic terrorism. The evidence in those cases is sent to Beltsville, or one of its two sister labs, in Atlanta and Walnut Creek, Calif.

Since 1886, the A.T.F.’s laboratory division has been spread across those three places. Its modest staff includes chemists, forensic biologists and scientists who analyze evidence each year from thousands of fires, explosions and other crimes. In 2017, A.T.F. labs helped close 314 explosives cases.

“I don’t know that there’s a better bomb lab in the country,” Brad A. Galvan, a former A.T.F. agent who ran the bureau’s explosives unit in San Diego until 2017, said of Beltsville.

To go from a blast site to Beltsville or a similar facility, a deactivated bomb — or parts of it — is transported to one of the A.T.F. labs. Stored at the facilities in bunkers, the samples can be road maps to suspects.

“We’re going to dissect that device down to its lowest common denominator,” Mr. Galvan said. “Anything that’s used and recovered, we’re going to try and identify. It’s very manpower-intensive.”

Each piece, down to the type of tape used to hold a bomb together, helps build a profile of the suspect. Shrapnel types, a certain kind of PVC piping, spit on the back of a stamp — any could lead to the right security footage or hardware store.

“Sometimes these areas are remote enough that you’ve only got one Lowe’s or one Home Depot in the whole area,” Mr. Klapac said.

In one instance, Mr. Klapac said, investigators found a suspect through DNA that his girlfriend had left on the cork of a wine bottle. The bottle had been filled with gasoline and put into a gift basket, which detonated when handled.

“It’s only limited by your imagination and the size of the container you want to put it into,” Mr. Galvan said of improvised bombs.

Pipe bombs remain the typical case, Mr. Klapac said. Most bombings use what is called a low explosive, something like black powder, instead of a high explosive like dynamite. Most are one-offs aimed at specific targets, not serial bombings.

The macabre mentality of multiple bombings can be gripping, Mr. Klapac said.

“Most serial bombers take their time,” he said. “There’s a lot of psychological components.”

Crucial to catching a bomber like Mr. Conditt is finding a pattern.

“As you do more and more things in a bomb, you create more and more of a signature,” Mr. Klapac said.

The A.T.F. maintains a database known as the Bomb Arson Tracking System, or BATS, where every detail of every domestic bomb in the United States is supposed to be logged. It can help investigators connect cases committed by the same person, even years apart.

Historically given limited resources, the A.T.F. has at times struggled to keep up with the volume of requests that enter its lab system.

“We have so much work that we have to turn some cases away,” Mr. Klapac said.

Current and former agents and officials at the agency lament its political handicaps — as the broker of the country’s gun regulations, it has been hamstrung by the powerful gun lobby — and the A.T.F.’s tendency to work in the shadow of bigger agencies like the F.B.I., which has its own bomb division.

A memorandum of understanding between the two agencies, brokered by the Justice Department, helps guide jurisdiction of bombing investigations. But those guidelines have pitfalls.

“The biggest time we butt heads is when you have domestic terrorism. What really is that?” said Mr. Klapec, noting the debate that emerged about whether Mr. Conditt should be considered a domestic terrorist. “Is everything domestic terrorism?”

Law enforcement officials have said Mr. Conditt should not be labeled a terrorist because he did not appear to be motivated by hate.

But for the city terrorized by him, Mr. Conditt’s actions qualify. “There is no mistaking the fear these attacks inflicted on an entire city,” the editorial board of The Austin American-Statesman wrote the morning after he killed himself. “That makes this terrorism.”

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HEADLINE	04/01 Police: fatal shooting near Seattle Center
SOURCE	http://mynorthwest.com/944044/police-investigate-fatal-shooting-near-seattle-center/
GIST	SEATTLE (AP) — Police are investigating a fatal shooting near Seattle Center. Authorities say witnesses called 911 just after 2:10 a.m. Sunday to report gunshots in the Lower Queen Anne neighborhood. Officers found a 21-year-old man shot in the head and provided first aid until medics arrived and pronounced him dead.
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HEADLINE	03/29 French police arrest driver aiming car
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/france-car-attack-soldiers-varces-allieres-et-risset-barracks-isere-manhunt/
GIST	PARIS -- A man shouted death threats from his car window at several groups of French soldiers out for a Thursday morning jog in the French Alps, then tried to run two of them over, a military spokesman said. Col. Benoit Brulot, a French Army spokesman, said the driver circled the military barracks in Varcès-Allières-et-Risset, in the southeastern Isère region, shouting at groups of soldiers. He returned later and tried to hit the two soldiers with his car before making a quick getaway. The National Police said in a brief statement on Twitter that an individual had been arrested in connection with the incident in the city of Grenoble, not far from Varcès-Allières-et-Risset. The police said they were not treating the incident as terrorism yet, but the motivation remained unclear. Brulot said that none of the soldiers, from the 27th Mountain Infantry Brigade, was injured. Security sources told French news agency AFP that the suspect shouted threats at the soldiers in both French and Arabic before returning to take aim at them with his car. AFP said the man was driving a car with false license plates when he drove at the soldiers. Authorities were on high alert as the incident occurred one week after an Islamic extremist shot at police returning from a jog in southern France, before taking hostages in a supermarket in an attack that claimed four lives. Brulot said several of the soldiers were questioned Thursday morning by gendarmes in nearby Grenoble.

	The motives for the attempted attack were unclear.
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HEADLINE	03/29 Parkland shooter brother gets probation
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/alleged-parkland-shooters-brother-gets-probation-for-trespassing-at-marjory-stoneman-douglas/
GIST	<p>FORT LAUDERDALE, Fla. — The brother of the suspected Florida high school gunman pleaded no contest Thursday to trespassing on the campus where the deadly rampage occurred and was sentenced to time served and six months of probation.</p> <p>Circuit Judge Melinda Kirsch Brown also ordered Zachary Cruz, 18, to enroll in therapy, wear an ankle bracelet and said he cannot possess firearms or ammunition. The judge also said Zachary Cruz must be tested to make sure he isn't consuming drugs or alcohol and must stay at least 1 mile from Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School during probation. He can never visit the school again and must not contact any victims or their families.</p> <p>He was arrested March 19 after police found him skateboarding at Stoneman Douglas after school, 33 days after his 19-year-old brother, Nikolas Cruz, killed 17 students and staff members and wounded 17 others during a Valentine's Day shooting. Broward sheriff's deputies say Zachary Cruz had told him not to come on campus, but his attorney, Joseph Kimok, denied that.</p> <p>Zachary Cruz had spent the last 10 days in custody on \$500,000 bond ordered by a different judge. The typical bond in Broward County for trespassing, a second-degree misdemeanor, is \$25.</p> <p>But this was not a typical trespassing case. Cruz, shackled at the wrists and ankles and wearing a tan prison jumpsuit, was led into court by six deputies Thursday as numerous reporters and TV cameras looked on.</p> <p>Prosecutor Sarahnell Murphy announced a plea deal had been reached, the conditions were read and the judge asked if he understood. He softly replied, "Yes, ma'am." After the judge accepted his plea and pronounced sentence, Kimok read an apology from Cruz, saying he was sorry if he scared anyone by visiting the school.</p> <p>After the hearing, Kimok called Zachary Cruz's 10-day detention on \$500,000 bond on a trespassing charge "immoral and unconstitutional." He said there is no doubt that was done simply because of who his brother is. He said no one else would have been arrested.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/29 When govt. lies about you in court
SOURCE	http://www.weeklystandard.com/the-firestarter-what-happens-when-the-government-lies-about-you-in-court/article/2012095
GIST	<p>Is there a hole in our justice system where corruption is allowed to fester? Yes.</p> <p>Sixty years ago, John Leo Brady was tried for murder in a Maryland court. Brady never denied helping to plan a robbery with his accomplice, Donald Boblit, but insisted that Boblit had pulled the trigger when the scheme went awry. Brady's lawyer argued that his client should therefore be sentenced to life in prison, not death. The jury disagreed and voted to execute him. It was only after Boblit himself was convicted and sentenced to death that Brady's lawyer learned that the prosecutor had intentionally kept hidden Boblit's admission to the crime.</p> <p>Ruling on Brady's appeal, the Maryland Court of Appeals agreed that the suppression of exculpatory evidence was a 14th Amendment due-process violation, and remanded the case to the trial court on the</p>

question of punishment. In 1963, the Supreme Court affirmed in *Brady v. Maryland* that exculpatory evidence withheld from the defense by the prosecution violates constitutional protections. Ever since then "Brady violations" have resulted in sanctions against prosecutors and police, as well as overturned criminal convictions.

But what happens when the government withholds exculpatory evidence during the prosecution of a civil lawsuit against an individual or company? Nothing, apparently.

With Brady deemed to apply only to criminal cases, no specific case law punishes a government lawyer for failing to disclose evidence that would've been helpful to a civil defendant. If there were, then last year the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals might not have denied a motion by Sierra Pacific Industries, a California forest products company, to set aside a consequential settlement it had made in 2012 with the U.S. Department of Justice. For that matter, if there had been a civil equivalent of Brady, there probably wouldn't have been a settlement in the first place.

* * *

In 2009, the Justice Department's Eastern District of California filed a lawsuit against Sierra Pacific Industries (and some minor defendants) for damages stemming from a 2007 forest fire in California's Sierra Nevadas. The fire burned about 65,000 acres of forest, most of them national lands. The suit was based on an origin-and-cause report filed by Joshua White, an investigator from the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (Cal Fire), that claimed a tractor operated by SPI's logging subcontractor had struck a rock, generating a spark that ignited some forest duff and then turned into a conflagration.

California filed a separate suit against SPI but signed a joint prosecution agreement with DOJ, allowing the two government agencies to prepare cooperatively. The only substantial difference between the two suits was the amount they sought in damages. The state of California wanted about \$10 million. The feds wanted nearly a \$1 billion. Which seemed excessive, since the total value of the land was about \$25 million and the costs of fighting the fire were less than \$10 million. The outsized damages were just the first sign that something was very wrong with the government's case.

Sierra Pacific Industries sounds like a big, faceless corporation, but in reality it's a family-owned company, founded more than six decades ago as a tiny sawmill by Archie Aldis "Red" Emerson, who'd survived a truly Dickensian childhood by outworking everyone around him. Now one of the country's most successful lumber suppliers, SPI fought back as if its future was at stake. Because it was.

Over the course of nearly three years of discovery, Emerson's lawyers in Sacramento deposed witnesses and produced evidence that comprehensively dismantled the investigator's report. They found that White and his counterpart from the United States Forest Service had failed to follow established investigative protocols, fabricated inculpatory evidence, hid exculpatory evidence, invented both a false theory of the fire and a false ignition point for the fire, lied under oath, and intentionally disregarded the possible involvement of a young man named Ryan Bauer, who started volunteering unsolicited alibis and statements which turned out to be contradicted by facts and subsequent statements.

Whether or not Bauer had had anything to do with the fire, the circumstantial evidence of his involvement appeared so compelling that SPI's lead attorney, William Warne, planned to put him on the stand as a dramatic symbol of the government's flawed investigation. That Cal Fire's White had deliberately ignored Bauer would underscore for the jury how poorly he had done his job—unless, that is, his job had been to target a deep-pocketed company instead of someone the state would be on the hook for incarcerating. (There was also a known arsonist in the area at the time of the fire. White ignored him, too.)

But just before trial, Assistant United States Attorney Kelli Taylor filed motions warranting to the court that there was not a "shred of physical evidence" to suggest another party might have been liable, and asked the court to preclude SPI from turning the trial into an "arson witch hunt." Judge Kimberly Mueller assented. SPI would not, she ruled, be allowed "to argue that someone else started the fire."

Now Red Emmerson faced a stark choice. Where victory once seemed certain, the odds had fallen to about 50-50—not good enough to risk possibly losing his company. Reluctantly, he and his sons George and Mark, who now ran SPI, agreed in July 2012 to transfer 22,500 acres of California forest owned by SPI to the United States Forest Service, and pay \$50 million. The DOJ valued the settlement at \$122.5 million and celebrated it as the "largest ever received by the United States for damages caused by a wildfire."

Emmerson explained that what made the decision to settle somewhat easier was knowing he would still get his day in court, as long as the California judge didn't issue a similar ruling.

Warne and his team were prepping for that trial when he got a call from Ryan Bauer's father, Edwin, who "wanted to gloat," Warne says, "about the settlement." Then Bauer mentioned "the bribe."

"What are you talking about?" Warne asked.

In late spring of 2012, officials from the Justice Department went to serve a subpoena on Bauer's father, Edwin. During the encounter, Edwin claimed that Warne had approached the Bauers' attorney and offered them money in exchange for Ryan Bauer admitting to starting the fire. Edwin claimed that his attorney had presented this offer to the Bauers and that the Bauers had refused it.

The DOJ investigators immediately contacted the Bauers' lawyer—but he denied that any such thing had happened, and proved it to their satisfaction. This lawyer later told Warne he'd naturally assumed Warne had been informed about the Bauers' allegation. But he hadn't been. No one from DOJ ever mentioned it to the defense, or the court.

Warne was shocked but not surprised. After all, AUSA Taylor hadn't dropped the suit even after seeing it was based on a dishonest investigation. Now she had withheld knowledge of a false accusation made by a percipient witness, too.

The disclosure would have contradicted Taylor's assertion that there was not a "shred" of evidence pointing to anyone else, and presumably would have inclined Judge Mueller to allow the defense to put Bauer on the stand. In which case, the federal trial would have proceeded. And given what soon happened in California, the verdict can be reasonably supposed.

Scheduled for July 2013, the California trial never took place. After reading hundreds of pages of motions, Superior Court Judge Leslie Nichols dismissed the lawsuit, calling it "corrupt and tainted," and ordered Cal Fire to pay the defendants \$32 million (the largest discovery sanction ever ordered by a judge against a government agency) for its "egregious and reprehensible conduct."

While the state ruling didn't affect the federal suit, Judge Nichols's finding of pervasive misconduct confirmed the defendants' belief that the prosecutors had perpetrated a "fraud on the court," for which there was ample precedent to set aside the settlement.

Warne filed a motion with the district court, which dismissed it, then appealed to the 9th Circuit, which ruled "the district court correctly concluded that Brady does not generally apply in civil proceedings . . . the government did not have a specific duty to disclose the false bribe information, beyond its standard discovery obligations."

Of course, those standard discovery obligations had also applied to Brady's prosecutor in 1958, and yet the Supreme Court decided 7-2 that such obligations would be honored more diligently if the prosecution faced sanctions for failing to abide by an inscription carved into the walls of the Department of Justice, as quoted by Justice William O. Douglas in his Brady opinion: "The United States wins its point whenever justice is done its citizens in the courts."

By that reasoning, it is nothing less than an injustice that "courts" doesn't refer also to civil courts.

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HEADLINE	03/31 ICE arrests farmworkers sparking fears
SOURCE	http://www.latimes.com/local/lanow/la-me-farmworkers-ice-20180316-htmlstory.html
GIST	<p>Jesus Aceves was driving three of his fellow farmworkers to the tomato fields in the early-morning darkness when he saw lights flash behind him.</p> <p>ICE agents pulled him over and asked for his license, registration and insurance and, most forebodingly, whether the men were in the United States legally.</p> <p>Aceves and his passengers were taken to an immigrant detention facility. But none of them had been the target of Immigration and Customs Enforcement.</p> <p>Three of the men had no criminal records. The most serious blots on the 44-year-old Aceves' record were several convictions — the most recent in 2012 — for driving without a license.</p> <p>That morning, an ICE spokesman said, agents went to a Kern County residence where they thought an immigration target lived. One of the men who got into Aceves' car matched that person's description, he said. The ICE agents followed.</p> <p>The arrests were part of a larger sweep in California's agricultural heartland that has sent fear through the Central Valley, where for generations, immigrants here — both legally and illegally — have picked crops. In some fields, almost all of the foreign workers are in the country without legal status.</p> <p>While many immigrants have been on edge since President Trump vowed a crackdown on illegal immigration, the recent sweeps have been particularly concerning because they included the arrests of people not specifically targeted by ICE.</p> <p>The concern extends to farmers, who fear more sweeps will drive away labor at a time when some are struggling to get enough workers to pick the crops.</p> <p>Manuel Cunha Jr., president of Nisei Farmers League, which represents agricultural employers and their workers throughout the state, said farmers are worried about losing trusted workers. He said the increasingly tense relationship between the Trump administration and California, which declared itself a "sanctuary state," has upped the anxiety.</p> <p>"They're not going to be replaced by American workers," Cunha said. "Don't punish the businesses. We're not the ones that came up with the sanctuary state."</p> <p>In the February sweep across the Central Valley, 232 people were arrested. Of those, 180 were either convicted criminals, had been issued a final order of removal or had been previously removed from the U.S. and returned illegally.</p> <p>The United Farm Workers of America identified at least 26 farmworkers arrested in Kern, Tulare and Madera counties, most of them stopped before dawn on their way to work.</p> <p>ICE Director Thomas Homan has said that immigrants who have entered the U.S. illegally "should be afraid."</p> <p>He warned that California's so-called sanctuary policies, which limit the cooperation between local and federal law enforcement, give the agency no choice but to make arrests in neighborhoods and at work sites. That leads to the arrests of other immigrants in the country illegally who are not intended targets, he said.</p> <p>"This is a prime example of how sanctuary policies, which have pushed ICE out of jails, force our officers to conduct more enforcement in the community — which poses increased risks for law enforcement and the public," Homan said in a statement to The Times. "It also increases the likelihood that ICE will</p>

encounter other illegal aliens who previously weren't on our radar. It is nonsensical to demand that ICE solely focus on criminals, while simultaneously preventing ICE from arresting criminal aliens inside the secure confines of local jails.”

Win Eaton, an attorney in Bakersfield, is representing some of the detained farmworkers in immigration court.

“It’s just terrible that these people are going to be used as pawns,” he said.

Dozens of workers have fled since immigration agents began checking employee records at San Joaquin Valley farms. ICE said 77 businesses — in the jurisdiction that includes Northern California, Hawaii, Guam and Saipan — were served with employment authorization audit notices in January.

Farmers have struggled in recent years with labor shortages. A summer 2017 survey by the California Farm Bureau Federation showed that 55% of responding farmers experienced shortages, with problems most acute among those whose crops require intensive hand labor, such as tree fruits and grapes.

Phil Martin, professor emeritus of agricultural and resource economics at UC Davis, said while that’s true, it would take a huge, targeted immigration operation to really put a dent in the agricultural industry. That’s because production requires so many workers and the industry is using more and more people from a temporary guestworker program.

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HEADLINE	04/01 London murder rate overtakes NYC
SOURCE	http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-5566689/London-murder-rate-overtakes-New-York-time-including-11-killings-just-16-days.html
GIST	<p>London's murder rate has overtaken New York City's for the first time ever as the twelfth person has been killed in just 19 days.</p> <p>February marked the first month in history books that London had more murders than the American city with a total of 15 homicides. Out of the 15 killed, nine were aged 30 or younger.</p> <p>In March, there were 22 murders, which is likely to match if not beat out New York's numbers.</p> <p>The murder epidemic continued on Sunday when a man in his twenties was fatally stabbed after leaving a bar in Wandsworth, marking the 12th person to be murdered in London in 19 days.</p> <p>According to a report by the Sunday Times, New York City's murder statistics have decreased by 87 per cent since the 1990s.</p> <p>Meanwhile, London's rate has grown by nearly 40 per cent in just three years, not including deaths caused by terrorist attacks.</p> <p>Although New York last year had nearly double the number of murders than London, experts are concerned the gap is steadily closing.</p> <p>Officials are concerned about the uptick in fatal stabbings, fearing there is a dangerous surge in knife crime.</p> <p>Last year there was a total of 80 fatal stabbings in the capital - the most in almost a decade. And official figures show that 2017 was the worst year for knife deaths among young people since at least 2002.</p> <p>Forty-six people aged 25 or under were stabbed to death in London, up by 21 compared with the previous year, according to police figures.</p>

	<p>The victim's death comes as London's murder rates have overtaken New York City 's numbers for the first time ever.</p> <p>The man's death on Sunday marks the 12th murder in London in 19 days.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/01 Virginia: university bomb threat arrest
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/marymount-university-evacuated-after-bomb-threat-student-in-custody-2018-03-31/
GIST	<p>The campus at Marymount University in Arlington, Virginia, has reopened after authorities investigated a bomb threat made on social media. One student was taken into custody Sunday, and police said there was no evidence that a bomb was on campus.</p> <p>The university was evacuated Sunday morning, with those on campus asked to go across the street. The university was on Easter break during the incident.</p> <p>Canine units with the Arlington County Police Department swept the campus as a precaution, but it was later reopened and the community was cleared to return.</p> <p>"We want to express our sincere appreciation to the law enforcement officers who responded promptly to protect the safety of our campus community," Eric Hols, the university's director of campus safety, said in a statement. "We will continue to cooperate fully as their investigation continues."</p> <p>The Arlington County Police Department reminded the community that while it was April Fool's Day, threats of violence are not a joke.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/01 Chicago police: drop in violent crimes
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/violent-crimes-drop-fewer-shootings-chicago-police-2018/
GIST	<p>CHICAGO -- New numbers released by the Chicago Police Department show a big drop in violent crimes across the city, CBS Chicago reports. This March had 17 percent fewer shootings than March 2017.</p> <p>Overall since the beginning of the year, shootings are down 25 percent from this time last year.</p> <p>According to Chicago Police, murders are down 22 percent.</p> <p>And total citywide crime is down 15 percent this year.</p> <p>The department says 1,900 guns have been taken off the streets.</p> <p>Chicago Police Superintendent Eddie Johnson released a statement that says in part "our work is far from over. We will continue our hiring plan and identify ways we can integrate technology into the crime fight."</p>
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HEADLINE	04/02 Atlanta: drive-by shooting kills 3yr-old
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/three-year-old-killed-in-drive-by-shooting-just-outside-atlanta-dekalb-county/
GIST	<p>ATLANTA -- Police near Atlanta are investigating after a three-year-old boy was shot and killed late Sunday night, reports CBS Atlanta affiliate WGCL-TV. The child's mother said a grey Dodge Charger</p>

	<p>pulled up to her vehicle at a stop light just before midnight, and the driver showed what she thought was a paintball gun.</p> <p>She told police she heard a pop, but drove on.</p> <p>"She heard a real gunshot. She didn't think anything of it," DeKalb County Police Chief James Conroy told the station.</p> <p>The suspect fled the scene, and the mother drove on, then noticed her child wasn't breathing. The boy was transported to a hospital, where he was later pronounced dead.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/01 Mexico: prison riot fire kills 7
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/police-die-quell-prison-riot-mexico-54160759?
GIST	<p>Six police officers died Sunday from smoke inhalation after prisoners started a fire while resisting an effort to transfer dangerous inmates out of a prison in Mexico's Gulf coast state of Veracruz, authorities said.</p> <p>Veracruz Gov. Miguel Angel Yunes said a seventh person died but it was unclear if he was an inmate or prison guard.</p> <p>Yunes said four "highly dangerous" inmates had been helping run criminal networks in the area around the La Toma prison in the town of Amatlan de los Reyes, so officials had decided to transfer them to a maximum-security federal prison.</p> <p>Yunes did not name the criminal gang involved, but the area was long dominated by Zetas cartel.</p> <p>When local police, in support of state police, went into the prison to get the four inmates for transfer, they were apparently ambushed by prisoners, who blocked their escape and lit a fire that suffocated six officers, the governor said.</p> <p>"The six police officers were attacked and were enclosed in an area with no exit. The inmates started a fire, and with the smoke, they caused the asphyxiation and death of the six police officers," Yunes said.</p> <p>The seventh dead man was not wearing a uniform, and could have been an inmate or guard, Yunes said. His body was being examined.</p> <p>Seven inmates were injured, two seriously, and 15 police officers were hospitalized, one with serious injuries, authorities said.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/30 Group: transgender killed; 7th this year
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2018/03/30/us/transgender-woman-killed-baton-rouge.html
GIST	<p>A young black transgender woman was shot dead in a Louisiana motel this week, becoming at least the seventh transgender woman known to have been killed in the United States this year, rights advocates said.</p> <p>The woman, Amia Tyrae, 28, was killed Monday at about 1:15 a.m. at a motel on Airline Highway, according to the Baton Rouge Police Department.</p> <p>Dr. William Clark, the East Baton Rouge Parish coroner, ruled Ms. Tyrae's death a homicide, caused by a gunshot wound to the chest.</p> <p>The Police Department said Friday night that Dedrick Butler, 22, of Denham Springs, La., had been</p>

arrested in the killing. He was charged with second-degree murder, possession of a firearm by a convicted felon, and possession of a firearm with an obliterated serial number.

Between 25 to 28 transgender people were reported killed in the United States last year, the highest number in at least a decade, according to a report by the Human Rights Campaign and the Trans People of Color Coalition. The violence disproportionately affects transgender women of color.

The killing of Ms. Tyrae came less than a month after the shooting death of another transgender woman, Phylcia Mitchell, 46, outside her apartment in Cleveland on Feb. 23. Transgender women were also killed in New Mexico, Florida, New York, Massachusetts and California this year, according to data compiled by GLAAD.

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HEADLINE	04/01 UCF police chief: prevented disaster
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/03/31/us/florida-chinese-student-guns-deported/index.html
GIST	<p>(CNN)A Chinese college student who made no threats but had alarmed a roommate and a friend with his behavior and bought two semiautomatic rifles will be deported for an unrelated visa issue, University of Central Florida police said Thursday.</p> <p>Police at the Orlando school said they were first alerted by a campus official in late January that Wenliang Sun, 26, was a "student of concern," UCF police Chief Richard Beary said.</p> <p>Campus police received information that Sun had altered his appearance and his behavior was changing, the chief said. They contacted the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives and were told Sun owned an AR-15-style rifle and ammunition.</p> <p>"We know that in today's world that a person in distress who owns a high-powered firearm, we just cannot ignore that," Beary said. "We have a duty and an obligation to make sure our people are safe."</p> <p>There was "red flag after red flag," that something bad would happen, he added.</p> <p>Those red flags, the chief said, included Sun being uncommunicative with others and not leaving his room, dyeing his hair blond, paying for a fast expensive car with cash, and referring to one of his guns as a "sniper rifle."</p> <p>Beary said Sun also went to a gun range to practice with his rifle and also wouldn't return calls from authorities when they tried to notify him his immigration status was subject to change.</p> <p>But the chief acknowledged there were no comments in interviews or in reviews of his electronic devices that Sun was planning to harm anyone.</p> <p>"That's the interesting thing in this case, there were no specific threats. Reiterating that, there were no threats," Beary said.</p> <p>The chief said the red flags looked at separately might not mean much but when all of them were considered collectively they were concerning.</p> <p>"I think there was a disaster about to happen and we stopped it," the chief said.</p> <p>Sun is at a US Immigration and Customs Enforcement holding facility in Macclenny, Florida, according to ICE.</p> <p>"Under normal circumstances, it probably would not have moved that quickly," an official with Homeland Security said. "He probably would've been placed on notice, and we would have issued him a notice to</p>

appear, indicating that he would need to go before an immigration judge in order to deal with his status, or lack thereof."

The official said he didn't know when Sun would be deported.

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HEADLINE	03/31 Monroe police raid pawn shop
SOURCE	http://www.heraldnet.com/news/nw-gold-buyers-pawn-shop-raided-by-police/
GIST	<p>MONROE — On a billiards table in the center of the pawn shop's back room, police pulled up a white sheet to reveal enough probiotics, Claritin and pregnancy tests to stock a pharmacy aisle.</p> <p>Cardboard boxes full of pills, from Allegra to Zyrtec, lined the walls of the store. Many still had QFC tags.</p> <p>Monroe police believe the owner of NW Gold Buyers knew he'd been fencing thousands of dollars in shoplifted goods online over the past two years.</p> <p>On Friday morning, a half-dozen officers raided the business in a strip mall on Highway 99, the climax of a two-year investigation that led officers from the owner's defunct pawn shop in Monroe to his new storefront near Lynnwood.</p> <p>Police dumped a mound of Flonase bottles onto the floor in a back room, sifting through them for signs that they were obviously stolen.</p> <p>"Whoa!" an officer said. "The fair market value is \$2,500 for that box."</p> <p>At first they expected to be in the store all day, making an exhaustive inventory. Once they saw the scope of the task, they decided to bring all of the merchandise back to the police station, to add it up later. They picked things off shelves, off the pool table and out of the moving boxes.</p> <p>Online ads say NW Gold Buyers will pay "top dollar" for jewelry, coins, watches and silver. Search warrant papers say the owner was, in reality, often offering 12 to 20 percent of retail value for razors, medications and other items that could be concealed and stolen en mass from legitimate stores. Customers showed up to sell, not to buy. The merchandise was kept behind a locked door. The business had a core of about 20 people who would sell goods, officer Nathan Erdmann said.</p> <p>"It was all a front," Erdmann said. "At the other one, he actually had stuff for sale up front, but that wasn't what this business was about."</p> <p>The case began because of a missing vacuum cleaner. Theft prevention workers at a hardware store reported the possible theft in January 2016, and relayed that a new pawn shop in Monroe might be taking stolen goods. Erdmann studied security video from the vacuum case. He recognized the suspect as an often-homeless heroin user. He checked an online database and noticed "odd transactions that were not typical of items that would be purchased by a pawn shop," according to the search warrant affidavit.</p> <p>Rogaine, Nicorette, teeth-whitening kits, electric toothbrushes as well as memory supplements, allergy medication, routers and electric razors were standard fare. Other local businesses reported a spike in thefts of health and beauty products.</p> <p>Hints that a large-scale investigation was under way can be found in 2-year-old arrest reports. One Monroe man, then 29, admitted in 2016 to stealing electric razors to pawn so he could buy heroin. He'd made 59 transactions for more than \$7,600 at One Stop Pawn Shop over three months. He told officers he typically received 30 percent the product's worth, indicating his theft total during that time was about \$22,000.</p> <p>Police worked closely with local businesses, enlisted undercover officers from other agencies, interviewed</p>

theft suspects and used confidential informants during the course of the investigation. Thieves told police they were making a beeline to the One Stop Pawn Shop.

Police believe the goods were sold online, on Amazon or eBay.

One Stop Pawn was closing in the fall of 2016, when Erdmann paid the owner a visit. Near the end of the chat, Erdmann shared his suspicions.

“I told him that the stores in Monroe were cleaned out of many of the items that he was buying because there was so much theft,” he wrote, in the affidavit for the search warrant that was served Friday. “I told him that if he was not already closing down his business I would be coming after him and find some way to charge him, because no reasonable person could look at the things he was buying and not know (they were) stolen ... I asked if that made sense, and he acknowledged that it did.”

Even after the business was shuttered, Erdmann kept a watchful eye. He learned that the suspect would meet at night in and around Lynnwood with people wanting to sell bags of stolen goods.

A confidential informant reported being given specific lists of items to steal, including Prevagen, Viviscal, Crest 3D Luxe and Alli, an over-the-counter weight loss pill.

In February 2017, the new business was registered in a triangular strip mall on Highway 99, between Everett and Lynnwood.

Video surveillance showed people waiting in parking lots late at night for the pawn shop owner to drive up in a Mercedes to conduct business.

One confidential informant told police the owner was getting nervous, inquiring about any possible connection to Monroe and saying he’d heard there might be a rat.

Police noticed an extremely high volume of traffic into the store by a small number of people. One man made 85 sales since October 2017. A woman had more than 90 transactions during the same period. In the online database, almost all of the transactions were listed as gift cards.

The suspect “has a common practice of entering transactions as the purchase of a gift card or multiple gift cards, when it is obvious that a large amount of unknown items is actually brought in,” Erdmann wrote. “Additionally, the frequency with which the same people routinely visit the store, taking bags and bags of items in on an almost daily basis, and sometimes twice in a day, would lead any reasonable person to question whether the items were legitimately obtained.”

Police believe the store had taken in about \$428,000 in revenue.

Outside the store, officers handcuffed the owner, 22, and booked him into the Snohomish County Jail for investigation of attempted trafficking in stolen property.

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HEADLINE	03/29 Bellevue: teen arrested in mosque fire
SOURCE	http://mynorthwest.com/941490/bellevue-police-arrest-teen-in-fire-at-vacant-mosque/
GIST	<p>BELLEVUE, Wash. (AP) — Bellevue police say they’ve arrested a teenager they suspect of having started a fire at a vacant mosque.</p> <p>The Islamic Center of Eastside was closed after having been previously damaged in a January 2017 arson. It was burned again on March 21, and police said traffic camera footage showed a group of five people running from the building moments before the fire.</p>

	<p>The Bellevue Police Department said in a news release Thursday that school resource officers recognized them. Investigators located them on Tuesday and brought them in for questioning. One of the five, an 18-year-old, was identified as the primary suspect and booked into the King County Jail for investigation of first-degree arson.</p> <p>Investigators say there is no indication the fire was a hate crime or bias-related.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/30 Arrests in casino loansharking probe
SOURCE	http://komonews.com/news/local/two-arrested-in-loansharking-money-laundering-probe-at-tukwila-casino
GIST	<p>TUKWILA, Wash. -- The Washington State Gambling commission says an employee of the Macau Casino in Tukwila made high-interest loans of cash and chips to 100 customers and fellow employees for at least \$300,000.</p> <p>The same casino worker also laundered \$1.5 million through the casino, the Gambling Commission said. The amount is 10 times the worker's reported annual income, the commission said. The source of the money is under investigation.</p> <p>As a result of the investigation, the worker, a 45-year-old woman, and her 27-year-old boyfriend were arrested earlier this month and booked into jail.</p> <p>The gambling commission also suspended the license of the general manager of the casino. The manager, a 48-year-old man from Federal Way, knew about the money laundering and loansharking but didn't report the activity, the Gambling Commission says.</p> <p>Complaints had come to the Gambling Commission and Tukwila Police Department in the last two years about loansharking and money laundering at the casino.</p> <p>The investigation showed the employee was loaning cash and chips, then charging what the commission called "exorbitant interest rates." In some case, the interest rates were 10 times the maximum amount state law allows.</p> <p>The worker targeted people who had gambling problems. Many made minimum wage and had a hard time covering the monthly or weekly interest of 10 to 15 percent on the loans, the Gambling Commission said.</p> <p>The worker and her boyfriend and others "utilized fear tactics and threatened violence in order to collect on debts."</p> <p>Search warrants at the woman's home turned up a luxury vehicle, jewelry, big-screen TVs, high-end handbags and numerous smartphones, tablets and gaming platforms in the original packaging, the Gambling Commission said.</p> <p>Agents also seized more than \$45,000 in cash.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/30 Arrest in Seattle home invasion
SOURCE	http://www.king5.com/article/news/local/arrest-in-seattle-home-invasion-that-left-elderly-woman-shot-2-still-at-large/281-533717000
GIST	<p>Seattle police have arrested one suspect wanted in connection with a home invasion robbery and the shooting of an elderly woman earlier this month. Two additional suspects are still on the loose.</p>

	<p>Police arrested the 23-year-old man Friday afternoon, according to an SPD Blotter post.</p> <p>Detectives spotted the suspect at a gas station near the 500 block of S Dearborn Street.</p> <p>On March 6, an elderly couple on Renton Avenue S. had just arrived home from the store when police say two suspects walked up and asked for directions.</p> <p>The woman was shot. She was also pistol-whipped in the head by the suspects. The two teenage suspects ran off with the woman's purse with \$60 inside.</p> <p>A neighbor's surveillance camera captured a grainy photo of a red Kia Spectra.</p> <p>A few days later, a patrol officer found the Kia parked in a parking lot on the 9400 block of Rainier Avenue South. Another surveillance camera captured footage of the suspects climbing into a late model, silver Toyota Corolla Hybrid.</p> <p>One suspect is described as a light-skinned black male in his late teens, 6 feet tall, wearing a white jacket and white pants and armed with a black handgun. A second suspect is described as a light-skinned black teen, 5 feet 6 inches tall, skinny, wearing a blue jacket and dark pants. He had a mustache at the time of the attack. (It's not yet known which suspect was arrested.)</p> <p>Seattle police believe a third suspect was driving the getaway car.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/31 'Palm Sunday Massacre' gunman freed
SOURCE	http://www.foxnews.com/us/2018/03/31/palm-sunday-massacre-gunman-who-killed-10-people-in-1984-discreetly-released-from-prison.html
GIST	<p>The gunman behind the 1984 "Palm Sunday Massacre" that left 10 people dead and was considered one of New York City's largest mass shootings in decades was quietly released from prison in January.</p> <p>Christopher Thomas, 68, was released from Shawangunk Correctional Facility on Jan. 5 and is believed to be residing in Queens, NY, the New York Post reported. He was released after serving about two-thirds of his 50-year maximum sentence, good behavior and fulfilling other criteria, a New York State Department of Corrections spokesperson said.</p> <p>"The parole board did not let him out," the spokesperson said. "He had five appearances before the parole board and was denied every time. He doesn't need board approval because he served two-thirds."</p> <p>Thomas was convicted of manslaughter and sentenced to 25 to 50 years in 1985, following the massacre. He was able to avoid a murder rap because it was determined his heavy cocaine usage "contributed to his actions," the New York Post reported.</p> <p>A sole motive for the slaying was never determined.</p> <p>On Palm Sunday in 1984, Thomas shot and killed 10 people in an apartment in Brooklyn. Thomas was embroiled in a dispute with the apartment owner, convicted drug dealer Enrique Bermudez. The victims of the slaying were Bermudez's pregnant wife, another adult woman, and eight children.</p> <p>One person survived the shooting, a toddler named Christina Rivera who was adopted by a police officer who was at the scene of the slayings, The New York Times reported.</p> <p>Ray Kelly, the former commissioner of the New York Police Department [NYPD] said Thomas' "heinous crime warranted the maximum penalty."</p>

	Retired NYPD Lt. Herbert Hohmann told the New York Post that Thomas does not deserve to be free. “He doesn’t deserve to be on the street. He killed poor, innocent children,” Hohmann said.
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HEADLINE	03/29 Probing allegations Syrian war crimes
SOURCE	https://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/investigators-quietly-probe-allegations-syrian-war-crimes-n858641
GIST	<p>In a drab office building in a European capital amid the sound of humming document scanners, a team of human rights lawyers is hard at work processing thousands of documents that they say link the Syrian government to war crimes.</p> <p>The papers point to an unmistakable conclusion, according to those leading the effort: The government of Syria's President Bashar al-Assad has violated the international rules of war through attacks on civilians, torture, rape, and the use of chemical weapons, among other crimes.</p> <p>“We have stronger evidence than we had for any past conflicts, any past tribunals, any past international justice efforts,” said Chris Engels, deputy director of the Commission for International Justice and Accountability, which has been documenting human rights abuses by Syrian officials since the start of the civil war in 2011.</p> <p>According to CIJA adviser Stephen Rapp, the Syrian government meticulously documented its treatment of thousands of detainees — a product of its large bureaucracy. As a result, thousands of leaked photos mean prosecutors have far stronger evidence of war crimes than what existed to convict the Nazis at Nuremberg, said Rapp, the former U.S. ambassador-at-large for war crimes issues under President Barack Obama.</p> <p>The documents amassed so far form a “paper trail of war crimes” noteworthy for their specificity, according to Engels, who requested NBC News not reveal the location of the group's office out of concern for investigators’ safety and the security of the evidence. The documents are stored in a vault.</p> <p>The group's 140-person staff is made up of lawyers, investigators, and translators. That includes more than 40 "document hunters" in Syria whose mission is to extract material produced by the regime, authorizing the detention, torture, and execution of people for suspected anti-government activity.</p> <p>Documents identify who in the regime signed off on what, who was targeted, and why. In some cases where the documents indicate that a prisoner admitted to participating in anti-regime activity, CIJA tracked down the accused, who later said their confessions were extracted through torture.</p> <p>The organization was founded by Bill Wiley, a Canadian former war crimes investigator, as news reports began surfacing of widespread abuses by the Assad regime in 2011. It receives funding from Western countries, including the British and Canadian governments, to carry out its work.</p> <p>Added to the trove of documents is vital visual evidence: roughly 50,000 photos shot between the start of the war in 2011 and 2013, cataloging more than 6,700 victims of torture by pro-regime forces. They were taken by a forensic photographer known by the pseudonym Caesar who worked for the Syrian military and smuggled them out of the country on hard drives in 2013.</p> <p>Assad has disputed the veracity of the photos, but Human Rights Watch called the images authentic. The New York-based group confirmed the identity of 27 victims in the photos through interview with relatives, while former prisoners and defectors have corroborated the widespread torture in government prisons. In a separate analysis, the FBI confirmed a portion of the photo trove as authentic. So did a U.N. report.</p> <p>Caesar’s photos show emaciated corpses, many stripped naked, arrayed on the ground — some with</p>

gouged-out eyes, bloodied genitals, and severed fingers. Many show signs of bruises, burn marks, and gashes covering discolored skin.

Other investigators and activists have also collected testimony, images and videos documenting atrocities committed by all sides during Syria's war, a U.N. quasi-prosecutorial body has said. The team announced Monday that it is preparing case files and has engaged with war crimes investigative units of different countries including in Europe, whose courts can exercise universal jurisdiction to prosecute.

CIJA's goal is to prove government officials' individual criminal culpability, from the highest echelons in Damascus down to the provincial level. The Syrian government's formalized command-and-control structure, as well as its careful record-keeping, make that work easier.

The Syrian government is "process driven," Engels said. Directives — even those authorizing torture — were documented "to make sure that everyone does what they're supposed to be doing."

CIJA's work is logistically difficult and comes with significant risks. Over the course of the war, where rebels seized regime territory, CIJA's document hunters entered abandoned government facilities and extracted material — USBs, computer hard drives, reams of paper — that might contain evidence of war crimes.

Next they had to safely store the material, and when possible, smuggle it through checkpoints and out of Syria. Engels says no one directly employed by CIJA was ever killed in the process, but people who worked closely with the team were.

Once the documents are ferried out of Syria, the rest of the CIJA team sifts through them to build cases for future criminal prosecutions.

Despite what CIJA and other investigators consider to be clear and overwhelming evidence of war crimes by Assad's government, the regime remains more firmly entrenched than at any other point in the war due in large part to the support of Russia, Iran and Iran-backed Lebanese militia Hezbollah.

Now a concern among human rights lawyers pursuing a case against Assad's government is that victims of the regime will never see officials held to account.

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HEADLINE	03/31 Violence threatens Mexico tourism
SOURCE	https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/world/2018/03/31/mexico-tourist-fears-violence-cancun-los-cabos/471115002/
GIST	<p>PLAYA DEL CARMEN, Mexico — Tourists taking the ferry from this tourist town to the island of Cozumel now walk down a wharf lined with police, heavily armed soldiers and bomb-sniffing dogs.</p> <p>Those safeguards came after a Feb. 21 explosion ripped through one of the ferries, injuring 24 people, including five Americans. Explosives were later found on another ferry owned by the same company.</p> <p>"It's something that makes you feel safer," Roberto Cintrón, president of the Cancún hotel owners' association, said about the soldiers and security after a recent ferry ride to Cozumel. "It's the complete opposite situation of the insecurity many people think of."</p> <p>Numerous reports about crime and tourist tragedies have made recent headlines as the violence plaguing this country erupts in cities popular with foreign visitors.</p> <p>Incidents causing concern in Cancún and outlying Quintana Roo state range from bars allegedly serving adulterated liquor to unsuspecting tourists to police targeting visitors in rental cars for bribes.</p>

A vacationing Iowa family of four was found dead March 23 in a condo in Tulum on the Caribbean coast. Authorities suspect the cause was a gas leak from a faulty water heater

Violence in resort cities such as Cancún, Playa del Carmen (in Quintana Roo state) and Los Cabos resembles the rest of the country, but it threatens Mexico's lucrative tourism industry.

"The common thread in Los Cabos and Quintana Roo is the public security system had been totally dismantled," said Francisco Rivas, director of the National Citizen Observatory, which monitors security issues in Mexico. "There were prosecutor's offices that didn't investigate and police that couldn't prevent or react to crime."

Analysts offer a variety of explanations for the rising crime across Mexico, from drug cartels to the U.S. opioid crisis prompting cartels to switch from growing marijuana to producing heroin.

Mexico had the most murders on record in 2017, with 29,158 homicides. The homicide rate in the first two months of 2018 was already up 21% over the same period last year.

The U.S. State Department in January issued a strict travel advisory for five Mexican states, including Guerrero, home to Acapulco and Ixtapa. The "do not travel to" advisory put the states of Sinaloa, Colima, Michoacán, Guerrero and Tamaulipas (on the Texas border) on the same level as war-torn countries like Syria.

Mexico's Tourism Secretariat said the advisory was based on crime statistics and atrocities "not related to incidents that directly affected foreign visitors."

The secretariat noted the list did not include Mexico's five biggest tourist destinations: Cancún, the Mayan Riviera, Los Cabos, Puerto Vallarta-Riviera Nayarit and Mexico City.

The U.S. government closed its consular agency here in Playa del Carmen in early March, citing a security threat after the ferry explosion, but service has since resumed. Mexican authorities said the explosion was unrelated to organized crime.

Cintrón, the hotelier, said violence strikes overwhelmingly in areas not visited by tourists. Hotel occupancy hovers at 83%, roughly the same as the same time last year, he said.

"This is not happening in tourist areas," Cintrón said. "There have been cases, we can't deny that" in the tourist areas, he added, "But it's something very targeted" and not putting tourists at risk.

Mexico welcomed nearly 40 million foreign visitors in 2017, and tourism accounts for 8% of the country's GDP. Tourist hotspots also attract millions of Mexicans seeking jobs.

"There's lots of work here and it pays better," said Fabiola López, a waitress who moved to Playa del Carmen from Chiapas, Mexico's poorest state. "I was able to buy a house."

Tourists often ask about security, said Israel Uribe, a concierge in Playa del Carmen. After a shootout on the tourist strip here in early 2017, his bosses instructed him, "Don't say anything" when asked about security.

Some in this region support the U.S. tourist advisory, saying that's the only way the Mexican government will take security issues seriously.

"This is something that will open our government's eyes, that the threat here is real," said Daniel Villaseñor Pérez, a lawyer and community activist in Cancún.

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HEADLINE	03/30 China: gangs smuggled \$80M via drones
SOURCE	http://money.cnn.com/2018/03/30/technology/drone-iphones-smugglers-china/index.html
GIST	<p>Smugglers in China are going high-tech.</p> <p>Chinese authorities busted a criminal ring that allegedly used drones to smuggle almost \$80 million worth of Apple (AAPL) iPhones and other smartphones, according to state media.</p> <p>Chinese customs officials told state media the suspects illegally transported up to 15,000 devices per night across the border from Hong Kong to the neighboring city of Shenzhen.</p> <p>Authorities said the gang used drones to suspend two, 200 meter-long cables between buildings on either side of the border. Bags carrying smartphones were attached to the cables and then pulled over to Shenzhen.</p> <p>Customs officers said it was the first case they had encountered where drones were used to smuggle goods, according to state media. The bust was made in February as part of a joint operation between authorities in the two cities.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/30 Maryland: 6 suspected MS-13 indicted
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/federal-jury-indicts-alleged-ms-13-members-maryland-54127115
GIST	<p>A federal grand jury in Maryland has indicted six alleged members of a violent street gang that's been a prime Trump administration target.</p> <p>Six defendants — ranging in age from 19 to 22 — were charged in a nine-count indictment unsealed this week. The alleged members of MS-13, a gang with deep Central American ties, are charged with murder, conspiracy and racketeering.</p> <p>The men, all living in Annapolis, were detained on federal or state criminal charges and their initial court appearances have not yet taken place, according to prosecutors. Their immigration status was not immediately clear.</p> <p>The latest indictments come roughly two weeks after a MS-13 member from another Maryland community was convicted in a federal racketeering conspiracy. Raul Ernesto Landaverde Giron of Silver Spring, just outside of Washington D.C., was found guilty of murder in aid of racketeering and faces a mandatory sentence of life in prison.</p> <p>Following that conviction, U.S. Attorney General Jeff Sessions said Maryland has "suffered terribly" because of the "uniquely barbaric" gang's criminal activities.</p> <p>In charges announced Thursday, Juan Carlos Sandoval Rodriguez, 20, is accused of luring a victim to a park in Annapolis, where he and other alleged MS-13 members and associates murdered him. Prosecutors believe the March 2016 killing was motivated by a desire to enhance or maintain rank within the gang or gain status as a member.</p> <p>In October 2016, four defendants allegedly attempted to murder two others in Annapolis, largely by stabbing the victims repeatedly.</p> <p>Last year, Sessions designated MS-13 as a "priority" for the Department of Justice's Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force. That designation directs prosecutors to pursue all legal avenues to target the gang and lets local police agencies tap into federal money to help pay for gang-related investigations.</p> <p>MS-13, or the Mara Salvatrucha, is believed by federal prosecutors to have thousands of members</p>

	nationwide, primarily immigrants from Central America. It emerged in the 1980s from a stronghold in Los Angeles. But its true rise began after members were deported back to El Salvador in the 1990s.
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HEADLINE	03/30 Calif. gov. pardons men facing deportation
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/california-governor-pardons-men-facing-deportation-54136644
GIST	<p>California Gov. Jerry Brown on Friday pardoned five ex-convicts facing deportation, including two whose families fled the Khmer Rouge regime in Cambodia four decades ago.</p> <p>The pardons don't automatically stop deportation proceedings, but eliminate the state convictions federal authorities based their deportation decisions on. That gives the men's lawyers strong legal arguments before immigration judges to try to prevent the deportations.</p> <p>"The pardon does provide enormous benefit to immigrants facing deportation," said Anoop Prasad, an immigration staff attorney at Asian Law Caucus.</p> <p>Brown's intervention for the men — among 56 pardoned — marked the Democratic governor's third consecutive pardon round in which he intervened on behalf of immigrants who were deported or faced deportation because of criminal convictions. Brown has accused the administration of President Donald Trump of "basically going to war" with California over immigration policy.</p> <p>Brown last year signed sanctuary legislation limiting state and local cooperation with federal enforcement of immigration laws. U.S. Attorney General Jeff Sessions responded with a Department of Justice lawsuit seeking to invalidate three state laws protecting residents living in the country without documentation.</p> <p>Those pardoned Friday included Sokha Chhan and Phann Pheach, both of whom face deportation to Cambodia, a country ruled in the 1970s by the genocidal Khmer Rouge. Chhan was convicted of two counts of misdemeanor domestic violence in 2002 and served 364 days in jail.</p> <p>Pheach was convicted of possessing drugs and obstructing a police officer in 2005 and served six months in jail. His wife said he is in federal custody.</p> <p>Also pardoned was Daniel Maher, who was convicted in 1995 of kidnapping, robbery and being a felon in possession of a firearm and served five years in prison. Maher is facing deportation to China.</p> <p>Chhan, Pheach and Maher hold permanent U.S. residency but had exhausted all legal avenues to fight deportation, making Brown's pardons for them their last hope to stay in the U.S., Prasad said.</p> <p>"This is a life-changing, enormous event," he said.</p> <p>Also pardoned while facing deportation were Daniel Mena and Francisco Acevedo Alaniz, but their home countries were not immediately known. Mena was convicted in 2003 of possessing illegal drugs. Alaniz served five months in prison for a 1997 auto theft conviction.</p> <p>Brown on Friday also commuted the sentences of 14 others convicted of crimes.</p> <p>The governor is a former Jesuit seminarian and traditionally issues pardons close to major Christian holidays. Easter falls on Sunday.</p> <p>California's longest-serving governor has now issued 1,519 pardons, including 404 during his first two terms as governor from 1975 to 1983.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/30 Kentucky: cop killer suspect dead
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/US/kentucky-police-officer-gunned-suspected-cop-impersonator/story?id=54122297
GIST	<p>An off-duty police officer in a close-knit Kentucky community was gunned down on March 29 by a man who allegedly was pretending to be a cop.</p> <p>Here is what we know about the shooting, the manhunt and the slain officer.</p> <p>At about 5:10 p.m. Thursday, Hopkinsville police officer Phillip Meacham was off-duty and in his personal car but responding to a "potential criminal situation" when he was pulled over by a man pretending to be a police officer, according to police and the mayor of Hopkinsville.</p> <p>"Shortly after that" Meacham was shot, the Hopkinsville police said.</p> <p>The suspected gunman, 34-year-old James DeCoursey of Hopkinsville, fled on foot and stole a pickup truck, the Kentucky State Police said.</p> <p>Meacham, a married father of two, died at a hospital, authorities said.</p> <p>In the middle of the night, authorities zeroed in on the stolen truck in a restaurant parking lot in Clarksville, Tennessee, a city just across the border from Kentucky that's about 30 miles south of Hopkinsville.</p> <p>At about the same time, a call came in to police from a hotel across the street, reporting that a man who looked like the suspect was there asking for a cigarette, the Tennessee Bureau of Investigation said.</p> <p>Authorities were headed toward the hotel when two Montgomery County Sheriff's deputies and a U.S. Marshal came across DeCoursey walking across the street back toward the restaurant, the TBI said.</p> <p>It appeared DeCoursey "ignored repeated commands and the situation escalated," resulting in the officers firing at DeCoursey and killing him, the TBI said.</p> <p>No law enforcement officers were injured in that shooting, the TBI said.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/31 Escaped ICE detainee caught in Chicago
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/US/prisoner-escaped-ice-custody-jfk-airport-captured-chicago/story?id=54143321
GIST	<p>The prisoner who escaped from immigration officials at John F. Kennedy International Airport earlier this week was captured halfway across the country on Friday.</p> <p>An Immigration and Customs Enforcement official confirmed Mohamadou Lamine Mbacke was taken into custody in Chicago Friday afternoon. Chicago ABC station WLS reported Mbacke was found while at a Starbucks at about 1:30 p.m.</p> <p>Mbacke, 31, was spotted by undercover officers at the coffee shop, according to a witness.</p> <p>"All of a sudden see seven cops kind of running from the outside into the inside, and they kinda huddled around him. There wasn't any fuss or anything, it was just they all exchanged words with him, they got the handcuffs, and they left in like a group huddle," Zimbo Gessert, a Starbucks employee, told WLS.</p> <p>Mbacke was being deported to his native Senegal on Tuesday night when he bailed from Terminal 4 at JFK Airport at about 8:30 p.m. According to ICE, surveillance footage showed Mbacke hailing a cab and</p>

	<p>driving off.</p> <p>The prisoner was with officials at JFK while waiting for a connecting flight from Detroit to Dakar. New York ABC station WABC, citing sources, said the officials had turned to get him food when he took off.</p> <p>It is not clear how he got to Chicago.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/31 Texas: woman gets 5yrs for illegal vote
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/US/texas-woman-sentenced-years-prison-illegally-voting-2016/story?
GIST	<p>A trip to her local polling place may have earned a Texas woman five years behind bars.</p> <p>Crystal Mason was sentenced to five years in prison this week after she voted in the 2016 election while on parole, according to Dallas ABC affiliate WFAA. Mason was on parole after serving time for a federal tax crime, her lawyer said.</p> <p>"She had a good faith belief she could vote legally and she did so," Mason's attorney Warrent St. John told WFAA.</p> <p>The 43-year-old Mason says she had no idea she was committing a crime. Mason voted in Tarrant County, just west of Dallas.</p> <p>"She testified this week in court that she was never told by the federal judge she couldn't vote," St. John said. "She was never told by halfway house folks she couldn't vote."</p> <p>Mason did not want to speak when reached by WFAA, but she told The Dallas Morning News she "didn't even want to vote."</p> <p>Texas law states it is illegal for a felon to vote while serving their sentence, including while on parole.</p> <p>"Our society is built on personal responsibility," Tarrant County District Attorney Sharen Wilson said in a statement given to WFAA. "There were multiple safeguards in place to keep Crystal Mason from breaking the law, but she still made that choice."</p> <p>Mason has already appealed the conviction, WFAA reported.</p>
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