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## The Logic of Counting Votes

Mathematicians have precise ways of measuring the fairness and efficiency of different electoral systems

By Eugenia Cheng

Oct. 16, 2020 9:28 am ET

Millions of votes have already been cast in next month's presidential election, and a lot of attention is focused on making sure they are counted correctly. Once votes are counted, however, they have to be translated into results—and that is where math comes in. Mathematicians have developed logical rules that allow us to test the fairness and efficacy of different voting systems, rather than just yelling at each other about fairness and seeing who yells the loudest.

In presidential elections, almost all states use a first-past-the-post system, in which the candidate who receives the most votes wins the state, whether they get a majority (more than half the votes) or only a plurality (more votes than any other candidate). The more candidates there are, the further from a majority a plurality can be. Even when there are only two major-party candidates, small parties might receive enough votes that the winning candidate has less than 50% of the vote.

First-past-the-post goes hand in hand with a "winner take all" system for awarding electoral votes, where the candidate with the most votes receives all of the state's electors. Maine and Nebraska have a slightly different system, with each congressional district choosing its own elector.

## MORE EVERYDAY MATH

A Viral Video Asks a Deep Question September 10, 2020

What the Numbers Say About Gender Differences August 6, 2020

This year, Maine is also using Ranked Choice Voting (RCV) for the first time in a presidential election. In this system, voters can rank all the candidates rather than picking one favorite. Then multiple rounds of balloting are simulated: The first-choice votes are counted, the candidate who comes last is eliminated, and their votes are redistributed to the second choice listed on each ballot. The process is repeated until the last remaining candidate becomes the winner.

RCV is designed to avoid a central problem of first-past-the-post voting, which was identified by the Nobel Prize-winning economist Kenneth Arrow. For an election to be fair, he argued, the existence of a third candidate shouldn't change the relative ranking of the first two—a condition he called "the independence of irrelevant alternatives." In first-past-the-post systems, however, this condition fails to

apply, since voters often vote tactically. If your main priority is to defeat candidate A, you might vote for candidate B because you think they have the best chance of winning, even if your actual favorite is candidate C.

RCV largely avoids this problem, dramatically reducing the need for tactical voting. But it doesn't eliminate the possibility of the electoral college result not agreeing with the popular vote, as happened in 2016. One way to solve that problem would be to stop awarding electors on a winner-take-all basis and shift to a proportional representation system, in which each candidate receives a share of the state's electors proportional to their share of the vote.

Still, it's important to remember that math offers only one criterion for the fairness of voting systems, while politics involves many other considerations as well. In voting as in other areas of life, math doesn't give us the answers but offers us a set of tools to use in conjunction with those of other disciplines.

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<b>From:</b>	CISA CurOps (b)(6)
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<b>Subject:</b>	CISA Weekly Operations Infographic 19 Oct 2020
<b>Date:</b>	2020/10/19 07:59:30
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Good Morning,

Please see the attached CISA Ops Infographic for the week of 19 Oct.

Respectfully,

CISA IOD Current Operations  
 Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA)

Office: (b)(6) Email: (b)(6)



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# DIRECTOR'S WEEKLY OPERATIONS INFOGRAPHIC

CISA CENTRAL

202.282.9201

October 19, 2020

## ALERT LEVELS

NTAS	None		Bulletin		Elevated	Imminent
NOC	Steady State	Awareness		Guarded	Concern	Urgent

## OPERATION & SITUATION UPDATES

### COVID-19-Worldwide

- As of 19 Oct, there are 39,801,612 cumulative cases and 1,110,908 deaths worldwide.
- In the U.S. there are 8,081,612 cases and 218,511 deaths.
- 39 jurisdictions are currently showing an increasing trend in new COVID-19 cases, 8 are mostly unchanged, and 9 jurisdictions are showing a downward trend.
- Governor of KS announced the State will remain in a state of emergency until November 15.
- Vice Presidential Candidate Senator Kamala Harris cancelled speaking engagements and will self-quarantine this weekend after her Communications Director and a member of her flight crew tested positive for COVID-19.

## ENGAGEMENTS

- 19 OCT: DAD DeLaurentis will participate in the CAE Annual Portfolio Reviews and the JRC Weekly Meeting w/ Cybersecurity Portfolio Team.
- 19 OCT: AD Brown and DAD DeLaurentis will participate in the SAFECOM and NCSWIC Leadership Weekly Sync.
- 20 OCT: (A)AD Harris will speak at the Idaho National Laboratory Capability Overview meeting.
- 21 OCT: (A)AD Harris will speak at the 2020 DHS Integrated Preparedness Planning Workshop.
- 21 OCT: (A)DAD Walsh will record a standalone presentation for CybertechUSA.
- 22 OCT: DAD DeLaurentis will participate in the ECD / National Risk Management Center (NRMC) Sync.
- 22 OCT: (A)AD Willke will speak at the BCEM Fall Meeting Speaker Request - Election Security & Cybersecurity.
- 23 OCT: (A)AD Willke and (A)DAD Walsh will attend the Federal Senior Leadership Council Meeting.

## CONGRESSIONAL AFFAIRS

- 21 OCT: AD Ware and Geoff Hall will brief the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence. Subject: Election Security with FBI and NSA (Possibly Classified).
- 22 OCT: Dir Krebs will brief Senator Rounds. Subject: NDAA and Election Security.

## INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

- 19 OCT: SED and IA will participate in a CISA-Netherlands sync on Joint Advisories.
- 22 OCT: Dir Krebs and AD Ware will participate in the Second Annual Global Cyber Cabinet with the Israel National Cyber Directorate.
- 23 OCT: CISA International will meet with the Chilean Ministry of Interior to discuss pending cybercrime bill and CI protection.

	DIR	D/DIR	COS	(A)AD ISD	AD CSD	AD ECD	AD IOD	(A)AD SED	AD NRMC
Today	NCR	NCR	NCR	NCR	ONCR	NCR	ONCR	PA	NCR
Tomorrow	NCR	NCR	NCR	NCR	ONCR	NCR	NCR	PA	NCR



# DHS MORNING BRIEFING

Prepared for the Office of Public Affairs (OPA)

U.S. Department of Homeland Security

By TechMIS

[www.TechMIS.com](http://www.TechMIS.com)

Mobile User Copy

**Editorial Note:** The DHS Daily Briefing is a collection of news articles related to Department's mission. The inclusion of particular stories is not intended to reflect their importance, nor is it intended to endorse the political viewpoints or affiliations included in news coverage.

**TO: Homeland Security Secretary & Staff**

**DATE: Monday, October 19, 2020 6:00 AM ET**

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## Top News

### Colorado wildfire grows into largest in state history (New York Times)

New York Times [10/18/2020 7:06 PM, Charlie Brennan and Rick Rojas, 1421K]

She was driving back to her home in the Colorado mountains on Saturday when she saw the ominous plume swirling into the sky. In an instant, Jyoti Sharp's mind went back to



2013, the last time she had been forced out by nature.

Her home had been destroyed, as was much of Jamestown, the 280-person community where she lives. Then, the town had been wiped out by Colorado's worst flood in a generation. This time, it was a swiftly growing wildfire at the end of a long and brutal season that had her packing to leave the house she had rebuilt and moved into just four months earlier.

"My heart was beating fast," Ms. Sharp, 64, said of how she felt on Saturday as she recalled fleeing the flood with a single suitcase she happened to have packed for her son's wedding. "My breathing was shallow. I had to keep reminding myself to breathe."

The fire started on Saturday in the woodlands near Jamestown, a late arrival in a season that would normally be nearing its end but still rages in Colorado, straining firefighting resources to their limit and signaling for scientists another devastating consequence of rising temperatures in a changing climate.

Already, firefighters are battling to contain the Cameron Peak Fire, which has burned since August and grown into the largest fire recorded in Colorado history. On Sunday, it eclipsed 200,000 acres. And the latest fire spread rapidly, engulfing more than 8,000 acres by Sunday.

"It just exploded," Mike Wagner, division chief for the Boulder County Sheriff's Department, said in a briefing late Saturday. "It's been so dry and just such high fire danger combined with lack of firefighting resources because of the number of fires not only in Colorado but across the West."

Millions of acres have been scorched by wildfires in Western states this year, burning homes and businesses as they invaded communities and killed people who were unable to escape the flames. The fires have also showered ash upon communities beyond their direct path and cast a haze that darkened skies across the region.

In California, lightning storms ignited hundreds of blazes, some of which grew into the largest in modern state history. More than 8,500 wildfires have burned over 4.1 million acres in California, state fire officials said, killing at least 31 people. More than a million acres also burned in Oregon and Washington.

Dry conditions have also stoked what has become one of the worst years for wildfires in Colorado. More than 430,000 acres have burned so far this year, said Brian Buma, an ecology professor at the University of Colorado Denver.

Scientists say that wildfires have become hotter, more intense and more destructive in recent years. In Colorado, the threat has also intensified as the fire season has grown longer.

Typically, the state would see the arrival of mountain snowfall by October. Instead, there has been little to no precipitation in areas where the fires have burned. "It is very unusual for wildfires to start after October," said Jennifer Balch, the director of the Earth Lab at the University of Colorado Boulder.

Scientists say that it has been an unsettling development, yet also one that has been anticipated as the region has been in the grip of drought and as temperatures rise globally.

"This is exactly what we expect from climate change," Professor Buma said. "It's not going to get any better — that's the hard part. It's becoming more and more regular, and that time in the fall when they can breathe a sigh of relief is being pushed out further and further."

The dry conditions and powerful gusts of winds, reaching roughly 70 miles per hour, created a dangerous recipe for the rapid spread of wildfires. Thousands of people have been forced to evacuate.

The Cameron Peak fire ignited on Aug. 13 on the Arapaho and Roosevelt National Forests, northwest of Boulder. The fire traversed rugged terrain as it claimed more ground, making it difficult to contain for the more than 1,500 firefighters battling it. The fire is 62 percent contained, state fire officials said.

There was hope that a shift in the weather on Sunday could help the firefighters gain ground. "Watching the cold, calm and wet weather move in today — which was not in the forecast — I am grateful for answered prayers," Justin Smith, the Larimer County sheriff, said in a post on Facebook on Sunday morning.

To the south, the East Troublesome fire had burned more than 12,000 acres and was just 5 percent contained by Sunday. The Williams Fork fire, which is also nearby, has burned more than 14,500 acres and is about 26 percent contained.

The fire that started on Saturday, known as the Cal-Wood fire for the name of an educational center near where it was ignited, had about 5 percent containment by Sunday afternoon, with about 250 firefighters mostly focused on protecting homes and other structures that could fall within its path.

It led to evacuations for Jamestown, which is only two miles from where the fire ignited.

The town, outside Boulder, was founded by gold miners along James Creek and is perched at about 7,000 feet in the eastern foothills of the Rocky Mountains. These days, it has become a bucolic mountain retreat with just one storefront business on Main Street, the Jamestown Mercantile — The Merc, to its regulars — serving as a community hub and pit stop for bicyclists.

With cartons still not unpacked from her return to her home in June, Ms. Sharp found herself quickly boxing up treasured photographs, and rings that had belonged to each of her parents.

Her partner, Mark Behan, was less concerned about possessions, recalling a fire at his family's home as a child that nearly killed his brother. "It's stuff that can be replaced," he said. "Even if it's a house, it can be replaced. People can't be replaced."

Still, an enduring question that arises in times of disaster is about the sustainability of living in the mountains, where the solitude and natural splendor can give way to danger.

"That will probably be in the forefront of my mind — for a few days until the nice weather comes back," Ms. Sharp said. "It's so beautiful up there."

### **Colorado CalWood wildfire erupts to 8,788 acres, Cameron Peak exceeds 200,000 acres (Breitbart)**

Breitbart [10/18/2020 5:25 PM, UPI, 1912K]

A wildfire in California erupted to more than 8,000 acres in less than 24 hours, forcing more than 3,000 evacuations Sunday.

The CalWood Fire began burning in Boulder County on Saturday and quickly grew to 8,788 acres at just 5% containment as Boulder County Sheriff's Office Division Chief Mike Wagner said it is already the largest blaze in the county's history.

"It just exploded," Wagner said. "We do believe multiple homes were probably lost. It's still to dynamic to get in and begin to assess."

The CalWood Fire is located just 50 miles southeast of the Cameron Peak Fire, the largest in Colorado's history and the first to burn more than 200,000 acres, which was 62% contained on Sunday.

Meanwhile, the East Troublesome Fire north of Hot Sulphur Springs, Colo., grew to 12,655 acres at 5% containment.

Wagner said the causes for both blazes in Boulder County remained under investigation as no lightning strikes or other likely weather events that could have sparked the CalWood Fire took place but the area has experienced "critically dry" conditions for weeks."

He added that efforts to combat the fires have been hampered by the weather.

The entire state of Colorado is experiencing drought conditions for the first time since 2013, with nearly 60% in extreme drought or worse, according to the U.S. Drought Monitor.

"We've been concerned for some time about the fire danger," Wagner said. "It has been so dry."

### **In Colorado, 2-month-old Cameron Peak Fire tops 200,000 acres (ABC News)**

ABC News [10/18/2020 7:45 PM, Ivan Pereira, 29K] Video: [HERE](#)

Hundreds of thousands of acres in Colorado continue to go up in flames as firefighters battle several wildfires throughout the state, including one that has been burning for over two months.

The Cameron Peak Fire, which began on Aug. 13, is the largest recorded wildfire in Colorado's history, according to the Rocky Mountain Area Coordination Center. The fire, located west of Fort Collins, had burned 203,253 acres and was 62% contained as of Sunday afternoon, according to fire officials and the U.S. Forest Service.

About 1,542 firefighters were battling the blaze in different sections, the U.S. Forest Service said in a news release.



"In anticipation of the fire advancing, crews and heavy equipment built contingency lines and focused on structure protection," the agency said in a statement.

Officials said firefighters have been aided by improving weather conditions. On Saturday evening, wind speeds dropped and the humidity shifted to a safer level, according to the U.S. Forest Service.

"Fire managers will take advantage of this weather change to utilize aircraft and employ aggressive fire suppression actions," the agency said in its statement.

A chance of snow Sunday night is expected to bring relief, but higher wind gusts are also in the forecast, according to the U.S. Forest Service.

In the meantime, the state is dealing with other smaller fires that are burning in different areas.

The Calwood Fire, located just north of Boulder, erupted Saturday and has burned 8,788 acres, according to the U.S. Forest Service. Around 250 firefighters were battling that fire and had 5% of the blaze contained, according to Chief Mike Wagner of Boulder County Sheriff's Office.

"The plan was to hit the fire really heavy with air resources," he told reporters at a news conference Sunday. "With the conditions we have down here, and visibility, we can't fly. So as soon as the weather resolves, incident command is hoping to utilize the air resources to attack the fire much better."

The East Troublesome Fire, which is located just north of Route 40, had burned 11,562 acres and was 5% contained as of Sunday afternoon, according to the U.S. Forest Service.

Colorado's fires are part of a surge in dangerous wildfires that have spread throughout the West Coast and Rocky Mountain region since the summer.

Scientists and meteorologists say climate change has been the leading factor behind the rise in fires, as rising temperatures, drier air and strong wind gusts have fueled and strengthened the blazes.

Last week, there were at least four dozen large uncontained wildfires burning in western states, forcing evacuations in several towns in California and Colorado.

California's Department of Forestry and Fire Protection reports that wildfires in California this year have burned through more than 4.1 million acres, damaged over 5,400 structures, and killed eight people.

### **It just exploded': Colorado's Cameron Peak, CalWood fires drive thousands from their homes (USA Today)**

USA Today [10/18/2020 3:16 PM, John Bacon, 5823K]

A Colorado wildfire had raced through more than 8,700 parched, wind-blown acres in less than 24 hours on Sunday, forcing evacuation of almost 3,000 people in Boulder County as wildfires continued to batter the state and the West.



The CalWood fire began burning Saturday in Boulder County, about 50 miles southeast of the Cameron Peak Fire. That fire, the largest in state history, has burned more than 300 square miles since mid-August.

"It just exploded," Mike Wagner, division chief with the Boulder County Sheriff's Office, said of the CalWood fire. "We do believe multiple homes were probably lost. It's still too dynamic to get in and begin to assess."

Courtney Walsh posted three pictures of her burned-out, Boulder-area home on social media.

"It's all gone," she tweeted. "I'm gutted."

Jessica Newmans posted an offer to house animals in her barn or contained pasture after her property was removed from the evacuation zone. An hour earlier she had been on the move.

"One of the first things we grabbed before mandatory evacuations hit? Our ballots," she tweeted. "Then our children & dog, guitar, and a few nice bottles of wine of course."

The causes of both fires remain under investigation. Wagner said there had been no lightning strikes or other likely weather events that could have ignited the CalWood blaze. But the region has been saddled with high winds and what fire officials termed "critically dry" conditions for weeks.

"Anyone under an Evacuation WARNING for #CalWoodFire should be ready to leave immediately," the Boulder Office of Emergency Management said on social media. "Have a bag packed & be ready to leave with very little notice. Winds on Sunday could create fast-moving fire activity."

Wagner said efforts to combat the blaze were constrained by the weather and the lack of firefighters because of demand throughout the West. More than 60 major fires were burning in 11 Western states, according to the National Interagency Fire Center.

"We've been concerned for some time about the fire danger," Wagner said. "It has been so dry."

The Cameron Peak fire, 62% contained Sunday, has burned more than 100 structures. The wildfire started in the high country 30 miles west of Fort Collins and continued to grow despite more than 1 foot of snow that fell on Labor Day. It broke the state's record for the largest fire last week, fanned by days of high winds.

More than a dozen fires were burning across California, which got a trace of good news over the weekend. The White House and the Federal Emergency Management Agency approved the state's request for disaster relief funds to clean up damage from six fires. Late last week the application has been rejected, the administration claiming California hadn't made a strong enough case for assistance with the September fires.

In Utah, two new fires were much smaller but also forced evacuations. The Range Fire had

burned 1,500 acres and was not at all contained; the Fire Canyon Fire was estimated at 1,460 acres Sunday morning but only 10% contained.

**What the Supreme Court's rulings mean for the 2020 Census and Trump's attempt to exclude the undocumented from the count (Washington Post)**

Washington Post [10/18/2020 6:00 AM, Tara Bahrapour, 13480K]

The Supreme Court has cleared a path for the Trump administration to exclude undocumented immigrants from representation, potentially altering the balance of power in Congress for the next 10 years.

The court Tuesday cut short the census count by two weeks, which census experts and civil rights advocates say risks producing a less accurate count. Then on Friday, the court said it would review President Trump's efforts to omit unauthorized immigrants when apportioning congressional seats. That decision overturned a lower court's order that had blocked the Commerce Department and Census Bureau from including information about the undocumented when they deliver state population counts to the White House after the census is completed. The justices said they will hold a hearing Nov. 30.

The government has said it ended the count early to provide state population totals to Trump by the statutory deadline of Dec. 31, even though it had originally asked for a four-month extension because of the coronavirus pandemic.

Moving up the end date set off a wave of litigation from civil rights advocates who argued that it would cause an undercount of traditionally hard-to-count populations such as minorities, immigrants and low-income people, depriving them of services such as schools, roads, fire stations and hospitals, along with political representation. Businesses and analysts also rely on census data when deciding where to open new locations or make policy recommendations based on population numbers.

The purpose for the rush appears to be political. Meeting the Dec. 31 deadline helps ensure that regardless of November's election outcome, the president will have an opportunity to fulfill a July memorandum in which he said he wanted to omit the undocumented from apportionment.

A government filing to expedite Supreme Court review of the case said: "Absent some form of relief from the judgment, the Secretary and the President will be forced to make reports by the statutory deadlines that do not reflect the President's important policy decision concerning the apportionment."

Removing undocumented immigrants from apportionment would be unprecedented in U.S. history, and critics say it is unconstitutional. It could also affect the makeup of the House and the distribution of electoral college votes, shifting representation from some more diverse states with large immigrant populations to more White ones. A Pew Research Center study this summer found that if the country's undocumented immigrants were excluded from apportionment, California, Texas and Florida would end up with one less seat and Minnesota, Ohio and Alabama would end up with one more, compared with what they would have gotten with no adjustments.

Trump's memo sparked a separate spate of lawsuits, including the case that the Supreme Court plans to take up in November. But even as litigation is underway, the government has

not explained how it plans to identify and count undocumented immigrants, leaving some worried that reapportionment numbers could be calculated by the White House behind closed doors.

Howard Hogan, a former Census Bureau chief demographer, wrote in a court filing that “traditionally, the Census Bureau takes the Apportionment Counts, that is, state population counts, and applies a complex mathematical algorithm to allocate the 435 Congressional seats to the states.”

But bureau officials “state that the Census Bureau plans to give to the President the components of the Apportionment Counts,” he wrote. “The clear implication is that it would not be the Census Bureau that would compute the actual apportionment, but presumably someone at the White House. The risk to an accurate and fair apportionment [is] enormous.”

The law requires that apportionment numbers be based on an actual enumeration of people living in a state, not estimates. Because no comprehensive list of undocumented immigrants exists, attempts to count them could involve subtracting citizens and legally documented noncitizens from the total population count.

Hints about the process that the White House may use to exclude the undocumented have emerged in court documents. In a filing to the Supreme Court this month, acting solicitor general Jeffrey B. Wall wrote that the bureau planned to “provide the President with information regarding any ‘unlawful aliens in ICE Detention Centers’ whom the President could, consistent with the discretion delegated to him by law, exclude from the apportionment base, thereby partially implementing his Memorandum.”

But the number of people in Immigration and Customs Enforcement detention centers on April 1, the official Census Day, is probably in the tens of thousands and is probably not enough to affect representation in a meaningful way, said Dale Ho, director of the ACLU’s Voting Rights Project, who argued the case. “That’s not going to shift any seats,” he said. “It just seems to me that they must have more in mind.”

In an email to Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross in late September, Census Bureau Deputy Director Ron Jarmin referred to a plan “to finish the processing of the resident population, federally affiliated overseas and, if requested, unlawful aliens in ICE Detention Centers by 12/31,” adding that other “outputs” related to the presidential memo would be pushed to Jan. 11.

In a statement this month, Al Fontenot, the bureau’s associate director for decennial census programs, said the bureau had postponed “the five days of processing needed to implement the Presidential Memorandum” to the first week of January.

The bureau and the Commerce Department did not respond to questions from The Washington Post about what the “outputs” are.

At a hearing in Maryland on Wednesday in a related suit, a panel of federal judges pressed the government to define the additional “outputs” and processing. Justice Department lawyer John Coghlan said the plan was “a dynamic process” and the bureau was “not in a position to answer that question right now.”



“How can you say we don’t know what the plan is, it’s dynamic, it’s changing, but we know it will take five days?” asked Judge Pamela Harris of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 4th Circuit. “I am starting to feel that someone is not being honest with us.”

Coghlan told the panel that aside from people in ICE detention centers, “it’s unknown right now what additional categories could . . . potentially be feasibly identified by the secretary.”

Sounding infuriated, U.S. District Judge Paula Xinis noted: “So until the secretary reports the numbers to the president, it is a black box.”

After the government’s attempt to add a citizenship question to the survey was blocked last year by the Supreme Court, Trump issued an executive order directing federal agencies to share information on citizenship with the bureau. It is not clear how much information has been shared or how good the quality is. Only a handful of states complied with a bureau request to share information from state DMVs.

The bureau may be collecting information from other administrative records, including the Social Security Administration, the Internal Revenue Service, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services and the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

But that data may not accurately reflect someone’s immigration status or place of residence on Census Day.

“To my knowledge, administrative data sources don’t exist to give you a comprehensive picture for the undocumented populations,” said Amy O’Hara, a former Census Bureau official who is now executive director of the Federal Statistical Research Data Center at Georgetown University’s McCourt School for Public Policy.

Inaccurate or incomplete counts of the undocumented would not affect apportionment if the inaccuracy were spread evenly across states, said Tom Louis, a former chief scientist and former associate director for research and methodology at the Census Bureau. But the addition this year of four political appointees to the traditionally nonpartisan bureau worries him.

“Staff is not going to feel comfortable discussing issues and resolving them with those four around,” said Louis, who, along with Hogan, was on the task force that on Tuesday issued an American Statistical Association report calling for more transparency around the agency’s decennial Census activities. “My concern is that we’ll never know what the values were before the undocumented were removed.”

It is also not clear from the president’s directive who would meet the criteria to be excluded.

[Editorial note: consult source link for extended commentary]

**[OR] Officers deploy crowd control agents at protesters outside an ICE building in Portland (CNN)**

CNN [10/18/2020 10:48 AM, Alta Spells, 7975K]

Tensions between protesters, federal officers and Portland police escalated Saturday night outside a US Immigration and Customs Enforcement building in the city.

Protesters gathered at Willamette Park before moving to the ICE building and surrounding neighborhoods, CNN affiliate KATU reported.

About 100 people outside the building were chanting when Federal Protective Service officers came out to face protesters around 10 p.m. local time, KATU reported.

Officers from the Portland Police Bureau were also on scene issuing warnings to the crowd to move away from the federal officers and the ICE building.

Police accused the crowd of throwing rocks and incendiary devices at officers while apologizing to nearby residents for the noise in a series of tweets.

Video from CNN affiliate KPTV captured a smoking canister being tossed and the sound of pepperball shots.

Portland police had warned that "impact weapons, tear gas and/or OC munitions" might be used if the crowd did not move out of roads and stay off the ICE building property.

#### **[OR] Federal officers use tear gas during ICE protest in Oregon (AP)**

AP [10/18/2020 3:38 PM, Staff, 422K]

Federal agents and demonstrators clashed outside the Immigration and Customs Enforcement building in South Portland for several hours late Saturday, with officers eventually using tear gas and detaining several people.

Demonstrators gathered at Willamette Park and walked about a mile (1.6 kilometers) to the ICE building, arriving at about 9 p.m. Saturday. Department of Homeland Security officers first responded as protesters tried to tie mylar balloons to a gate outside the building, The Oregonian/OregonLive reported.

Federal officers used smoke, an irritant and non-lethal munitions to break up the crowd while demonstrators threw playground balls or rocks at officers in several exchanges throughout the night, officials said.

About 100 protesters remained in the area by 10 p.m., the newspaper reported, and the confrontations continued. Federal officers detained several people but it was unclear how many.

The demonstration, in honor of those who have died in ICE custody, came as part of the near nightly protests in Portland calling for criminal justice reform that began after the death of George Floyd in late May. A former Minneapolis police officer is charged with murder in the killing of Floyd, a Black man.

#### **[OR] Antifa Medic Calls for Federal Agent to Be 'Executed' (Breitbart)**

Breitbart [10/18/2020 12:50 PM, Bob Price, 1912K]

An Antifa protester wearing "medic" markings on his black bloc uniform screamed "You should be executed" at a federal agent defending an Immigration and Customs Enforcement facility.

The Antifa protester confronted a U.S. Border Patrol BORTAC agent after he reportedly became separated from other agents protecting a U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) facility in Portland.

A video tweeted by Elijah Schaffer shows a man wearing all black (black bloc) with red medic crosses on his clothes and helmet confronting a Border Patrol BORTAC agent. He begins screaming at the agent calling him a “f\*cking Nazi.”

As the abuse continues, the protester screams, “You Nazi piece of sh\*t. ... You sterilize women. ... You Nazi piece of sh\*t, you should be executed.”

The agents proceeded to walk through the human blockade to try and rejoin his fellow agents.

Elsewhere, federal agents confronted protesters as they attempted to move on the ICE facility.

Journalist Sergio Olmos tweeted a video showing a standoff between protesters and what he described as DHS agents.

The agents rushed the crowd, moving them down the block.

Another video shows protesters throwing a large rubber ball at one of the agents.

The federal agents continued moving the crowd down the street and eventually deployed smoke and gas, according to Olmos.

The Oregonian reported that in addition to rubber balls, protesters also threw rocks at the federal agents. The protest was described by organizers as a “solidarity march against deportation,” the newspaper stated.

The crowd arrived at the federal facility around 9 p.m. local time. Agents and protesters moved the line forward and back multiple times throughout the evening until Portland police officers eventually arrived sometime after 11 p.m. The protest continues for a few more hours after that.

Portland police apologized to high-rise residents in the area who were disturbed by the protesters and the clouds of smoke and gas, the article states.

[Editorial note: consult videos at source link]

**[CA] Asian Americans in San Francisco are dying at alarming rates from COVID-19: Racism is to blame (USA Today)**

USA Today [10/18/2020 9:03 PM, Marco della Cava, 5823K]

Mandy Rong was terrified her 12-year-old daughter had COVID-19. It was 2 a.m. and the young girl was hours into a fierce fever and a racking cough. She was weak and didn't want to eat. What few medications were on hand had expired. She sipped warm water instead.

“Mommy, why are my eyes on fire?” asked Amy Rong.



The mother and daughter, along with Rong's parents, live in an 80-square-foot windowless single-room-occupancy Chinatown building that is a home of last resort for many impoverished Asian immigrants. Hallways are cramped, bathrooms and kitchens are communal. A ripe setting for the spread of the highly contagious novel coronavirus.

That early March night felt endless. Rong, 42, repeatedly touched Amy's forehead, wondering if her child would die in the small loft that the two shared. Down below, her father slept on the floor while her mother took the lone sofa bed. The grandparents were eager for updates on Amy's fever, but they worried their whispers would wake her.

In the morning, the fever had vanished, only to return a week later. Once again, the family endured a restless night. Rong made soup, but Amy wouldn't eat it. She cooked porridge and spoon-fed it to her daughter.

Getting tested for COVID-19 didn't seem like an option for the Rongs. The rumor was that the tests were expensive. Rong also feared the reaction from neighbors.

"If you test positive, everyone would be scared of you," said Rong. "Everyone would think you are the devil."

It is easy to mistake San Francisco for a thriving Asian American haven. The city, which is its own county, boasts a bustling Chinatown as well as a popular Japantown. Native Hawaiians, Pacific Islanders, Vietnamese, Indians and Filipinos also have made their homes here, representing more than 20 different countries.

But many Asian American immigrants in the county lead a fragile existence rendered even more precarious with the arrival of COVID-19. So far, 38% of the 123 COVID-19 deaths reported by the San Francisco Department of Public Health are Asian American residents, the most of any ethnicity.

Experts also are concerned that positivity rates among Asian Americans in San Francisco could be far higher than the 12% reported, a by-product of the decades-in-the-making model minority myth, which characterizes this ethnic group as financially successful, physically healthy and upwardly mobile. This belief has caused segments of the Asian American community to long be overlooked when it comes to social services for housing, employment and health.

San Francisco is one of the few places in the nation tracking data on Asian Americans and COVID-19 deaths at a time when officials don't know the ethnicity of the person affected in nearly half of the nation's 7.8 million coronavirus cases. Around 17 million Americans are of Asian descent, or 5.6% of the population.

In many cases, Asian Americans in this city have received imprecise or no information in their native language about testing, safety tips, housing and other critical care services during the pandemic. At the same time, the community is struggling with inadequate access to comprehensive health care, the need to keep front-line employment and growing incidents of anti-Asian hate crimes.

"This model minority thing, that's not us," said Judy Young, executive director of the Southeast Asian Development Center, a San Francisco nonprofit that helps area residents



from Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia. She said 80% of her clients have lost their mostly service industry jobs during the pandemic.

"There is the language barrier and our community is small," Young said. "So the city doesn't think we have any problems when we do."

That risk of invisibility is only heightened by the pandemic. Since city health officials do not break down COVID-19 statistics beyond "Asian American," many advocates for the city's various groups said they are left to speculate about coronavirus infection and death rates within their individual communities. How many people are dying, and are those people Japanese Americans? Vietnamese? Korean? Filipino? No one knows.

"There's this feeling that there's excess death out there," said Jeffrey Caballero, executive director of the nonprofit Association of Asian Pacific Community Health Organizations. "That high mortality rate among Asian Americans means either there isn't enough testing or people are waiting far too long to get care."

What is the model minority myth?

Xing Tam's mother tested positive for COVID-19 in March. Her symptoms were mild. Medical officials told her to quarantine at home and avoid others.

Suddenly, the working class Bayview district home where Tam, his mother and 17 other relatives and friends live together became uncomfortably crowded. Tam's mother was given one of the three-story home's 12 rooms. For weeks, everyone in the two-story house feared they would be next.

As his mother recovered, Tam, 39, fretted about the cost of health care if he got sick. He worried the doctors wouldn't be able to speak to him in words he could understand.

Before the pandemic, life had started to improve for Tam. Five years ago, San Francisco relatives urged him to leave China's Guangdong Province and try his luck in the U.S. He learned some English and landed a job at a hotel in catering. But when COVID-19 hit, his job vanished.

The cost of housing in San Francisco is so expensive, his family has no option but to live together.

"Even if I test positive, I feel there is nothing the government will do to help me more," he said. "I can see why some people look at Asians here and feel we are all well-off because we work hard and save whenever we can. But for many of us, it's very challenging."

For many Asian Americans in San Francisco, the high rate of COVID-19 deaths is directly linked to the corrosive and distorting effects of the model minority myth, said Dr. Tung Nguyen, a University of California at San Francisco professor of medicine.

Nguyen co-authored a report in May by the Asian American Research Center on Health that called attention to the fact that 50% of San Francisco's 31 COVID-19 deaths at that time were among Asian Americans, disproportionately high considering they make up just over a third of the population.

Although that percentage has since dropped, Nguyen said a lack of detailed data about Asian Americans often means that city funds aren't allocated to this group.

"The truth is we are the ones who lose out as a result of this stereotype," he added.

To be sure, the fortunes and contributions of many Asian Americans have skyrocketed in past decades. The median annual income of households headed by the nation's 22 million Asian Americans is \$73,060, compared with \$53,600 for all U.S. households, according to the Pew Research Center.

Asian case-fatality rate nearly triple that of all other groups in San Francisco County

But these success stories obscure the troubling reality facing many Asian Americans.

"You simply cannot look at Asian Americans as a monolithic group because if you do that, you're going to miss how different communities experience the pandemic," said Jarvis Chen, a lecturer in social and behavioral sciences at Harvard University's T.H. Chan School of Public Health in Massachusetts.

A closer look at San Francisco's two dozen Asian ethnicities reveals many groups within this broad categorization are struggling financially and remain outside the mainstream. About 43% are non-English speakers, according to a USA TODAY analysis of U.S. Census data. About a third of San Franciscans are foreign-born, and 13% are not U.S. citizens.

"With Asian Americans, the average always is pulled way up by those doing very well, which means you miss the groups who clearly are not," said Margaret Simms, a non-resident fellow with The Urban Institute in Washington, D.C., who specializes in race and labor economics. The think tank found nearly 13% of Asian American senior citizens live in poverty compared to a 9% national average.

Discrimination also is keeping some Asian Americans from getting tested for COVID-19. The website Stop AAPI Hate, the acronym for Asian American Pacific Islander, has logged more than 2,500 incidents of discrimination across the U.S. since mid-March. The attacks have ranged from verbal assaults to acts of physical violence.

When Asian Americans hear President Donald Trump, who contracted COVID-19 in October, repeatedly call the virus the "China virus" and "Kung Flu," "it makes them less likely to seek help, a bit like early in the AIDS epidemic when the gay community was stigmatized," said Karthick Ramakrishnan, professor of public policy at the University of California at Riverside and chair of the California Commission on Asian and Pacific Islander American Affairs. "We fear many Asian American families have gone underground."

[Editorial note: consult source link for extended commentary]

## **Immigration and Customs Enforcement**

**[VA] Virginia county escalates sanctuary battle with ICE (Washington Times)**

Washington Times [10/18/2020 1:41 PM, Stephen Dinan, 459K]

Prince William County's jail released an illegal immigrant late last month despite a federal criminal warrant for his arrest, marking what federal officials see as an escalation of sanctuary policies.

Edras Onel Vasquez-Perez, 25, had been deported before. When he was found in the U.S. again, federal authorities persuaded a magistrate judge to issue a felony warrant for his arrest.

Prince William County police arrested Mr. Vasquez-Perez on Sept. 28 on charges of assaulting a family member, but the jail released him a day later, apparently ignoring both the criminal warrant and a detainer request from U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

The Prince William-Manassas Regional Adult Detention Center recently enacted a sanctuary policy, but defying a criminal warrant appears to go beyond the terms of that policy, and it surprised ICE officials.

Indeed, most sanctuary city advocates say criminal warrants are what they want ICE to obtain. Deportation officers usually file administrative warrants, not approved by a judge, to accompany detainer requests, which are a matter of civil law.

"Prince William County's new noncooperation policy ignores common-sense public safety policies for the sake of politics, even to the point of ignoring a federal criminal warrant issued by a U.S. District Court," said Matthew Munroe, acting director of ICE's Washington field office, which covers Prince William County.

"When local jurisdictions choose to treat a federal law enforcement agency differently, ignoring lawful detainees and warrants, it puts the public at risk, plain and simple," Mr. Munroe said.

Neither Col. Pete Meletis, superintendent of the jail, nor Prince William County Sheriff Glendell Hill, who serves as chairman of the jail board, responded to inquiries last week, and it's not clear whether the defiance was an oversight or intentional.

Jessica Vaughan, policy studies director at the Center for Immigration Studies, said it was "extremely rare" not to comply with a warrant from any fellow law enforcement agency, much less a federal warrant.

"It might even be a violation of the terms of the law enforcement information-sharing agreements. The Department of Justice should look into how this happened and whether there should be some consequences," she said.

ICE ended up nabbing Mr. Vasquez-Perez in Woodbridge on Oct. 7 as deportation officers swept through six sanctuary areas of Washington, Baltimore, Seattle, Denver, New York and Philadelphia.

All told, more than 170 illegal immigrants were nabbed, including 23 in the Washington region: 12 in Maryland and 11 in Virginia.



Immigrant rights groups said the wave of arrests was an attempt at “scaring immigrants” ahead of Election Day.

“Violating the sanctity of sanctuary jurisdictions in battleground states like Pennsylvania is not part of ‘routine operations,’” said Gustavo Torres, president of CASA in Action, a major activist group operating in the mid-Atlantic. “Trump himself is scared of immigrants exercising their right to vote.”

The number of sanctuary jurisdictions has soared on President Trump’s watch as communities mount resistance to his get-tough talk. Although the policies vary, they all involve refusing cooperation of some sort.

Some jurisdictions refuse to hold ICE targets for pickup but will call to alert ICE before release, giving deportation officers a chance to be on hand. Other jurisdictions refuse all cooperation.

Prince William and some other jurisdictions say they chart a middle ground.

Under the jail’s policy, adopted weeks ago, someone booked in on a misdemeanor will be shielded but someone booked in on a felony will be held for up to two hours for ICE pickup.

Mr. Vasquez-Perez sneaked into the U.S. as an unaccompanied alien child in 2012. Under U.S. policy, that meant he was released to sponsors.

Four years later, he was arrested in Montgomery County, Maryland, on eight charges, including robbery, assault and hate crimes. He pleaded guilty to a single assault charge, was sentenced to 18 months and then was deported.

It’s not clear when he sneaked back into the country, but he was indicted by a federal grand jury in Newport News, Virginia, in 2019 on a charge of illegal reentry, a felony punishable by up to 20 years in prison.

A magistrate judge then issued an arrest warrant that, according to court documents, was still valid when police in Prince William County nabbed him last month.

Prince William used to be one of the country’s most cooperative jurisdictions when it came to relationships with ICE.

Over the past year, though, the county allowed its cooperation agreement with ICE to lapse. The jail then implemented its new sanctuary policy.

Ms. Vaughan said the slide from cooperation to ignoring a felony warrant was striking.

“It’s quite a turnaround from the successful partnerships of recent years, and the residents of Prince William County soon might start feeling some buyer’s remorse for these new officials,” she said.

As more communities adopt sanctuary policies, ICE is getting more aggressive in its pushback.

The agency has purchased billboard space in Pennsylvania to highlight a half-dozen targets who have been released by sanctuary communities in that state.

Acting Homeland Security Secretary Chad Wolf said the goal is to raise awareness among residents about the consequences of sanctuary policies.

Sanctuary communities argue that cooperation with ICE and the agency's presence scare some communities and hinder their willingness to report crimes to local authorities.

The data is unclear on whether that is true.

But Mr. Wolf said if sanctuaries are trying to protect illegal immigrants, then it's backfiring.

When communities cooperate, ICE can pick them up in prisons and jails and goes only after its targets. Without that cooperation, ICE sends teams of officers into communities who can arrest other illegal immigrants they encounter while pursuing their targets.

"If communities and jurisdictions would simply cooperate with us, you would likely not see ICE in your communities," Mr. Wolf said.

## **Transportation Security Administration**

### **Hard hit by virus, airlines push for tests over quarantines (Washington Post)**

Washington Post [10/18/2020 7:24 AM, David McHugh, 13480K]

What will it take to get people flying again? International air traffic is down 92% this year as travelers worry about catching COVID-19 and government travel bans and quarantine rules make planning difficult. One thing airlines believe could help is to have rapid virus tests of all passengers before departure.

Scattered experiments on improving safety are under way around the world, and a UN organization is leading talks to set guidelines. There is a lot at stake. With no end in sight to the pandemic, the near total halt to international travel will hinder economies as they try to bounce back from recession and return to normal levels of business activity. Millions of jobs - at airlines, airports and travel related businesses such as hotels and restaurants - are affected.

Here's a look at some of the key issues.

### **WHY IS THE FOCUS ON TESTING?**

One major factor keeping people from taking long-haul flights is the fear they will be seated next to someone with COVID-19, according to a survey by the International Air Transport Association. While flying helped carry the virus around the world initially, airplanes themselves have so far not been proven to be super-spreader locations the way business conferences and meat-packing plants have been.

Most people are also reluctant to fly into a quarantine that restricts their activities for up to two weeks after arrival. Quarantines themselves aren't perfect in terms of stopping the virus from spreading, as in some cases they're not strictly enforced.

“Testing all passengers will give people back their freedom to travel with confidence. And that will put millions of people back to work,” says Alexandre de Juniac, IATA’s director general and CEO.

#### HOW WOULD TESTING WORK?

Initial trials focus on testing passengers before departure, either at the airport or remotely. Information about the test result could be documented through a smartphone app. Newer tests can give results in less than an hour.

#### WHAT DO HEALTH AUTHORITIES SAY?

They are open to the idea but are still assessing how effective it would be.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control noted that testing technology, capacity and access to testing is improving. It added that “efforts are currently ongoing internationally to assess the risk reduction, determine what a feasible testing regime for air travel may look like, and gain some level of agreement on standards for a harmonized approach to testing globally in air transportation.”

#### WHO’S GOING TO DECIDE THIS?

The IATA is calling for rapid, accurate and scalable testing for all passengers. After airline executives appealed for help on this from the European Union and the White House’s COVID-19 task force, the issue appears to have moved to a United Nations forum, the International Civil Aviation Organization based in Montreal.

The ICAO is working on guidelines based on scientific advice that countries could use in establishing testing regimes. The issue is on the agenda for an Oct. 29 meeting, but that’s not a guarantee that guidelines will be approved.

#### WHAT TRIALS ARE UNDER WAY?

Various forms of testing have been tried for weeks in different places. What airlines want is a larger-scale international approach.

For instance, China requires a time-consuming negative polymerase chain reaction test before departure. At Frankfurt’s international airport, diagnostics firm Centogene has been offering tests to non-symptomatic people for 59 euros (\$69) for a result within 12 hours and 139 euros for six hours. A doctor’s certificate - for another 25 euros - can help avoid quarantine restrictions.

The Switzerland-based Commons Project Foundation and the World Economic Forum are holding trials this month for CommonPass, a digital health pass that lets travellers securely document compliance with COVID-19 test requirements through a QR code on their smartphones or on paper. The idea is to get around the problems posed by printed test results, which may be from unfamiliar labs or in a language that those inspecting them don’t know.



Cathay Pacific has trialled CommonPass with volunteers on a Hong Kong-Singapore flight and United Airlines will test it between London Heathrow and Newark Liberty International. The CDC's Martin S. Cetron, head of the global migration and quarantine division, says it is "eager to learn" from the trials and that CommonPass "could be one of the many potential tools." CommonPass could be adopted by individual countries, without waiting for international agreements.

#### WHAT'S THE HOLDUP?

There are a lot of moving parts to any testing regime. First off, the test must be accurate, fast and cheap enough to deploy on a large scale. Governments must agree to accept the results; while governments are represented in the ICAO, the organization's guidelines will not be mandatory. There has to be a way of certifying the result, while at the same time protecting privacy of passenger medical information, and a procedure for handling people who test positive.

Scientists warn there are concerns about the accuracy of some rapid tests. People can test negative for a couple of days after being infected. People can be infectious before they show symptoms, and these people may also test negative.

#### IS TESTING THE ONLY SOLUTION?

The International Air Transport Association advocates a layered approach. In addition to testing, that means: social distancing at the airport, touchless check-in, wearing masks in flight, and limiting passenger movement in the cabin.

In a survey published in May, consulting firm McKinsey asked 40 corporate travel planners what would give them the confidence to book travel. Seventy-five percent said they would want a vaccine, while 39% said testing. McKinsey said business travel spending exceeded \$1.4 trillion in 2018, or 21% of the global travel and hospitality sector. Business travellers drive 55% to 75% of the profit at top airlines - even though they make up less than 10% of passengers.

### Federal Emergency Management Agency

#### **New wildfires in Utah, Colorado force evacuations, 0% contained (FOX News)**

FOX News [10/18/2020 2:29 PM, Peter Aitken, 10362K]

Authorities have ordered evacuations in Colorado and Utah as new wildfires blaze across the states.

The Range Fire and Fire Canyon Fire have already burned through thousands of acres in less than a day in Utah, with the cause of both fires still under investigation.

The Fire Canyon Fire is believed to be human-caused, according to Utah authorities.

The Range Fire has burned approximately 1,500 acres and is 0% contained so far, but authorities cautioned that homeowners may be able to return to their homes sometime on Sunday.



The Boulder Office of Emergency Management said that nearly 900 homes have been evacuated already.

"It is still too dynamic to get in and even begin to assess where those homes may have been damaged or lost," said Mike Wagner, a member of the Boulder County Sheriff's Office.

No deaths or injuries have been reported and a cause of the CalWood Fire has not yet been determined, authorities said.

New wildfires have continued to spread over parts of the western United States, spreading rapidly to consume thousands of acres over the course of a day.

In Arizona, the Horse Fire has consumed nearly 8,500 acres since starting on Thursday, the Daily Courier reported.

Residents in Crown King near Prescott National Forest were evacuated from the area over the weekend as the fire raged nearby. Authorities worry that the fire will damage necessary communication structures, making it even more difficult to combat and contain the blaze.

#### **[MD] Hotel-turned-isolation-center helps hundreds in Baltimore (AP)**

AP [10/18/2020 5:04 PM, Staff, 422K]

A historic Baltimore hotel has been repurposed amid the coronavirus pandemic, serving as a free isolation center for people with COVID-19.

Since May, more than 600 people have come through the Lord Baltimore Hotel's doors, the Baltimore Sun reported. Referrals to the city's Triage, Respite, and Isolation Center come from hospitals as well as homeless shelters and recovery houses. It's intended for people who aren't sick enough to require hospitalization but who can't self-isolate at home.

The initiative is a partnership between Baltimore and the University of Maryland Medical System. It's being funded through \$103 million the city received from the federal coronavirus relief bill. While those dollars expire in December, city officials plan to seek funding from the Federal Emergency Management Agency to keep it open longer, the newspaper reported.

Leon Love, a 68-year-old Baltimore resident, stayed there last month. He says the good care he received there helped him make a full recovery.

The new business has also helped the hotel hire back 20 of the 60 employees laid off earlier in the pandemic, according to the newspaper.

#### **[AZ] Hot Shot Firefighters Arrive to Battle an Arizona Wildfire (AP)**

AP [10/18/2020 1:35 PM, Staff, 3498K]

A hot shot crew with additional firefighters and support equipment arrived Sunday to battle a wildfire that's forced evacuations in small mountain communities about 80 miles (129 kilometers) north of Phoenix.

The U.S. Forest Service said the blaze was showing "extreme fire behavior" and had grown to 14 square miles (36 square kilometers) as of Sunday morning with zero containment so

far.

Authorities said the wildfire fire began Thursday and its cause was under investigation.

It has been burning on juniper, chaparral, timber and 8-foot-high brush in a remote section of Prescott National Forest where firefighters face steep and rugged terrain.

Firefighting efforts are focused on the communities and infrastructure around it.

More than 250 firefighters were working the wildfire before the Southwest Area Type 1 Incident Management Team assumed command of the wildfire Sunday.

On Friday, the Yavapai County Sheriff's Office sent evacuation orders for residents of Crown King, Minnehaha and Horsethief Cabins.

Crown King is home to roughly 100 residents.

Authorities said the last known fire in October within the Prescott National Forest was in 2007 and was stopped at 630 acres.

## **Secret Service**

### **[TN] Belmont University in Nashville prepares for final Trump-Biden debate (The Center Square)**

The Center Square [10/16/2020 9:02 PM, Vivian Jones, Neutral, Secondary]

In less than a week, President Donald Trump and former Vice President Joe Biden will face off for the second and final presidential debate before the Nov. 3 election – and the stage is set.

The debate, organized by the Commission on Presidential Debates, will take place in the Curb Event Center at Belmont University in Nashville from 8 to 9:30 p.m. CDT on Thursday – 11 days before the election.

"While the debate itself will only last 90 minutes, the lessons imparted and the experiences that folks are having around this will last for a lifetime," Belmont University President Bob Fisher said during a news conference Friday. "We believe it's our responsibility as an institution of higher education to host events like this and to create forums where our country can make those decisions about our future."

After a debate scheduled for Oct. 15 in Miami was cancelled, Thursday's debate in Nashville will mark the last time the two candidates meet face to face before Americans choose the next president.

The debate will be moderated by Kristen Welker, a White House Correspondent for NBC who moderated a Democratic presidential primary debate with NBC colleagues Rachel Maddow, Andrea Mitchell and Ashley Parker in November 2019.

Thursday will be the second time a presidential debate is held on the Belmont campus. In October 2008, then-Sens. John McCain and Barack Obama faced off in a debate

moderated by NBC's Tom Brokaw.

Debate coverage is set to be broadcast in 40 countries.

"Next week, Belmont will once again shine a light on our great state, putting the eyes of the world on Tennessee just 11 days before Americans cast their vote for the President of the United States," Gov. Bill Lee said in a video statement, welcoming both candidates, the Commission on Presidential Debates and the world media to the state.

Extensive safety precautions are underway. All media and attendees are required to wear surgical grade masks throughout their time on the Belmont campus. Credentialed media are required to undergo a provided COVID-19 test and show proof of a negative result within 72 hours to gain access to the campus.

While the 2008 debate welcomed more than 2,500 media members to Belmont's campus, the media filing center is limited to 200 reporters to accommodate social distancing. An additional 48 TV broadcast teams will work from platforms on the campus lawn.

"We have a reputation for safety that we have built, and we are maintaining," Nashville Mayor John Cooper said. "We have taken action to control the virus instead of letting the virus control us."

Security, too, is extensive. The Secret Service has collaborated with Nashville's police and fire departments and the Office of Emergency Management to execute security for the candidates, attendees and media.

"This has been a unified and collaborative effort within the Nashville law enforcement public safety community," said Todd Hudson, special agent in charge of the Secret Service's Nashville Field Office.

Butch Ferran, board chairperson of the Nashville Convention Corporation, said he looks forward to the attention Nashville and Tennessee will receive.

"This debate will shine a very positive global spotlight on our city," Ferran said, noting the event will provide the city a "much-needed economic boost."

"I fully expect this debate to pay off as much as 2008," he said. "And I can only hope that FIFA is watching this, and that Saturday Night Live takes another shot at Nashville just a few days after."

## **Coast Guard**

### **[NY] Coast Guard Rescues Three Boaters off New York's Fire Island (Yahoo)**

Yahoo [10/18/2020 6:32 AM, Bill Gertz, 459K]

The US Coast Guard rescued three boaters from the ocean off Fire Island, New York on October 15, transporting them to safety via helicopter, according to local reports.

In a press release, the Coast Guard said that it was contacted around noon on Thursday about a disabled boat with the three people on board. Rescue crews hoisted the boaters



into a MH-65 Dolphin helicopter, as seen in this footage released by the Coast Guard.

"What started out in the early morning as a beautiful day for fishing offshore, very quickly deteriorated into hazardous weather conditions," said Cmdr. Valerie Boyd, Response Chief at Coast Guard Sector Long Island Sound. "The seamless coordination by the command center, outstanding judgement and risk management demonstrated by the Station Fire Island crew, coupled with the fast response and expert technical ability of the MH-65 crew, prevented a dangerous situation from worsening and likely saved the lives of the persons on board the distressed vessel."

**[FL] Cruise ship rescues 24 people from a sinking boat off Florida: report (FOX News)**  
FOX News [10/19/2020 4:23 AM, David Aaro, 10362K]

At least two dozen people aboard a sinking boat off the Florida coast were rescued by a massive Carnival Cruise Line ship on Saturday, according to multiple reports.

The Carnival Sensation, which reportedly had no guests onboard due to the coronavirus pandemic, came to the aid of the small boat that was in international waters roughly 37 miles off the coast of Palm Beach, Fla, the cruise line said.

The larger vessel came alongside the boat and gave its passengers, who were of various nationalities, life jackets, water, and food, according to the Miami Herald.

After the smaller craft started taking on water, the Sensation rescued all 24 people, including two children, and brought them aboard.

They were evaluated and quarantined from the crew before the U.S. Coast Guard later took the 24 people off the cruise ship, the paper reported.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention announced last month it had extended a "no sail" order for cruise ships through the end of October amid continued concerns due to the coronavirus pandemic.

This order, which was set to expire after Sept. 30, will continue to suspend passenger cruise ship operations that have the capacity to carry at least 250 passengers or more in waters subject to U.S. jurisdiction, according to a statement by the CDC. Carnival cruise ships aren't yet in service due to the pandemic and only have a limited crew onboard. It's not clear how the smaller vessel came under distress.

**[FL] Cruise ship rescues 24 people from boat off Florida coast (AP)**  
AP [10/18/2020 12:29 PM, Staff, 422K]

A Carnival Cruise Line ship rescued two dozen people, including two children, from a sinking boat 37 miles (about 60 kilometers) off the Florida coast, the cruise line reported Saturday.

It was not immediately clear why the smaller boat came under distress, but its passengers were taken on board the Carnival Sensation when the boat started taking on water. They were given life jackets, food, water and blankets.

The Miami Herald said the passengers were later transferred to the U.S. Coast Guard.

The cruise ship was in international waters 37 miles off the coast of Palm Beach when it came upon the struggling boat, whose passengers were of various nationalities, cruise line officials said. They were evaluated and quarantined from the crew.

Carnival cruise ships aren't yet in service and had no guests on board when it came to the smaller boat's aid.

## **CISA/Cybersecurity**

### **Toshiba targets \$3 billion revenue in quantum cryptography by 2030 (Reuters)**

Reuters [10/18/2020 12:32 PM, Makiko Yamazaki, 5304K]

Toshiba Corp 6502.T said on Monday it aims to generate \$3 billion in revenue from its advanced cryptographic technology for data protection by 2030, as the Japanese sprawling conglomerate scrambles to find future growth drivers.

The cyber security technology, called quantum key distribution (QKD), leverages the nature of quantum physics to provide two remote parties with cryptographic keys that are immune to cyberattacks driven by quantum computers.

Toshiba expects the global QKD market to grow to \$12 billion in 10 years with the advance of quantum computers, whose massive computational power could easily decipher conventional math-based cryptographic keys commonly used in finance, defence and health care.

The company is hoping to tap global demand for advanced cryptographic technologies as cyber security has come to the forefront of national defence. China is aggressively expanding network infrastructure for QKD, including quantum satellites that relay quantum signals.

The company said it has teamed up with Verizon Communications Inc VZ.N in the United States and BT Group BT.L in Britain in pilot QKD projects, and is in talks with another telecommunications carrier in South Korea.

Since a crisis stemming from the bankruptcy of the U.S. nuclear power business in 2017, Toshiba has conducted a series of restructuring steps, including the sale of its laptop and television set businesses.

It is now focusing on public infrastructure businesses that are resilient to a global economic slump driven by the coronavirus outbreak.

### **TikTok Tightens Crackdown On QAnon, Will Ban Accounts That Promote Disinformation (NPR)**

NPR [10/18/2020 7:11 PM, Bobby Allyn, 5227K]

TikTok is toughening its stance against the QAnon conspiracy theory, expanding its ban to all content or accounts that promote videos advancing baseless ideas from the far-right online movement.

The action hardens the video-sharing app's previous enforcement against QAnon that

targeted specific hashtags on the app that QAnon supporters have used to spread unfounded theories. Now, users that share QAnon-related content on TikTok will have their accounts deleted from the app.

"Content and accounts that promote QAnon violate our disinformation policy and we remove them from our platform," a TikTok spokesperson said in a statement to NPR. "We've also taken significant steps to make this content harder to find across search and hashtags by redirecting associated terms to our Community Guidelines."

TikTok's sweeping action against QAnon comes just as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and other technology giants have announced bans on content from the Trump-supporting conspiracy theory. QAnon started in October 2017 and has amassed an enormous following online thanks largely to social media companies.

"There should be recognition of a thing that is good and significant, even if it's long overdue," said Angelo Carusone, president of the liberal nonprofit watchdog group Media Matters for America. "TikTok is recognizing that by the nature of the QAnon movement, you can't just get rid of their communities, the content itself is the problem."

Earlier this month, Media Matters identified more than a dozen hashtags TikTokkers used to spread QAnon conspiracy theories about President Trump's positive coronavirus test, false beliefs about Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden and videos questioning the reality of the pandemic.

"We're talking about hundreds of millions of video views just for a limited segment of QAnon communities that we identified," Carusone said.

TikTok, which has 100 million monthly active users in the U.S., made its expanded ban against QAnon quietly in a statement to Media Matters, where it garnered little attention. A TikTok spokesperson confirmed the policy to NPR on Saturday.

Hany Farid, a UC Berkeley computer science professor who is a member of TikTok's committee of outside content moderation experts, said there is tension within social networks over how to respond to misinformation without also amplifying the underlying theories.

"When you ban it, you give it credibility. You give it attention," Farid told NPR.

"But the movement got big enough and dangerous enough that people were looking at the landscape and saying, 'Yeah, this is completely out of control,' " he said. "Were they slow to do it? Probably. But platforms get criticized when they act too quickly. So there is a dilemma there."

TikTok uses a mix of artificial intelligence and thousands of human content moderators to try to curb troubling content. The Chinese-owned app is best-known for viral dance challenges and comedic performances.

According to TikTok's Community Guidelines, misinformation that "causes harm to individuals, our community or the larger public" is prohibited on the site, including medical misinformation, which QAnon has engaged in by pushing false notions about the deadly



coronavirus.

Carusone of Media Matters said misinformation accounts on TikTok have been clever about avoiding detection by hijacking otherwise-benign hashtags, or creating new hashtags that are written slightly in code, among other strategies to evade efforts to curb the content.

"The test of this policy will be how much it affects the creation and germination of new QAnon content on TikTok," Carusone said. "If you know your video is going to be eliminated before it has a chance to spread, you're less likely to spend time polluting the TikTok pool."

The future of TikTok in the U.S. remains uncertain. A federal judge last month temporarily halted a Trump administration attempt to shut down the app. But a separate order from the White House for TikTok to divest from its Beijing owner or cease operations remains in place, with a deadline of Nov. 12 for TikTok to find an American buyer or close down its U.S. operations.

Trump officials cite national security concerns with TikTok's China-based corporate owner, ByteDance, but TikTok has long dismissed the effort as an crusade to score political points. The company says U.S. user data is controlled by an American-led team and that the Chinese government has never requested access to the data.

## **Terrorism Investigations**

### **[MI] 'Just cap her': Imagery reveals details of alleged Whitmer kidnap plot (CNN)**

CNN [10/18/2020 12:39 AM, Sara Sidner and Elizabeth Joseph, 7975K]

Videos, photographs and text messages between individuals charged by the Department of Justice with conspiring to kidnap Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer reveal details of their plan, their access to weapons and various training exercises.

One of the pieces of evidence is a video that was played in court showing the men doing training with weapons as they jump out of a vehicle and start firing their large rifles.

The imagery -- which is being used as evidence against the six alleged conspirators -- was provided to CNN affiliate WXMI by the US Attorney's office and reviewed by CNN.

"Have one person go to her house, knock on the door and when she answers it just cap her," reads one message in an encrypted group text thread.

That particular text message was also mentioned in the federal criminal complaint against the men.

In an encrypted group chat on September 17 that included Adam Fox, Ty Garbin, Kaleb Franks, Daniel Harris and Brandon Caserta -- all charged in the alleged kidnapping plot, according to a federal complaint -- Fox asked the group if they wanted to accept an invitation from a militia group to join an armed protest at the State Capitol.

"I would highly advise minimizing any communication with him. Also there needs to be zero and i mean zero public interaction if we want to continue with our plans," Garbin replied.



"When the time comes there will be no need to try and strike fear through presence. The fear will be manifested through bullets," Caserta said.

A video of Caserta -- who allegedly attended tactical training exercises in Michigan and Wisconsin and was part of the September 13 meeting in which the plan to kidnap Whitmer was discussed -- is included in the evidence obtained by WXMI.

"If this sh\*t goes down, OK, if this whole thing, you know, starts to happen, I'm telling you what, dude, I'm taking out as many of those m\*therf\*\*kers as I can -- every single one. ... I'm sick of being robbed and enslaved by the state, period," he says in the video.

It is unclear who he is speaking with or what exactly he's referring to.

In another group message, someone shared a social media post that included a news article about Whitmer.

"B\*tch needs to go ASAP boys," someone replies.

In another screengrab from a group text that same day, Garbin asks a person who would later act as an informant, and who is referred to in the federal complaint as "CHS-2," how a surveillance trip had gone.

CHS-2 shared a map of the area -- which is redacted in the evidence obtained by WXMI -- to which Garbin replied in a mixture of words and emojis, "suggesting demolition of a bridge would hinder a police response," federal authorities outline in the federal complaint.

CHS-2 provided the FBI with an image of a hand-drawn map of the lake near Whitmer's vacation home with the distance of the nearest police departments and the estimated response time. A photo of Fox allegedly drawing that map is included in the evidence obtained by WXMI.

Paul Mitchell, an attorney for Garbin, said he did not approve of the kidnapping plot.

"Our client is not guilty and took steps to disavow and withdraw," Mitchell said.

Under federal law, each of the six men faces "any term of years up to life in prison if convicted," according to the Department of Justice.

Eight other men, all associated with the extremist group Wolverine Watchmen, have been charged by the state of Michigan in the alleged terrorist plot to kidnap Whitmer.

#### **[MI] Whitmer kidnapper suspects captured exercising tactical training in PT Cruiser (FOX News)**

FOX News [10/18/2020 8:15 PM, Nick Givas, 10362K]

New video is helping put in perspective the chilling details that went into the alleged plot to kidnap Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer, police say.

In documents, videos, and pictures from the case obtained by Fox 17 via the US Attorney's office, details surrounding the plan were revealed as several men have been charged with conspiring to kidnap Whitmer and are preparing to head to trial.

In one video exhibit, suspects can be seen exiting a PT Cruiser with rifles in hand, firing off multiple rounds in what appears to be a training exercise, as the person recording the clip encourages them to continue.

"Have one person go to her house. Knock on the door and when she answers it just cap her," a screenshot of one of the text messages between the accused conspirators read.

Fox 17 reported that as of Sunday, 14 men had been charged with conspiracy to kidnap and kill Whitmer, but only five of those cases have been approved by the courts, thus far, to move forward.

This news comes just two days after Whitmer, a Democrat, spoke with NBC's "Meet The Press," and claimed that President Trump is instigating domestic terrorism and violence with her comments about her, when he should be working to slow the spread of COVID-19.

"Every moment that we are not focused on the fact that there are 220,000 Americans who died from this virus is good for him," she said.

Whitmer added: "So in that sense, as he incites additional violence against people who are just trying to save one another's lives, it's good for him. And that's why I don't want to talk about him endangering public servants' lives. I want to talk about what he hasn't done, and that's his job."

Whitmer's comments came less than 24 hours after Trump had held a campaign rally in her home state of Michigan, in which he criticized her stringent coronavirus-related restrictions, as his supporters chanted "Lock Her Up!" – a phrase frequently heard during Trump's first White House run in 2016 in reference to then-Democratic presidential nominee Hillary Clinton.

[Editorial note: consult video at source link]

## **National Security News**

### **Europe Is Still Wide Open to Russian Information-Warfare Attacks (Bloomberg)**

Bloomberg [10/19/2020 12:00 AM, Alberto Nardelli, 6400K]

Since news first broke that Russian opposition leader Alexey Navalny had been poisoned with a nerve agent, some of the most popular coverage in Germany has come from Kremlin-funded outlets questioning Berlin's efforts to blame Moscow for the attack.

RT Deutsch's stories denouncing the accusations as shrill and hypocritical ranked among the top 10 most shared sources on German-language social media on the subject, registering more engagement than official government statements or coverage in mainstream outlets like Welt, Bild and broadcaster ZDF, according to analysis by the European Union covering the period since the August attack.

The popular Kremlin-backed posts were just a part of a flood of stories from Russian state media across Europe that sought to cast doubt on the official German account, pushing unsubstantiated alternatives ranging from allegations Navalny's poisoning was a western

intelligence plot to claims he did it to himself. Echoing Russian officials' statements, the torrent was picked up by some German politicians, as well.

More than five years after Europe began trying to combat Russian disinformation in earnest, the Kremlin's campaigns are still hitting their targets. Alongside overt operations that take advantage of an information landscape that makes people distrustful and willing to buy into conspiracy theories, Moscow's outlets have steadily adapted their tactics to evade efforts to combat them, often using local media and writers to avoid detection and reach receptive audiences. The EU's focus on exposing Russian disinformation hasn't succeeded in substantially limiting its reach.

#### Kremlin 'Undeterred'

"The Kremlin remains largely undeterred in using disinformation as a political weapon," said Monika Richter, a senior director at Counter Action and former EU official at the East Stratcom Task Force. "The EU still predominantly tackles disinformation as a tech governance challenge -- but it is also a geopolitical security threat."

German counterintelligence singled out RT Deutsch and the state-backed Sputnik in a report published this year, saying that both play a "central role" in Russian disinformation operations and influence campaigning. But both continue to operate freely in Germany. RT Deutsch has more than 520,000 followers on Facebook and 437,000 subscribers on YouTube. They are especially popular among immigrants from the former Soviet Union and supporters of far-right and left parties.

"The main appeal is they pretend to present the truth that other media hide," said Susanne Spahn, an independent researcher on the issue. "This strategy to present themselves as independent and alternative is popular among special groups in Germany who have lost trust in mainstream media."

The Kremlin's counter-narratives in the Navalny case have been echoed by German politicians. Sevim Dagdelen, a lawmaker with the anti-capitalist Left party who sits on the foreign affairs committee on the Bundestag, said on a widely watched talk show that it wasn't at all clear whether the Novichok came from Russia since western intelligence agencies also had the agent.

Pushed by Sputnik in Italy and Poland, as well, that account also showed up in local media in Hungary and the Czech Republic, where several websites citing another Russian source claimed the whole case was a U.S. operation.

#### Political Fringes

To be sure, the Russian narratives rarely break out of the political fringes. In Germany, support for extremist parties has dropped during the coronavirus pandemic while backing for the government has strengthened. The EU study found that RT and Sputnik content about Navalny was far less successful when it came to English-language social media.

Still, Russian disinformation operations in recent years have expanded and become better, more targeted and sophisticated, which has in turn made it harder to trace.



“There is an increased focus in finding domestic local actors that will spread and amplify disinformation,” said Jakub Kalensky, a senior fellow at the Atlantic Council’s Digital Forensic Research Lab and former head of the EU team countering Russian efforts. “The EU is moving slower than the information aggressors.”

In Finland and Lithuania, government programs in schools to teach students how to identify disinformation are credited with helping increase resilience to Russian efforts. The U.S. has forced Kremlin-backed media to register as ‘foreign agents,’ an approach that European officials have so far avoided on civil-liberties grounds.

Russian efforts have been detected beyond issues directly affecting Moscow. Two French websites with ties to a news agency previously linked to Russian military intelligence were found this summer to be spreading disinformation about Covid-19. A fake story about failed vaccine trials in Ukraine originally published on the website of the self-proclaimed Lugansk People’s Republic was picked up by several Russian-language media and fringe conspiracy outlets earlier this year.

#### Fake Personas

Russian-controlled outlets have used fake personas, local websites masquerading as independent outlets and forged documents to push claims that Covid-19 was manufactured in North Atlantic Treaty Organization country labs, according to analysis gathered by the military alliance.

The EU acknowledges that some member states could be doing more to combat and prevent disinformation from spreading in their own countries.

“Disinformation is usually sophisticated in the way that it is tailor-made for a specific market in the local language and in the local context of its history, relations with Russia, ethnic composition, political situation, presence of far right or far left political parties and local actors willing to be part of the disinformation activities,” said spokesman Peter Stano. “There is a big role for the member state to fight disinformation.”

But governments struggle to keep up. “The toolbox of conventional government communications is insufficient to expose the covert strand of the Kremlin’s ongoing disinformation campaign,” said Stratcom’s Richter.

#### **[Armenia] Armenia, Azerbaijan blame each other for truce violations (AP)**

AP [10/18/2020 10:15 AM, Avet Demourian, 422K]

Despite a second attempt at a cease-fire, Armenia and Azerbaijan traded accusations Sunday of violating the new truce in their destructive conflict over the separatist region of Nagorno-Karabakh.

The latest truce, which was announced Saturday and took force at midnight, was the second attempt to establish a cease-fire since heavy fighting between Armenian and Azerbaijani forces broke out in Nagorno-Karabakh on Sept. 27. The fighting and shelling has killed hundreds of people — both combatants and civilians — and marks the biggest escalation of a decades-old conflict over the region in more than a quarter-century.

The fighting, involving heavy artillery, rockets and drones, has continued despite repeated

calls for cessation of hostilities coming from around the globe. It also raises the specter of a wider conflict that could draw in Russia and Turkey and threaten Caspian Sea energy exports.

Armenian military officials on Sunday reported artillery shelling and missile strikes by Azerbaijani forces in the conflict zone overnight. In the morning, "the enemy launched an attack in the southern direction," and there were "casualties and wounded on both sides," Armenian Defense Ministry spokeswoman Shushan Stepanian said.

Azerbaijan's Defense Ministry, in turn, maintained that Armenian forces used mortars and artillery in the conflict zone overnight despite the cease-fire and in the morning attempted attacks in several directions. The ministry accused Armenia of using large-caliber weapons to attack the positions of the Azerbaijani army in two regions north of Nagorno-Karabakh along the border, a claim Armenian military officials denied.

The Azerbaijani military also said it downed an Armenian Su-25 warplane "attempting to inflict airstrikes on the positions of the Azerbaijan army in the Jabrayil direction," but Stepanian dismissed the statement as untrue.

Nagorno-Karabakh lies within Azerbaijan but has been under the control of ethnic Armenian forces backed by Armenia since a war there ended in 1994.

According to Nagorno-Karabakh officials, 673 of their servicemen have been killed in the renewed fighting. Azerbaijan hasn't disclosed its military losses, but says 60 civilians have died so far and 270 have been wounded.

Turkey has publicly backed oil-rich Azerbaijan in the conflict and vowed to help it reclaim its territory.

Russia, which has a security pact with Armenia but has cultivated warm ties with Azerbaijan, hosted top diplomats from both countries last week for more than 10 hours of talks that ended with the initial cease-fire agreement. But the deal frayed immediately after the truce took effect last Saturday, with both sides blaming each other for breaching it.

The new cease-fire agreement was announced a week later on Saturday, following Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov's calls with his counterparts from Armenia and Azerbaijan, in which he strongly urged them to abide by the Moscow deal.

But several hours after the truce took force at midnight, both sides started accusing each other of breaching the agreement.

Later Sunday, Armenia and Azerbaijan reiterated their commitments to the cease-fire in statements issued by their foreign ministries, and laid the blame for the breaches on each other.

Azerbaijan "reserves its right to take counter measures to protect its civilians and positions," the country's Foreign Ministry said.

Yerevan "will continue to undertake all necessary measures to impose peace on Azerbaijan and establish a cease-fire regime which will entail precise and effective mechanisms for

maintaining and verifying it," Armenian Foreign Ministry said.

In a separate statement, the Armenia said the Azerbaijani government in Baku "categorically rejected" an attempt to reach an agreement on withdrawing wounded soldiers from the battlefield through mediation by the International Committee of the Red Cross.

Azerbaijani authorities said they were prepared to hand over the bodies of some Armenian servicemen to Armenia through mediation by the ICRC and an agreed-upon border corridor "in the direction of the Tovuz region." Officials didn't clarify how many bodies that entailed.

**[Syria] White House Envoy Met Syrian Official Over American Hostages (Bloomberg)**  
Bloomberg [10/18/2020 9:31 PM, Jennifer Jacobs and Sophia Cai, 6400K]

A top White House official went to Damascus this summer to negotiate the release of two American hostages, according to two people familiar with the matter, a rare sign of diplomacy between the U.S. and Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's regime.

Kash Patel, a top White House counterterrorism official, met with an undisclosed Syrian official to discuss the release of American journalist Austin Tice, who was abducted eight years ago while on assignment in Syria, and Syrian-American therapist Majd Kamalmaz, who disappeared in 2017 after being stopped at a government checkpoint.

The talks -- reported earlier by the Wall Street Journal -- come as the U.S. tries to force Assad's regime to negotiate an end to the ongoing civil war and are a part of the Trump administration's broader push to wind down some troop deployments in the Middle East.

Since taking office in 2017, President Donald Trump has twice launched military strikes on Assad's regime in response to the use of chemical weapons. Nevertheless, Trump said in March that the U.S. was working with Syria to secure Tice's release, and the president has touted his record of negotiating the return of American hostages at recent campaign rallies.

Trump administration officials met last week in Washington with Abbas Ibrahim, the influential head of Lebanon's General Security agency, who has had a hand in securing the release of three hostages, including Sam Goodwin, a U.S. citizen released from Syria last year. Guests at a dinner for Ibrahim on Friday included Diane Foley, the mother of American journalist James Foley, who covered Syria's civil war and was beheaded by Islamic State in 2014.

**[Syria] Top Trump administration official met with Assad regime over imprisoned Americans (CNN)**

CNN [10/18/2020 10:20 PM, Kylie Atwood, 7975K]

A top Trump administration official met with the Assad regime in Damascus this fall in an effort to secure the release of American prisoners believed to be held by the Syrian dictator, two administration officials confirmed to CNN.

Kash Patel, the senior director for counterterrorism at the National Security Council, made the trip with the support of President Donald Trump and in coordination with the State Department, the officials said. The US has not had diplomatic relations with Syria since 2012.



CNN previously reported Trump wrote a letter to Syrian President Bashar al-Assad earlier this year that offered "direct dialogue" over Austin Tice, one of the Americans believed to be held by the Assad regime.

Tice, an American journalist, went missing in Syria in 2012. State Department Special Representative for Syria Jim Jeffrey said in December 2018 that the US believes Tice is alive and "is being held captive inside Syria."

Roger Carstens, the US Special Presidential Envoy for Hostage Affairs, met with Debra Tice, Austin Tice's mother, at the State Department last week.

The Wall Street Journal was first to report on Patel's visit and the involvement of national security adviser Robert O'Brien in the process.

O'Brien, who was the top hostage negotiator at the State Department before he became Trump's national security adviser, has been engaged in the process. Lebanese security chief Major-General Abbas Ibrahim met O'Brien to discuss the Americans held in Syria, according to one administration official.

Ibrahim, director-general of Lebanon's General Directorate of General Security, was involved in helping to secure the release of Sam Goodwin, a 30-year-old American who was held for 62 days after disappearing in Syria last year while traveling.

Tice's family and the family of Majd Kamalmaz, a Syrian-American who went missing in Syria in 2017, did not provide a comment.

**[Syria] White House official went to Syria seeking Americans' release (Reuters)**

Reuters [10/18/2020 7:24 PM, Jeff Mason and Arshad Mohammed, 5304K]

A White House official traveled to Damascus earlier this year for secret meetings with the Syrian government seeking the release of at least two U.S. citizens thought to be held there, a Trump administration official said on Sunday.

The official, who spoke on condition of anonymity, named the official as Kash Patel, a deputy assistant to President Donald Trump and the top White House counterterrorism official, saying he had flown to Damascus.

"It is emblematic of how President Trump has made it a major priority to bring Americans home who have been detained overseas," said the official, who was confirming a report in the Wall Street Journal.

The White House and the State Department did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

The newspaper, citing Trump administration officials and others familiar with the negotiations, described Patel's trip as the first time such a high-level U.S. official had met in Syria with the isolated government of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad in more than a decade.

Syria erupted into civil war nearly a decade ago after Assad in 2011 began a brutal crackdown on protesters calling for an end to his family's rule.

The newspaper said U.S. officials hoped a deal with Assad could free Austin Tice, a freelance journalist and former Marine officer who disappeared while reporting in Syria in 2012, and Majd Kamalmaz, a Syrian-American therapist who disappeared after being stopped at a Syrian government checkpoint in 2017.

At least four other Americans are believed to be held by the Syrian government, the newspaper reported, but little is known about those cases.

The Journal reported that Trump wrote Assad a private letter in March, proposing a “direct dialogue” about Tice.

It said that Lebanon’s top security chief, Abbas Ibrahim, met last week at the White House with national security adviser Robert O’Brien to discuss the Americans held in Syria, according to people involved in the talks.

Talks with Syria have not gotten very far, according to people briefed on them, the newspaper reported, saying Damascus has repeatedly demanded Washington withdraw all its forces from the country.

#### **[Israel] U.S.-Israeli Delegation Lands in Bahrain to Formalize Historic Peace Deal (Breitbart)**

Breitbart [10/19/2020 3:32 AM, Deborah Danan, 1912K]

Landing in Bahrain late Sunday to formalize the newly signed, U.S-brokered normalization deal with Israel, the head of an Israeli delegation said in Arabic that Israel “extends its hands for genuine peace with the Bahraini people.”

“Together we will change the reality in the region for the benefit of our nations. God willing, we will host you in Israel soon,” Israeli National Security Adviser Meir Ben-Shabbat said, according to a translation by the Times of Israel.

He then switched to Hebrew and quoted from the Book of Genesis: “‘Let there be light, and there was light. And the Eternal One saw it was good.’ Let us bring light, and expand good.”

The joint U.S.-Israeli delegation arrived in the tiny Gulf kingdom in the first-ever nonstop passenger flight from Israel.

The U.S. delegation was headed by Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin and White House’s special envoy to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict Avi Berkowitz.

Bahraini Foreign Minister Abdullatif bin Rashid Al-Zayani, who welcomed the delegations on the tarmac, said the occasion “builds on the historic occasion at the White House last month, taking the next steps to implement the declaration in support of peace, and the Abraham Accords.

“ We do so in conviction that this approach of engagement and cooperation is the most effective, the most sustainable way to bring about genuine and lasting peace, one which safeguards the rights of the Middle East’s peoples.”

I have optimism that such a peace will bring new stability and prosperity to the region,

allowing our young people across the Middle East to achieve their potential and aspiration, which they have been denied for too long.

Today, we put in place the foundations through which we can reach this goal, establishing a practical framework to advance both our bilateral cooperation and our ongoing partnership our countries enjoy with the United States of America,” the top Bahraini diplomat said. “My hope is that this visit marks another step forward on the road to a truly peaceful, secure, stable and thriving Middle East, one in which all states, races and faiths resolve differences through dialogue and develop for our children a new reality of coexistence and prosperity.”

The two countries are set to sign a “Joint Communiqué” which Israeli media reported will include around eight memoranda of understanding on various topics including justice, communications, visas, science and technology, trade, energy and agriculture.

The Bahrain normalization deal, together with a similar deal with the UAE, comprise the Abraham Accords signed last month at a White House ceremony.

The UAE deal passed overwhelmingly in a Knesset vote on Thursday, except for 13 MKs — all from the Arab Joint List party — which voted against it, on the basis that it undermines the peace process with the Palestinians.

According to strategic advisor to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Aaron Klein, the Arab parliamentarians “sided with Iran, Hezbollah, Hamas, Turkey in voting against the deal.”

Klein, who was interviewed on the John Batchelor show, went on to say that more and more Arab and Muslim countries are finally “understanding that it’s time for them to join the circle of peace and to act in their own interests.”

The deals represent “peace through strength, peace through mutual interests and peace for peace,” Klein, who formerly served as Breitbart Jerusalem’s bureau chief, said.

The Palestinian leadership, however, has been mired in rejectionism for decades, Klein observed. The 1993 Oslo Peace Accords saw the Palestinians make extreme demands including calling for Israel to uproot Jewish communities in the West Bank and concede the Temple Mount — Judaism’s holiest site — to Palestinian control.

Klein stressed the leadership, and not Palestinians themselves, was the main problem.

“A lot of the Palestinians would want peace with Israel given where the region is heading and given the enormous economic benefit it would have. It would infuse their economy and bring an untold number of jobs to the Palestinian arena,” he said.

Historically, “the Palestinians were actually rewarded for their intractable positions,” Klein said, and “Israel was pushed into more and more concessions.”

“The Palestinians have to understand that they’re going to be left behind if they continue if they continue on the path of resistance,” Klein concluded.



**[Afghanistan] Despite its 10-day assault in Helmand, Afghan Taliban accuse U.S. military of violating February accord (Washington Post)**

Washington Post [10/18/2020 10:10 AM, Pamela Constable, 13480K]

The Taliban, facing international condemnation for a 10-day assault in southern Helmand province, is accusing the U.S. military of violating their February accord by carrying out "excessive" aerial attacks and bombings in recent days.

In a statement Sunday, the insurgents played down their own attack on areas around Helmand's provincial capital, which has forced thousands of villagers to flee their homes and left scores hospitalized.

The assault has aroused public alarm and anger, leading many Afghans to question why their government is holding peace talks with the Taliban, especially as the insurgents are hardening their negotiating position after President Trump said he wanted to withdraw all U.S. troops by year's end.

The Taliban delegates to the talks in Doha welcomed Trump's announcement and publicly wished for his reelection — and then turned on their American interlocutors with their accusations.

"All contents of the U.S.-Islamic Emirate accord are unambiguous, but the other side has violated its commitments on numerous occasions, engaging in provocative actions and bombing noncombat zones," spokesman Qari Yousef Ahmadi said in the statement. "All responsibility and consequences . . . shall fall squarely on the American side."

The U.S. military spokesman in Kabul responded that the strikes were "consistent" with both the U.S.-Taliban agreement and a joint declaration between Afghan and U.S. officials.

"We categorically reject the Taliban's claim that the United States has violated the U.S.-Taliban agreement," Col. William Leggett tweeted. He said U.S. airstrikes in both Helmand and Farah provinces were "solely in defense of" Afghan military forces as they are being attacked by the Taliban.

"The entire world has witnessed the Taliban's offensive operations in Helmand — attacks which injured and displaced thousands of innocent Afghan civilians," he said, adding that "all sides" in the conflict must "reduce violence to allow the political process to take hold."

Trump's call this month for a complete U.S. troop withdrawal has been viewed as a major concession to the Taliban, who have long demanded that U.S. forces leave the country. The insurgents agreed in February to reduce violence, cut ties with extremist groups and refrain from attacking U.S. forces in return for the gradual withdrawal of all U.S. troops by May.

It was soon after Trump's announcement that the Taliban launched the assault in Helmand, triggering accusations that they had violated the U.S. accord and jeopardized the entire peace process. U.S. officials appealed to the Taliban last week to stop, then met with its leaders in Doha to try to salvage the deal they spent 18 months negotiating.

Zalmay Khalilzad, the U.S. envoy to the talks, tweeted Saturday that both sides had agreed on a "reset" that would reduce violence. He did not provide details.

Meanwhile, the peace process between the Afghan government and the Taliban remained mired in disputes over procedural rules, as it has been since the talks started Sept. 12. The sides have yet to touch on the critical issues at stake: How to end the country's 19-year civil conflict and combine two starkly different visions of a future government into one.

In recent days, Afghan delegates to the talks said the Taliban was doubling down on its initial demands over the rules and terms to govern substantive discussions. The Taliban has insisted that all talks be conducted under the terms of the U.S.-Taliban pact, which did not include any Afghans, and under the authority of Sunni Muslim law, although Afghanistan has a sizable non-Sunni minority.

Since Trump's announcement, several Afghan delegates in Doha say, the Taliban's initial stiff but polite reception has given way to sharper, dismissive rebuffs. One delegate said the Taliban is acting "as if they have defeated the United States" and the Afghan delegation is there to surrender.

"We still want to act responsibly and find a way to end the war through negotiations, but as the violence rises, public pressure is mounting and people are starting to question why we are even at the table," said delegate Nader Nadery, an Afghan government administrator. "We have to find a balance between the sense of urgency and the temptation to rush into a peace that cannot hold."

On Saturday, a Taliban spokesman in Doha said the group wants to keep negotiating and has actually reduced its attacks in recent months.

Afghan delegates said they, too, will continue to participate, but they expected the talks to languish until after the Nov. 3 U.S. election. The Taliban appear to hope that a reelected Trump would abandon the war entirely, while Afghan analysts say a Biden administration would probably review U.S. policy and consult with military leaders, who advise keeping some troops here permanently.

Few Afghans believe the insurgents could take over the country by force, but many expect it's inevitable that they will play a significant role in any future government. Afghan and foreign experts have labored for months to come up with viable options for joint rule, but with the talks at a standstill, those efforts have been left on the drawing board.

Instead, a flurry of informal proposals have emerged. At one extreme is an Iran-style regime, led by Muslim clerics with controlled elections and technocratic ministries. At the other is a civilian-led government with some religious modifications and Taliban members holding some senior posts.

The role of religious influence is particularly sensitive. The Taliban members are hard-line Sunnis. Critics worry about the establishment of a Sunni theocracy in a country with a 15 percent Shiite minority that has long avoided sectarian strife.

"This has created fear that the Taliban want to pave the way for future discriminatory laws," said Ali Amiri, a professor at Ibn Sena University, located in Kabul's main community of ethnic Hazara Shiites. "The worry is that a post-peace power structure will be built on religious discrimination."

The uncertain path forward has been complicated by Afghan domestic politics. The government of President Ashraf Ghani is weak and unpopular, and some of his rivals hope for a deal in which the Taliban agrees to a permanent cease-fire in return for an interim government.

"My worry is not the Taliban taking over, it is internal collapse," said Rahmatullah Nabil, a former national intelligence chief. "Ghani has no leverage, and the Taliban have gained a lot of legitimacy from the U.S. deal. They may surround the cities and put on more pressure until they get a deal. We need to save our institutions, and we need new leadership to do that. The Taliban has a Plan B, but the government does not."

But aides to Ghani said the Taliban assault on Helmand has helped rob the insurgents of moral and religious credibility. One delegate in Doha said he felt "sick to my stomach" after hearing one Taliban delegate said they did not regret killing civilians in Helmand because there were "not Muslims."

One national security aide said the Taliban, who for years presented itself as waging a jihad against the West, has forfeited that claim by striking a deal with the United States that did little to benefit Afghanistan and by ramping up violent attacks on civilians from their own religion and homeland.

"Freedom fighters do not kill their own people or wage such destruction on them," said Javed Faisal, a spokesman for the national security adviser's office. "Their cruelty is being exposed and their jihadi narrative is hollow. No matter what happens at the table, even if the Americans give everything away, even if we do, this war is going to go on, because the Taliban show no will for peace."

**[China] China threatens to detain innocent Americans after DOJ arrests Chinese 'spies,' Gen. Keane warns (FOX News)**

FOX News [10/18/2020 7:15 PM, Yael Halon, 10362K]

The Chinese government is threatening to detain innocent U.S. nationals in China in retaliation to the Justice Department's prosecution of Chinese military-affiliated scholars, Fox News senior strategic analyst Gen. Jack Keane warned Sunday.

"China wants to retaliate," Keane told "Fox & Friends." "They've done this kind of retaliation with the Canadians — right now they've got two of them arrested...and they've also done it with the Australians and Swedes.

"The difference is, " Keane continued, "we're arresting spies. What China will likely do is detain Americans who have done nothing. They are not guilty of anything."

Chinese officials reportedly issued several retaliatory warnings to U.S. government representatives through the U.S. Embassy in Beijing and other channels -- according to the Wall Street Journal -- who spoke with people familiar with the matter.

"The Chinese message, the people said, has been blunt: The U.S. should drop prosecutions of the Chinese scholars in American courts, or Americans in China might find themselves in violation of Chinese law," according to the newspaper.

China began issuing warnings this summer after the U.S. arrested multiple Chinese



scientists who were said to be visiting American universities to conduct research. They were charged with hiding their connection to the People's Liberation Army from U.S. immigration authorities, the Journal reported Saturday.

Keane said Chinese authorities have a history of detaining foreign nationals in what he characterized as "hostage" diplomacy.

"It's not like the Cold War with the Soviet Union, [where] we arrested their spies, they arrested ours, and we exchanged them at some point," he explained.

'So, yes... hostages, that would be an appropriate description of what the Chinese intend to do."

[Editorial note: consult video at source link]

**[China] China warns Americans could be arrested over DOJ prosecution of Chinese scholars: report (FOX News)**

FOX News [10/18/2020 12:21 AM, Staff, 10362K]

Chinese government officials are warning their American counterparts they may detain U.S. nationals in China in response to the Justice Department's prosecution of Chinese military-affiliated scholars, according to people familiar with the matter.

The Chinese officials have issued the warnings to U.S. government representatives repeatedly and through multiple channels, the people said, including through the U.S. Embassy in Beijing.

The Chinese message, the people said, has been blunt: The U.S. should drop prosecutions of the Chinese scholars in American courts, or Americans in China might find themselves in violation of Chinese law.

China started issuing the warning this summer after the U.S. began arresting a series of Chinese scientists, who were visiting American universities to conduct research, and charged them with concealing from U.S. immigration authorities their active duty statuses with the People's Liberation Army, the people said.

The arrests were the subject of a Wall Street Journal article that also reported U.S. allegations that Chinese diplomats were coordinating activities with the researchers, and described that as a factor in ordering China to close its Houston consulate in July and remove the remaining military scientists from the country.

Chinese authorities have on occasion detained foreign nationals in moves seen by their governments as baseless, or in some instances as diplomatic retaliation, a tactic that many in Washington policy circles have referred to as "Hostage diplomacy." China has denied U.S. citizens permission to exit from the country, and arrested, charged or sentenced Canadian, Australian, and Swedish citizens on what officials from those governments have said are bogus allegations.

**[China] China Lawmakers Pass Export Control Law to Protect Tech (Bloomberg)**

Bloomberg [10/18/2020 7:24 PM, Tom Mackenzie, 6400K] Video: [HERE](#)

China passed a new law to restrict sensitive exports to protect national security, helping Beijing gain reciprocity against U.S. as tech tensions mount.

**[China] China passes export-control measure amid tensions with US (The Hill)**

[The Hill](#) [10/18/2020 2:40 PM, Joseph Choi, 2343K]

China has passed new laws that restrict the export of controlled items such as military and nuclear items, technologies, services and data.

Though no countries were singled out in the announcement, this move comes a month after the U.S. heightened tensions with Beijing by inhibiting exports of China's biggest chipmaker Semiconductor Manufacturing International Corp. The U.S. government has taken a series of actions against Chinese-owned tech businesses like Huawei and TikTok for possible threats to national security.

The law, set to take effect on Dec. 1, was passed by the National People's Congress Standing Committee, the highest legislative body in China. On the National People's Congress website the law was said to be "formulated for the purpose of safeguarding national security and interests."

The new legislation will allow the Chinese government to retaliate against countries or regions that abuse export controls and threaten their national security and interests. Companies or individuals who are found to violate these export laws could be punished with a fine of 5 million yuan (\$746,500), or twenty times the value of any business transactions that break the law, according to the Associated Press.

Apart from concerns for national security, President Trump's repeated blame on China for the COVID-19 pandemic has also contributed to worsening relations between China and the U.S.

On Thursday, the AP reported that officials from the U.S. State Department had advised the Nevada government to not use 250,000 Chinese-made testing kits donated to the state by the United Arab Emirates. Officials were concerned that the tests lacked sufficient accuracy and put patient privacy at risk. The tests were made by the BGI Group, a Chinese company that is the largest genetic sequencing company in the world. BGI denied having access to patient data.

**[North Korea] Kim Jong-un threatens Trump with new ballistic missile capable of targeting U.S. (Washington Times)**

[Washington Times](#) [10/18/2020 6:32 AM, Bill Gertz, 459K]

North Korea's rollout last week of an intercontinental ballistic missile capable of targeting the U.S. with a nuclear warhead showed that Pyongyang continues to expand its illegal weapons arsenal despite increased sanctions and diplomatic pressure from the Trump administration.

The communist regime of North Korean leader Kim Jong-un unveiled the road-mobile ICBM during a massive military parade in Pyongyang that U.S. experts said was clearly designed to send a message to Washington and its allies in the region, including South Korea.

“This parade was orchestrated to show that despite the sanctions and hardships, [North Korea] has continued to advance its capabilities across the spectrum, from nuclear weapons and missiles to conventional systems to individual soldier equipment,” said David Maxwell, a former U.S. Special Forces colonel focused on North Korea.

“Most important, it laid the foundation for continued blackmail diplomacy with the South and the U.S.,” said Mr. Maxwell, a senior fellow with the Foundation for Defense of Democracies.

He circulated his comments via email as U.S. officials scrambled to gauge the technical implications of what they had seen over the weekend on North Korean state-controlled TV broadcasts.

The ICBM that rolled through a parade marking the 75th anniversary of the Kim regime’s ruling Workers’ Party appeared to be a significantly ramped-up version of the Hwasong-15 missile that Pyongyang test-launched in 2017.

The ICBM, which had not been shown before in public, was rolled onto a transporter-erector launcher with 11 axles, two more than the Hwasong-15 — also known as the KN-22. It marks the fourth ballistic missile that the North Koreans have developed in a class that also includes the Taepodong, KN-20 and KN-22.

The parade in Pyongyang also showcased the KN-20 and a submarine-launched ballistic missile called the KN-11. The larger, newer ICBM is expected to have a longer range than the others, with a potential capability of flying some 7,000 miles — notably farther than the distance from Pyongyang to Washington.

National security sources have predicted for months that North Korea might use the Workers’ Party anniversary parade for a missile reveal, delivering an “October surprise” to capitalize on perceived policy uncertainty in Washington surrounding the impending U.S. presidential election.

A senior Trump administration official expressed frustration over the reveal.

“It is disappointing to see the DPRK continuing to prioritize its prohibited nuclear and ballistic missile program over working towards a brighter future for the North Korean people,” the official told Reuters, using the acronym for North Korea’s official name, the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea.

The development appears to fly in the face of the Trump administration’s pursuit of a major denuclearization deal with the Kim regime. Talks toward such a deal have been stalled since the breakdown of the February 2019 Hanoi summit between President Trump and Mr. Kim.

Mr. Trump said he walked away from the summit early because Mr. Kim demanded sweeping sanctions relief in exchange for only a limited commitment to destroy part of his nuclear arsenal.

The period since has been marked by on-again, off-again provocations from Pyongyang, including months of short-range missile launch tests that the Trump administration has



largely ignored.

Mr. Trump has repeatedly pointed out that, despite the tests, the Kim regime has thus far held to a promise he said Mr. Kim made at the first summit between the two men in June 2018 in Singapore: not to carry out any more ICBM or nuclear launches. This weekend's action was considered a parade rollout, not a test launch.

While the Trump administration remains eager to resume dialogue with the North Koreans, it has gradually increased sanctions on the Kim regime. U.S. officials have vowed to maintain a "maximum pressure" campaign until Pyongyang denuclearizes.

But Washington has struggled to get a full buy-in for the sanctions from China, which shares a border with North Korea and is Pyongyang's main strategic and economic backer. Hawkish foreign policy advisers in Washington have called on the Trump administration to level sanctions directly against Chinese banks doing business with the Kim regime.

The regime, meanwhile, has shown an ongoing ability to produce nuclear bombs and increasingly sophisticated missiles, exposing the limitations of U.S. and international sanctions.

North Korea has been under United Nations-backed sanctions and a nuclear embargo for more than two decades and has repeatedly violated past diplomatic nuclear agreements with the wider international community.

A U.N. panel of experts reported several years ago that North Korea's mobile missiles were built on transporter-erector launchers converted from Chinese lumber-carrying vehicles exported in the early 2000s.

The display of missile force over the weekend was the first since 2018, when the Trump administration began its push for diplomacy with the Kim regime.

Video of the Saturday parade in Pyongyang showed Mr. Kim opening the proceedings with a midnight speech.

"We will continue to strengthen war deterrence for self-defense to deter, control and manage all dangerous attempts and threatening acts, including ever-growing nuclear threats, from hostile forces," said the North Korean leader, who was dressed in a light-gray suit, according to South Korea's Yonhap News Agency.

North Korea uses the term "war deterrence" in referring to nuclear arms.

Mr. Kim also said North Korean military power would not be used preemptively. "But," he said, "should anyone undermine our national security and mobilize military power against us, I will retaliate by using the most powerful offensive force at our disposal and in a preemptive manner."

North Korean long-range missile development in recent years has forced the Pentagon to reevaluate its strategic missile defenses.

"I believe we have the capability today to deter North Korean aggression, but given where

we think the North Korean capability might be in terms of their missiles in the next five years, I think we must continue to explore, improve and resource our entire missile defense capabilities,” Adm. Philip Davidson, commander of the military’s Indo-Pacific Command, said in 2018.

Upgraded defenses include Theater High-Altitude Area Defenses (THAAD) in Guam and South Korea, missile defense ships in the Pacific and near Japan.

“I support planned improvements to the [ballistic missile defense] of the homeland architecture via the new Homeland Defense Radar for Hawaii, additional purchase of Ground Based Interceptors, and a detailed study that ascertains the efficacy of positioning interceptors in Hawaii,” Adm. Davidson said.

The admiral also said he wanted to see improvements in the capabilities and numbers of ballistic and cruise missile interceptors that he said would “further enhance homeland defense capabilities and protect key regional nodes from North Korea’s aggressive action against the United States.”

Richard Fisher, a military affairs specialist with the International Assessment and Strategy Center, said the new North Korean ICBM unveiled over the weekend appears to have the same diameter as the previously revealed KN-22, “but is longer, to accommodate a new warhead bus and possible third stage.”

“The warhead bus is large enough to carry multiple warheads, but how many would depend on their size, something not clear from North Korean sources,” Mr. Fisher said.

The new 22-wheeled ICBM vehicle, a transportor erector launcher (TEL), appears to be a variant of the 16-wheel transporters that China sold to North Korea in 2010.

“With 22 wheels, this new ICBM has the largest mobile TEL in the world, exceeding the previous record of the HS-15’s 18-wheel TEL,” Mr. Fisher said.

“It is either made in China or assembled in North Korea with substantial Sanjiang Space Group/China Science and Industry Corp. assistance,” he said. “It is safe to conclude this is yet another massive Chinese violation of the North Korea sanctions regime.”

#### **[Australia] Australia to set up Pacific Islands security centre in Vanuatu (Reuters)**

Reuters [10/19/2020 12:20 AM, Kirsty Needham, 5304K]

A centre focusing on the security concerns of Pacific island nations will start work in Vanuatu next year, Australia said on Monday, hosting analysts and sharing information on issues from maritime risks to human trafficking and disinformation.

The Australia-backed Pacific Fusion Centre in Vanuatu’s capital of Port Vila will also spotlight areas such as illegal fishing, drug smuggling, human trafficking and climate change, Australian foreign minister Marise Payne said in a statement.

In preparation, a team of 21 analysts from 14 Pacific Island nations began training in the capital, Canberra, in September last year.

“It has acted as a reliable source of information for Pacific governments,” Payne added,

listing coronavirus issues on food and border security and combating disinformation among those on which the analysts advised.

The move is part of the Pacific Step Up strategy Australia announced in 2018, regarded as a bid to counter China's growing influence in a region where Australia has traditionally been the largest aid donor.

In the statement, Vanuatu foreign minister Marc Ati said, "Vanuatu looks forward to working with Australia to establish the Pacific Fusion Centre, to complement and bolster existing regional security architecture."

**{End of Report} RETURN TO TOP**





# DIRECTOR'S WEEKLY OPERATIONS INFOGRAPHIC

**CISA CENTRAL**

202.282.9201

October 19, 2020

## ALERT LEVELS

NTAS	None		Bulletin	Elevated	Imminent
NOC	Steady State	Awareness	Guarded	Concern	Urgent

## OPERATION & SITUATION UPDATES

### COVID-19-Worldwide

- As of 19 Oct, there are 39,801,612 cumulative cases and 1,110,908 deaths worldwide.
- In the U.S. there are 8,081,612 cases and 218,511 deaths.
- 39 jurisdictions are currently showing an increasing trend in new COVID-19 cases, 8 are mostly unchanged, and 9 jurisdictions are showing a downward trend.
- Governor of KS announced the State will remain in a state of emergency until November 15.
- Vice Presidential Candidate Senator Kamala Harris cancelled speaking engagements and will self-quarantine this weekend after her Communications Director and a member of her flight crew tested positive for COVID-19.

## ENGAGEMENTS

- 19 OCT: DAD DeLaurentis will participate in the CAE Annual Portfolio Reviews and the JRC Weekly Meeting w/ Cybersecurity Portfolio Team.
- 19 OCT: AD Brown and DAD DeLaurentis will participate in the SAFECOM and NCSWIC Leadership Weekly Sync.
- 20 OCT: (A)AD Harris will speak at the Idaho National Laboratory Capability Overview meeting.
- 21 OCT: (A)AD Harris will speak at the 2020 DHS Integrated Preparedness Planning Workshop.
- 21 OCT: (A)DAD Walsh will record a standalone presentation for CybertechUSA.
- 22 OCT: DAD DeLaurentis will participate in the ECD / National Risk Management Center (NRMC) Sync.
- 22 OCT: (A)AD Willke will speak at the BCEM Fall Meeting Speaker Request - Election Security & Cybersecurity.
- 23 OCT: (A)AD Willke and (A)DAD Walsh will attend the Federal Senior Leadership Council Meeting.

## CONGRESSIONAL AFFAIRS

- 21 OCT: AD Ware and Geoff Hall will brief the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence. Subject: Election Security with FBI and NSA (Possibly Classified).
- 22 OCT: Dir Krebs will brief Senator Rounds. Subject: NDAA and Election Security.

## INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

- 19 OCT: SED and IA will participate in a CISA-Netherlands sync on Joint Advisories.
- 22 OCT: Dir Krebs and AD Ware will participate in the Second Annual Global Cyber Cabinet with the Israel National Cyber Directorate.
- 23 OCT: CISA International will meet with the Chilean Ministry of Interior to discuss pending cybercrime bill and CI protection.

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Per our conversation, attached is the presentation that was referenced from pre-COVID critical scenarios.

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Latest Social Media Sensing material attached.

Distro: NRMCM Leadership, ESI Leadership, IRAC/IOB Leads, SPP Election POCs, OCC, IOD

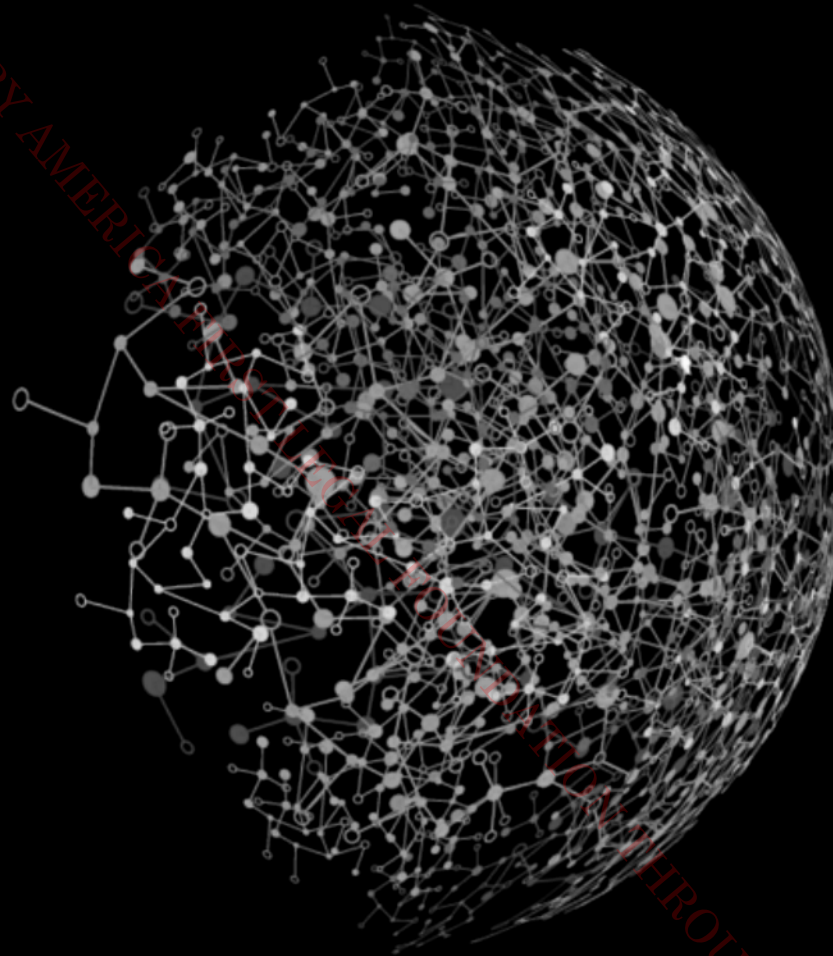
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## Elections Daily Digest

October 16, 2020

**Scope Note:** The following observations were developed from publicly available sources such as media reporting, social sensing tools, tools to detect inauthentic social media activity, content aggregators, social platforms, podcasts, online databases, and other open source data. This product was developed in compliance with the guidelines set forth in the Department of Homeland Security - Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security - National Risk Management Center COVID-19 Disinformation, Misinformation, and Malinformation, and Critical Infrastructure Risks Operational Use of Social Media Rules of Behavior.





DRAFT: PRE-DECISIONAL WORKING PAPER



# Daily Social Media Trends: US Election Topics

Timeframe: October 15, 2020, 12:00AM – October 15, 2020, 11:59PM



Topic	Total Mentions*	% Change in Mentions (since last period)	Volume and Velocity** (total mentions and rate of change over time)							Change in Sentiment*** (since last period)	Observations
			10/9	10/10	10/11	10/12	10/13	10/14	10/15		
<b>Elections</b> General Mentions Related to US Elections	<b>7.85M</b>	<b>▲ &lt;1%</b>	5,579,549	8,331,791					7,854,903	negative sentiment flat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>The total volume in the past 24 hours (October 15) <b>increased by less than 1%</b> compared to the total volume in the previous period (October 14).</li><li><b>Critical Drivers:</b> Presidential candidate town halls, accusations against social media platforms of election interference, Supreme Court Senate confirmation hearings</li></ul>
 <b>Voter Suppression</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Voter Intimidation</li><li>Polling Place Security</li><li>Impacts to Election Processes</li></ul>	<b>545K</b>	<b>▼ 24%</b>		313,877		935,095			545,049	▼ 7% less negative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>A journalist reported that a Democratic Senator accused the GOP of “massive voter suppression and call[ed] on all Americans to vote.”</li><li>A civil rights attorney tweeted that Black voters are waiting in long lines to cast their votes and commented that “no one will suppress their vote!”</li></ul>
 <b>COVID-19</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Political Exploitation of COVID-19</li></ul>	<b>246K</b>	<b>▲ 16%</b>		247,748		424,552			211,962	negative sentiment flat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>An online news publisher speculated that voters are not concerned about a story regarding the son of the Democratic presidential nominee because they are more worried about the pandemic and unemployment.</li><li>Several journalists reported that the Democratic vice presidential nominee cancelled her travel for the weekend because two members of her staff tested positive for COVID-19.</li></ul>
 <b>Vote-By-Mail</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Mail-in Ballots and Registration</li><li>Fraud Claims</li><li>Vote Counting</li></ul>	<b>49K</b>	<b>▼ 28%</b>		187,271		43,763		107,016	48,916	▼ 12% less negative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>A conservative journalist claimed that the Democratic presidential nominee was not asked any hard questions during his town hall, including questions about supposed corruption and mass mail-in ballot fraud.</li><li>An American singer stated that members of the California GOP should be arrested for “refusing to remove any of their fake mail-in ballot boxes.”</li><li>The chairman of a government accountability group in California shared a link to a “bombshell report” that claimed there was a “significant risk of voter fraud” in California and purportedly contained images of ballots mailed in error and a list of “witnesses willing to testify.”</li></ul>
 <b>Election Technology</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Voting Technology Issues</li></ul>	<b>28.4K</b>	<b>▼ 7%</b>		16,269		31,976			28,423	▼ 8% less negative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>A self-proclaimed election security advocate-stated that the possibility of election fraud in Georgia should not be overlooked and that identifying a “hacked election” requires a manual audit or recount.</li><li>A political reporter claimed that the “already-historic GA early vote totals” would be even higher “if not for bandwidth issues that require 4+ minutes to check in a single voter.”</li></ul>

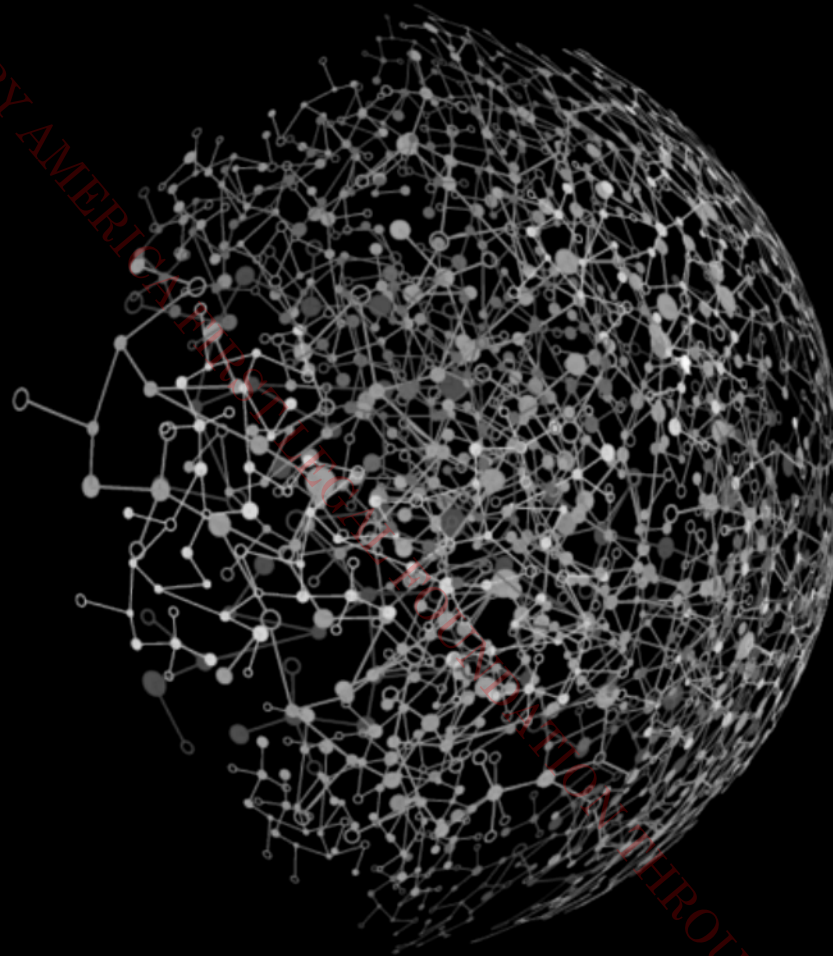
\* Total mentions is the number of individual pieces of content (including posts, comments, shares, retweets, and articles) including links related to the topic

\*\* These figures are approximate.

\*\*\* Sentiment analysis is only accurate up to 75% and can provide a holistic overview into the tone of a keyword search. It provides a look into the volume of documents each of which is assigned a tonality score of positive (green), negative (red), or neutral (gray), but should not be considered a definitive or complete snapshot of public sentiment.

DHS-1255901567-07/31/2023





## Elections and COVID-19 Weekly Digest

October 15, 2020

**Scope Note:** The following insights were developed from publicly available sources such as media reporting, social sensing tools, tools to detect inauthentic social media activity, content aggregators, social platforms, podcasts, online databases, and other open source data. This product was developed in compliance with the guidelines set forth in the Department of Homeland Security - Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security - National Risk Management Center COVID-19 Disinformation, Misinformation, and Malinformation, and Critical Infrastructure Risks Operational Use of Social Media Rules of Behavior.

DRAFT: PRE-DECISIONAL WORKING PAPER



OBTAINED BY AMERICA FIRST LEGAL FOUNDATION THROUGH LITIGATION

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# | US Elections |







The scale of election-related MDM narratives and associated online conversations collectively present an unprecedented risk to the execution of the presidential election, the acceptance of its results, and the peaceful transition of power. For example, homegrown and foreign MDM about mail-in ballot “fraud” is contributing to partisan calls for Americans to serve as “poll watchers” to monitor potential voter fraud on Election Day. There is now widespread concern – supported by reporting from US syndicated news – that these election-related MDM campaigns may lead directly to voter suppression and political violence.

# Social Media Trends: US Election Topics

Timeframe: October 5, 2020, 12:00AM – October 11, 2020, 11:59PM



Topic	Total Mentions*	% Change in Mentions (since previous week)	Volume and Velocity** (total mentions and rate of change over time)							Change in Sentiment*** (since previous week)	Observations
			Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun		
<b>Elections</b> General Mentions Related to US Elections	47.5M	▲ 11%								negative sentiment flat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Total volume in the past 30 days (September 12 to October 11) has <b>increased 24%</b> compared to total volume in the previous 30 days (August 12 to September 11).</li><li><b>Critical Drivers:</b> POTUS's COVID-19 diagnosis and continued debate about the security of mail-in ballots</li></ul>
 <b>Voter Suppression</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Voter Intimidation</li><li>Polling Place Security</li></ul>	2.55M	▼ 23%								negative sentiment flat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>A popular author tweeted about the Governor of Texas's decision to limit ballot drop off boxes to one per county, calling on Texans to speak-up against voter suppression (note: county populations in Texas vary from 134 to 4.7 million).</li></ul>
 <b>COVID-19</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Election-focused Political Discourse regarding COVID-19</li><li>Political Exploitation of COVID-19</li></ul>	3.14M	▲ 22%								negative sentiment flat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>POTUS announced he was ending negotiations with Congress on a COVID-19 stimulus package until after the election.</li><li>A Democratic Senator tweeted that the "only thing POTUS and Congress should be worried about right now is handling COVID-19, not ramming through a Supreme Court nominee."</li><li>Several journalists tweeted criticisms of POTUS's filming "campaign videos" while not wearing a mask following his positive diagnosis, saying he put the health of photographers at risk.</li></ul>
 <b>Vote-By-Mail</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Mail-in Ballots and Registration</li><li>Fraud Claims</li><li>Vote Counting</li></ul>	739K	▲ 6%								negative sentiment flat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>POTUS tweeted that "50 million incorrect absentee ballots" have been mailed, claiming that the "election was already rigged!"</li><li>A popular conservative talk show host tweeted that a progressive mayoral candidate in Texas has "109 counts of felony mail-in voter fraud," citing this as proof that Democrats are rigging the election.</li><li>POTUS retweeted a conservative watch dog account that claimed an election official in New Jersey was caught "dumping ballots."</li></ul>
 <b>Election Technology</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Voting Technology Issues</li></ul>	155K	▼ 23%								negative sentiment flat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>A popular author tweeted that POTUS tried to dissuade people from voting and convince the Postmaster General to destroy vote sorting machines.</li></ul>

<sup>1</sup>Total mentions is the number of individual pieces of content (including posts, comments, shares, retweets, and articles) including terms related to the topic

<sup>2</sup>These figures are approximate.

<sup>3</sup>Sentiment analysis is only accurate up to 75% and can provide a holistic overview into the tone of a keyword search. It provides a look into the volume of documents each of which is assigned a tonality score of positive (green), negative (red), or neutral (gray), but should not be considered a definitive or complete snapshot of public sentiment. For example, in many cases the gray area fluctuates not as a result of an increase or decrease in "neutral" sentiment but instead because content could not be assessed as either positive or negative.




DHS-1255001571 07/31/2023



# Overt Foreign Influence Narratives: US Elections

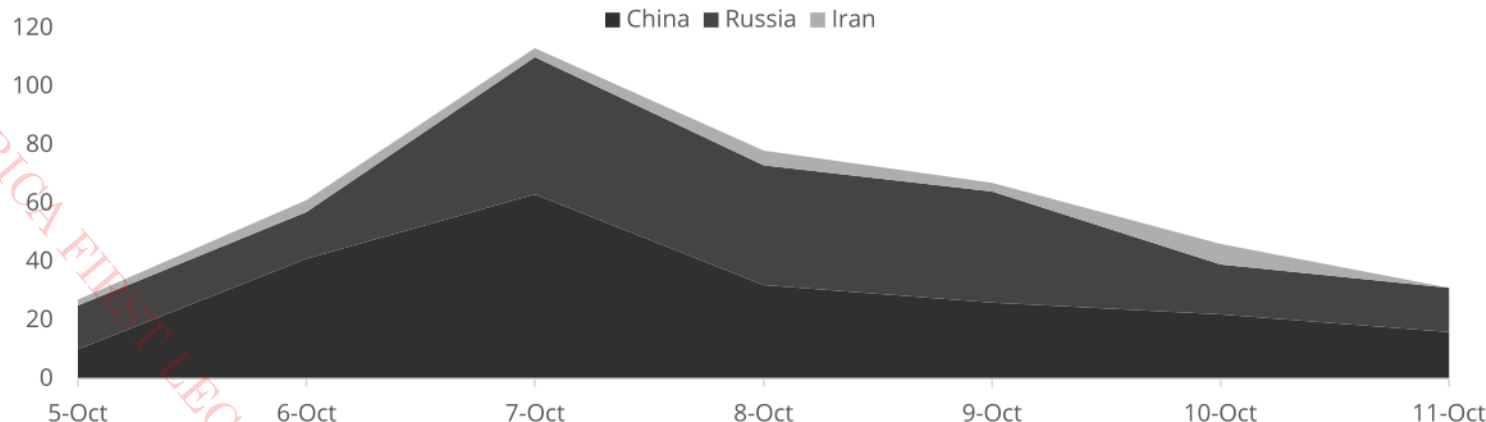
Timeframe: October 5, 2020, 12:00AM – October 11, 2020, 11:59PM



State	Total # of Mentions** (since last week)	% Change in Mentions (since last week)
 China	210	▲ 37%
 Russia	189	▲ 75%
 Iran	24	▼ 27%

\*\*mentions of narratives about US Elections

Mentions of the US Election by State-Backed Media Assets



## Key Observations

Mentions of US Elections by Chinese and Russian state-backed media assets<sup>1</sup> increased during this period, including those with MDM. Russian accounts consistently amplified narratives supportive of POTUS and critical of the Democratic presidential nominee. The activity from October 5 to 11 corresponded to the following narratives:

- Russia:** *Russia Today* (RT) tweeted a video of police clashing with BLM counter-protestors at a #WalkAway “anti-radical left” rally in Washington, DC. The #WalkAway “grassroots movement” is an example of astroturfing<sup>2</sup> and has been connected to Kremlin-linked bots aiming to manipulate voters into believing the “movement” is genuine and popular. RT sharing this video is likely an attempt to portray the political left as dangerous and exacerbate US sociopolitical divisions.
- Russia:** RT tweeted that the “deep state” prefers the Democratic presidential nominee to POTUS, but that voters do not.
- China:** *Global Times* reported that POTUS is cracking down on Chinese digital payment platforms to “provoke conflicts with China before the November election,” arguing that his actions are intended to secure his re-election.



Posts by Russian, Chinese, and Iranian state-backed media assets

DHS-1255001572 07/31/2023

<sup>1</sup> State-backed media asset: A social media account identified as consistently promoting narratives promulgated by official state media outlets

<sup>2</sup> Astroturfing is coordinated inauthentic behavior intended to create the false appearance of an organic movement. [Hamilton68](#) identified this activity as astroturfing.





# COVID-19

# Social Media Trends: COVID-19 Topics

Timeframe: October 5, 2020, 12:00AM – October 11, 2020, 11:59PM



Topic	Total Mentions*	% Change in Mentions (since previous week)	Volume and Velocity** (total mentions and rate of change over time) Mon Tue Wed Thu Fri Sat Sun	Change in Sentiment*** (since previous week)	Observations
<div>COVID-19</div> <div>General Mentions Related to COVID-19</div>	61.6M	▼ 1%		negative sentiment flat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Total volume in the past 30 days (September 12 to October 11) has <b>increased 7%</b> compared to total volume in the previous 30 days (August 12 to September 11).</li><li><b>Critical Drivers:</b> POTUS's COVID-19 diagnosis</li></ul>
<div>School Reopening</div> <div>Safety of students returning to school</div>	2.05M	▲ 6%		negative sentiment flat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>After POTUS tweeted that Americans shouldn't let COVID-19 "dominate their lives," conservative pundits reinforced that narrative and claimed there was "no reason" to keep schools closed.</li></ul>
<div>Business Reopening</div> <div>Private businesses lifting restrictions</div>	1.89M	▲ 8%		▼ 4% less negative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Liberal politicians and journalists criticized POTUS's decision to halt stimulus package negotiations until after the election, claiming it will devastate small businesses while large corporations continue to profit.</li></ul>
<div>Masks</div> <div>Opposition to mask requirements &amp; conspiracies</div>	274K	▼ 31%		▼ 6% less negative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>A popular conservative tweeted that "freedom is safe," falsely claiming that cases in Florida are stable, despite not having a mask mandate.</li><li>Several reporters criticized members of the current administration for refusing to wear masks despite numerous cases of COVID-19 in the White House.</li><li>A former First Lady stated that POTUS continues to "gaslight the American people and pretend this pandemic isn't real" by refusing to wear a mask.</li></ul>
<div>Vaccines</div> <div>Safety and efficacy of potential COVID-19 vaccines &amp; opposition</div>	346K	▲ 39%		negative sentiment flat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>A popular conservative account exhibiting bot-like activity falsely claimed that the husband of the Democratic vice presidential nominee still works for Merck, a company that is currently producing a COVID-19 vaccine.</li><li>Several syndicated news outlets quoted the Democratic vice presidential nominee at the Vice Presidential Debate, saying that she would take a vaccine if doctors and scientists said it was safe, but not if POTUS alone declared it was safe.</li></ul>

<sup>1</sup>Total mentions is the number of individual pieces of content (including posts, comments, shares, retweets, and articles) including terms related to the topic

<sup>2</sup>These figures are approximate.




<sup>3</sup>Sentiment analysis is only accurate up to 75% and can provide a holistic overview into the tone of a keyword search. It provides a look into the volume of documents each of which is assigned a tonality score of positive (green), negative (red), or neutral (gray), but should not be considered a definitive or complete snapshot of public sentiment. For example, in many cases the gray area fluctuates not as a result of an increase or decrease in "neutral" sentiment but instead because content could not be assessed as either positive or negative.

DHS-1255001574 07/31/2023

# Overt Foreign Influence Narratives: COVID-19

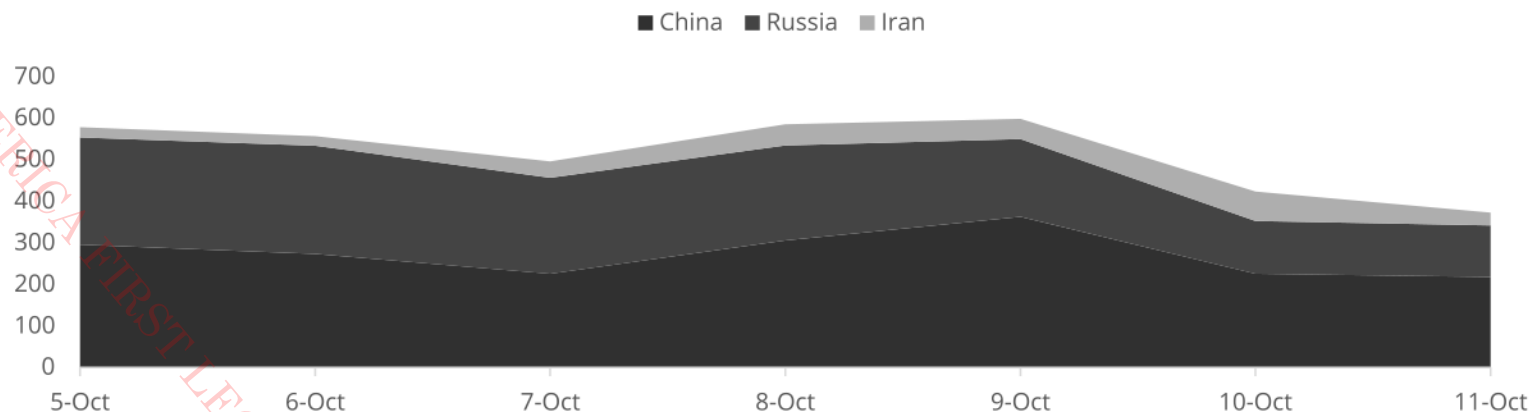
Timeframe: October 5, 2020, 12:00AM – October 11, 2020, 11:59PM



State	Total # of Mentions** (since last week)	% Change in Mentions (since last week)
 China	1.9K	▲ 12%
 Russia	1.4K	▲ 6%
 Iran	289	▲ 97%

\*\*mentions of narratives about COVID-19

Mentions of COVID-19 by State-Backed Media Assets



## Key Observations

Mentions of COVID-19 by Chinese, Russian, and Iranian state-backed media assets<sup>1</sup> increased during this period. Russian narratives included elements of MDM, while Chinese and Iranian narratives placed a political spin on otherwise truthful information. The activity from October 5 to 11 corresponded with the following narratives:

- Russia:** *Russia Today* (RT) tweeted an article alleging that the founder of a technology company is a proponent of extreme measures to reduce “vaccine hesitancy” in the US, including “round[ing] up the anti-vaxxers” and utilizing coercive measures to ensure public COVID-19 vaccine compliance. This narrative is a continuation of an ongoing storyline aimed at sowing distrust in the economic elite, large corporations, and a COVID-19 vaccine.
- Russia:** *RT* tweeted that “Orthodox Jews in New York” are protesting and burning masks in the streets. This narrative attempts to incite anti-Semitic sentiment, a common objective of Russian information operations, and exacerbate US sociopolitical divisions.
- Iran:** An Iranian state-backed media account accused the US of conducting a “terrorist act” for denying Iranian citizens medicine and food during the pandemic, referencing the new sanctions imposed on Iran by the US in late September in response to Iran’s nuclear program expansion.

Posts by Russian, Chinese, and Iranian state-backed media assets



DHS-1255001575 07/31/2023

<sup>1</sup>State-backed media asset: A social media account identified as consistently promoting narratives promulgated by official state media outlets



# MDM Narrative Analysis



# Analysis: Russia state-sponsored media reports that an American billionaire philanthropist promotes authoritarian vaccination methods (1/2)

## MDM NARRATIVES

- *A philanthropist has ulterior motives for encouraging mass vaccinations and proposes "rounding up" anti-vaxxers.*
- *The same philanthropist plans to deputize religious leaders, sports figures, and community heroes to "spread the pro-vaccine gospel."*

## CONTEXT

On October 6, *Russia Today (RT)* published an article, which it subsequently posted on social media, about a billionaire philanthropist and his supposed views on the COVID-19 vaccine. The article implied that the philanthropist supports a variety of manipulative tactics to reduce "vaccine hesitancy" in the United States and enforce COVID-19 vaccine compliance. These methods include "round[ing] up anti-vaxxers," using public figures to "spread the pro-vaccine gospel," and shutting down dissenting voices on the subject. The article suggests that the philanthropist in question has ulterior motives for encouraging vaccinations, including financial benefit.

While this article is crafted to avoid making sweeping claims, it builds upon previous narratives that paint the philanthropist's motives for supporting a COVID-19 vaccine as dishonest. In particular, it implies that the philanthropist will personally profit from a COVID-19 vaccine. While the philanthropist controls a trust through his charitable organization that invests in companies creating a COVID-19 vaccine, he does not financially benefit from this trust. Also, while the philanthropist supports coordinated public outreach to improve vaccination rates, he has not suggested mandatory actions, rounding up anyone who refuses the vaccine, or "deputizing" public figures to spread vaccine "gospel," as the article implies.

This article may seek to exacerbate existing skepticism of economic and political elites among certain US population segments by tying QAnon themes, such as alluding to a "trust network" of public figures, and the anti-vax community together. This convergence increases the risk of popularizing this narrative among both communities and decreasing public trust in the validity of the vaccine.

## TOP KEYWORDS

american health off... novel coronavirus community leaders  
conspiracy theories community heroes polio vaccine  
option religious leaders world covid jab  
media countries anti-vaxxers hesitancy prison  
governments money public billionaire enlist religious le...  
vaccine rollout ways to reduce population  
wealth monster vaccine-evangelist vaccine hesitancy  
up the billionaires vaccine gospel chinese vaccine dev...



## Risks To NCFs

- **Managing Emergencies & Support Community Health:** This narrative could potentially disrupt COVID-19 recovery efforts in the United States. Public health experts agree that full recovery will not occur until an effective vaccine is developed, distributed, and used to inoculate a high percentage of the population. If anti-vaccine communities continue to popularize these narratives and foster negative public sentiment about vaccination, it is possible that the US will not be able to vaccinate enough of the population to stop the spread of COVID-19.

DHS-1255001577 07/31/2023



# Analysis: Russia state-sponsored media reports that an American billionaire philanthropist promotes authoritarian vaccination methods (2/2)

## Inauthentic Amplification

Several accounts that retweeted the *Russia Today* (RT) tweet featuring the article exhibit bot-like activity. However, most of the other engagement appears to be authentic.

## Foreign Influence

**Russia:** The article from *RT*, a state-sponsored propaganda network used by the Kremlin to influence public opinion at-home and abroad, is part of a broader information operation that began at the start of the pandemic. This narrative follows patterns observed with similar MDM narratives that were likely promulgated by the Russian government, including a narrative purporting that Ukrainian soldiers died from an American COVID-19 vaccine and a narrative claiming that doctors believed the COVID-19 lockdowns caused adverse health impacts. This information operation may seek to erode trust in the US COVID-19 response, increase reluctance to take the vaccine, and spread doubts about the necessity of COVID-19 countermeasures.

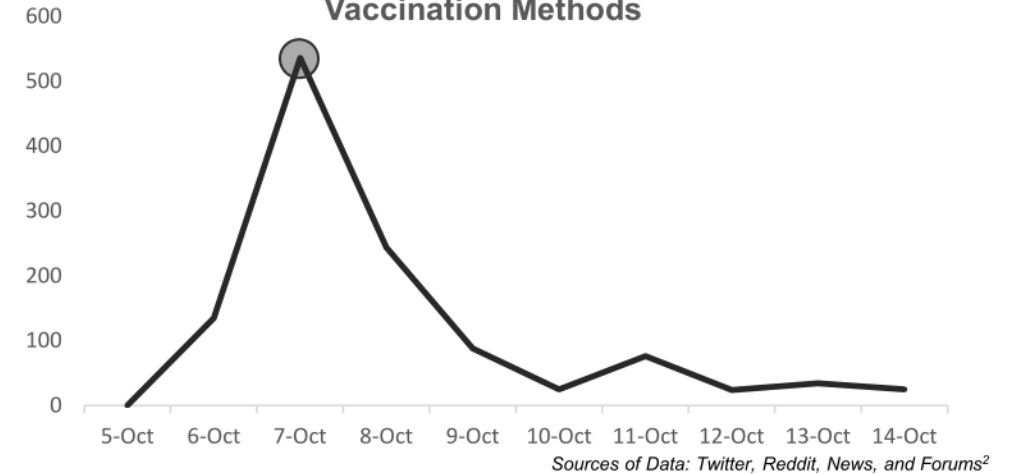
As with previous MDM campaigns likely coordinated by the Kremlin, accounts known to engage with and/or spread MDM have retweeted the article. Most of these accounts also exhibit bot-like activity.

## Target Audience

The *RT* article appears to target POTUS supporters, QAnon<sup>1</sup> followers, Americans who fear government overreach resulting from COVID-19 countermeasures and anti-vaccine communities. Based on self-reported data, the average Twitter user who engaged with the *RT* article appears to be males between the ages of 25 and 34 with an affinity for news sources outside of the “mainstream.” In the last week, Facebook users have shared the article in over 60 groups dedicated to libertarianism, anti-vaccine activism, Christianity, and QAnon or other “Deep State” conspiracy theories.<sup>2</sup>

## Activity Volume

Total Mentions related to *RT* Article about the Philanthropist Suggesting Authoritarian Vaccination Methods



The peak on October 7th correlates with the publication of the *RT* article on Twitter. The initial wave of engagement consisted of individuals from different communities retweeting and quote tweeting<sup>3</sup> this article. Individuals using themes and ideas from this article drove engagement for the later period of the week.

Overall engagement with this narrative is significantly lower than other MDM narratives previously covered, which have ranged from around 1,000 to upwards of 250,000 mentions, some of which were anti-vaccination narratives. This suggests the article likely had a limited impact on the intended audiences and supports the assertion that COVID-19 anti-vaccination narratives elicit more engagement when they originate, or appear to originate, in the U.S. and are shared organically among those audiences.

<sup>1</sup> “QAnon” is a conspiracy theory that first emerged in 2017, centered around an anonymous figure known as “Q”. Q claims to possess a top-level security clearance and evidence of a worldwide criminal enterprise, including a pedophilia ring, led by top Democratic figures and celebrities working in conjunction with the “Deep State” to undermine POTUS.

<sup>2</sup> This analysis includes limited data from Facebook due to the company’s current terms of service

<sup>3</sup> A Quote Tweet is a retweet that also includes an original comment



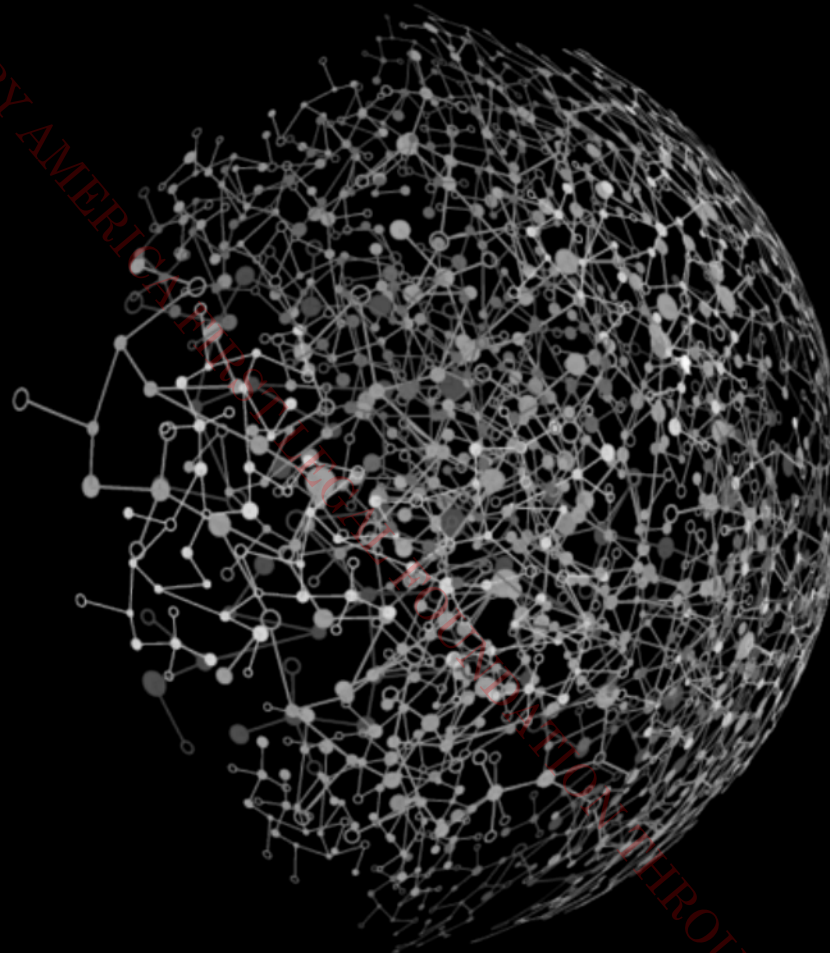
# Narratives to Watch

# Emerging: Narratives to Watch

The following emerging narratives have not yet gained sufficient traction to warrant further analysis but still merit ongoing monitoring as appropriate.

🚩 = indication of foreign influence observed

Topic	Narrative	Most Recent Notable Activity	Latest Insights
US Election	<i>A US Congresswoman is involved in ballot harvesting and a cash-for-ballots scheme.</i>	October 6, 2020	On October 4 <sup>th</sup> , a right-wing activist group shared a video claiming, through unidentified sources and with no verifiable evidence, that the campaign of the Congressional Representative from Minnesota's 5 <sup>th</sup> district had collected ballots illegally and was offering cash for ballots. The narrative was amplified by several prominent conservatives, but also quickly discredited by several syndicated news outlets.
US Election	<i>POTUS and the Republican party are plotting to steal the 2020 election.</i>	September 23, 2020	On September 23 <sup>rd</sup> , a professor of journalism and political columnist claimed POTUS had a 7-step plan to "steal the presidency," including "blocking mail-in votes" and "using GOP officials to block voters." Also, following POTUS's claim that he will "wait and see" before committing to a peaceful transfer of power, anti-POTUS accounts began trending the hashtag "#TrumpCoupPlot."
US Election	<i>The Intelligence Community is abusing its power to target POTUS and supports mail-in voting "chaos."</i>	September 14, 2020	On September 14 <sup>th</sup> , the president of a conservative action group (with substantial Twitter followers) tweeted that the US Intelligence Community was launching a "coup" to target POTUS. He claimed that the Intelligence Community supports mail-in voting "chaos" and pushes POTUS smears.
US Election	<i>POTUS opposes mail-in ballots so that people will vote on "pre-rigged" voting machines.</i>	September 8, 2020	On September 8 <sup>th</sup> , a narrative circulated on Twitter that POTUS's daughter has a patent on a certain brand of electronic voting machines. Far-left accounts speculated that POTUS will use these electronic voting machines to rig the election and help his daughter profit. Originally, two "watchdog" accounts were pushing this narrative. Since September 8 <sup>th</sup> , one of these accounts was disabled and the other account went on high privacy settings.



## Elections Daily Digest

October 15, 2020

**Scope Note:** The following observations were developed from publicly available sources such as media reporting, social sensing tools, tools to detect inauthentic social media activity, content aggregators, social platforms, podcasts, online databases, and other open source data. This product was developed in compliance with the guidelines set forth in the Department of Homeland Security - Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security - National Risk Management Center COVID-19 Disinformation, Misinformation, and Malinformation, and Critical Infrastructure Risks Operational Use of Social Media Rules of Behavior.

DRAFT: PRE-DECISIONAL WORKING PAPER





# Daily Social Media Trends: US Election Topics

Timeframe: October 14, 2020, 12:00AM – October 14, 2020, 11:59PM



Topic	Total Mentions*	% Change in Mentions (since last period)	Volume and Velocity** (total mentions and rate of change over time)							Change in Sentiment*** (since last period)	Observations
			10/8	10/9	10/10	10/11	10/12	10/13	10/14		
<b>Elections</b> General Mentions Related to US Elections	7.83M	▼ 7%								 negative sentiment flat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>The total volume in the past 24 hours (October 14) <b>decreased by 7%</b> compared to the total volume in the previous period (October 13).</li><li>Several conservative politicians and pundits accused social media platforms of election interference for “censoring” an <a href="#">article</a> from a daily newspaper regarding the Democratic presidential nominee and his son’s connection to Ukrainian businessmen.</li><li><b>Critical Drivers:</b> Accusations against social media platforms of election interference, SCOTUS Senate confirmation hearings</li></ul>
 <b>Voter Suppression</b> • Voter Intimidation • Polling Place Security • Impacts to Election Processes	717K	▼ 23%								 ▲ 3% more negative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>A conservative political action committee questioned if a conservative youth organization supports voter suppression, referencing an <a href="#">article</a> from a syndicated news outlet in which the youth organization’s founder shared his “delight” in university campus closures due to its potential negative impact on student voter turnout.</li><li>A former Director of the Office of Government Ethics claimed long lines at voting polls are a result of “Republicans actively making it hard for people... to vote.”</li></ul>
 <b>COVID-19</b> • Political Exploitation of COVID-19	211K	▼ 40%								 negative sentiment flat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>An online activist responded to a tweet by POTUS about his campaign rally in Pennsylvania, accusing him of ignoring public health guidelines during a pandemic by hosting a “super-spreader event.”</li></ul>
 <b>Vote-By-Mail</b> • Mail-in Ballots and Registration • Fraud Claims • Vote Counting	68K	▼ 12%								 ▼ 14% less negative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>A producer for a TV news network shared an <a href="#">article</a> from a syndicated news outlet about “conservative activists discussing attempts to limit mail-in ballots.”</li><li>A US Senator accused POTUS of trying to “deprive Americans of their voice in our democracy,” referencing an <a href="#">article</a> from a syndicated news outlet fact-checking POTUS’s claims about mail-in voting.</li><li>A syndicated news outlet shared its own <a href="#">article</a> reporting that the US Postal Service agreed to reverse changes that slowed mail services nationwide and would prioritize election mail after settling a lawsuit with the State of Montana.</li></ul>
 <b>Election Technology</b> • Voting Technology Issues	30.5K	▼ 5%								 ▲ 5% more negative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>A former US Congressional candidate shared an <a href="#">article</a> from a syndicated news outlet about an alert from the federal government regarding hackers that had gained access to election systems. He expressed his frustration at federal agencies for failing to investigate previous claims of “electronic rigging and illegal ballot destruction in South Florida.”</li></ul>

\* Total mentions is the number of individual pieces of content (including posts, comments, shares, retweets, and articles) including links related to the topic

\*\* These figures are approximate.

\*\*\* Sentiment analysis is only accurate up to 75% and can provide a holistic overview into the tone of a keyword search. It provides a look into the volume of documents each of which is assigned a tonality score of positive (green), negative (red), or neutral (gray), but should not be considered a definitive or complete snapshot of public sentiment.



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**Subject:** Social Media Sensing Observations

**Date:** 2020/10/19 12:03:00

**Priority:** Normal

**Type:** Note

Latest Social Media Sensing material attached.

Distro: NRMCM Leadership, ESI Leadership, IRAC/IOB Leads, SPP Election POCs, OCC, IOD

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Countering Foreign Influence Task Force  
DHS | CISA | National Risk Management Center

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Masterson, Matthew /4

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Snell, Allison /

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**Sent Date:** 2020/10/19 12:04:00

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<b>From:</b>	Brown, Keisha (b)(6) (b)(6) (b)(6)
<b>To:</b>	Masterson, Matthew (b)(6) (b)(6) (b)(6) (b)(6) (b)(6) Hale, Geoffrey (b)(6) (b)(6) (b)(6) (b)(6) (b)(6)
<b>CC:</b>	Snell, Allison (b)(6) (b)(6) (b)(6) (b)(6) Tipton, James (b)(6) (b)(6) (b)(6) Scully, Brian (b)(6) (b)(6) (b)(6) (b)(6) Bri (b)(6) (b)(6) (b)(6) (b)(6) JOHNSON, LAUREN (b)(6) (b)(6) (b)(6) KUENNEN, DAVID (b)(6) (b)(6) (b)(6) (b)(6) (b)(6) (b)(6) (b)(6)
<b>Subject:</b>	ESI Task and Review, 10/19
<b>Date:</b>	2020/10/19 17:43:20
<b>Priority:</b>	Normal
<b>Type:</b>	Note

Good evening,

Below is an update on the list of current priorities that ESI currently has for action. In addition, an updated status of all ESI and CFI products that are currently in development or in the OCC/EA clearance process and eventually route to CISA FO for final review and approval.

#### Current Priorities

(b)(5)

#### CATT Taskings

(b)(5)



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Thank you,

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Election Security Initiative

Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency

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