

Office of Information Governance and Privacy

U.S. Department of Homeland Security
500 12th St., SW
Washington, D.C. 20536



U.S. Immigration
and Customs
Enforcement

July 5, 2023

Hart Wood
American Oversight
1030 15th St. NW, B255
Washington, DC 20005
Hart.wood@americanoversight.org

RE: **AMERICAN OVERSIGHT v. U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY-
1:21-cv-01171-TNM**
ICE FOIA Case Number 2021-ICLI-00064
Seventeenth Release

Dear Mr. Hart:

This letter is the seventeenth interim response to your client's Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests to U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), dated July 16, 2021. Your FOIA request seeking records related to all final talking points prepared for Secretary Nielsen regarding the MPP and issues related to it, such as plans for lodging asylum seekers in Tijuana, plans for transporting migrants to and from Tijuana, expansion of the protocol to additional ports of entry, etc.

ICE has considered your request under the FOIA, 5 U.S.C. § 552.

A total of 500 pages of records were reviewed for this interim production. These 500 pages of records were located pursuant to a search of the Director's Office. After review of these documents, ICE has determined that 365 pages were duplicative; and 5 pages are non-responsive. The remaining 130 pages will be released in full. These responsive records are attached and have been marked 2021-ICLI-00064 3308 to 2021-ICLI-00064 3437.

If you have any questions about this letter, please contact Assistant United States Attorney Sean Michael Tepe at sean.tepe@usdoj.gov.

Sincerely,
MERONICA D
STONEY
Meronica D. Stoney
Deputy FOIA Officer

Digitally signed by
MERONICA D STONEY
Date: 2023.07.05 13:37:01
-04'00'

www.ice.gov

Page 2 of 2

Enclosure(s): 130 pages

cc: Sean Michael Tepe
Assistant United States Attorney
sean.tepe@usdoj.gov

From: DHS Daily
Sent: Wed, 2 Oct 2019 05:40:31 -0400
To: noreply@techmis.com
Subject: DHS Morning Briefing (10-2-19)
Attachments: DHS Morning Briefing (10-2-19).pdf



DHS MORNING BRIEFING

Prepared for the Office of Public Affairs (OPA)

U.S. Department of Homeland Security

By TechMIS

www.TechMIS.com

[Mobile User Copy](#)

TO: Homeland Security Secretary & Staff
DATE: Wednesday, October 2, 2019 6:00 AM ET

Top News

[Homeland Security Dept. Affirms Threat of White Supremacy After Years of Prodding \(New York Times\)](#)

[Stranded Asylum Seekers Ask Appeals Court to Let Them In \(Bloomberg\)](#)

[Trump administration asylum policies to be heard in federal appeals court \(CNN\)](#)

[Key Trump Asylum Policies Are Tested in Appeals Court \(US News & World Report\)](#)

[Trump asked about shooting migrants at border in legs if they threw rocks at agents, reportedly wanted a 'trench with deadly reptiles' \(FOX News\)](#)

[Trump proposed shooting migrants, using alligators at border, according to book \(USA Today\)](#)

[Judge grills government lawyer on potential violations of international refugee law \(CBS News\)](#)

[MA] Oxfam, other nonprofits urge feds to raise refugee cap (Washington Post)

[FL] Pelosi to meet with Venezuelan exiles in Florida (Politico)

[FL] Florida Schools to Teach Students About Child Trafficking Prevention (US News & World Report)

[IL] CBP commissioner says Chicago's 'reckless' sanctuary city policy will create more American 'victims' (FOX News)

[IL] Chicago Memo Instructs Police Not To Help DHS With Immigration Arrests (Daily Caller)

[TX] Border Patrol cares for toddler rescued from smugglers posing as child's family (FOX News)

[TX] School district in El Paso hosts mass shooting preparedness (San Francisco Chronicle)

[CA] 2 guilty of aiding man accused of killing California officer (ABC News)

[Mexico] Over Half A Million Central Americans Entered Mexico Illegally In First Half Of 2019 (Daily Caller)

[Mexico] U.S. appeals court questions Trump policy forcing refugee seekers to remain in Mexico (Los Angeles Times)

[Mexico] Mexican asylum seekers grow frustrated, fearful waiting in border towns from Tijuana to Ciudad Juárez (San Diego Union Tribune)

[Mexico] Appeals court blasts DHS 'return-to-Mexico' border policy (Washington Times)

[Honduras] DHS Signs Deal To Send Asylum-Seekers From U.S. Border To Honduras (NPR)

Immigration and Customs Enforcement

[NY] New York City bans term 'illegal alien,' institutes fines up to \$250K (The Hill)

[NY] You can now be fined up to \$250,000 if you call someone an 'illegal alien' in New York City (CNN)

[VA] Fairfax County officer suspended for turning driver over to ICE after accident, police say (Washington Post)

[VA] Sanctuary Police Chief Suspends Officer Who Helped Catch Illegal Alien Fugitive (Breitbart)

[VA] Virginia officer suspended for turning driver over to ICE after accident: police (The Hill)

[VA] Fairfax County suspends officer who cooperated with ICE (Washington Times)

[VA] Officer suspended; alerted feds to immigrant's traffic stop (San Francisco Chronicle)

[FL] Florida law banning sanctuary cities takes full effect (The Hill)

[FL] Florida's ban on sanctuary cities begins today. It requires police officers to help ICE (CNN)

Citizenship and Immigration Services

Dick Durbin Stalls Landmark Immigration Bill, But Won't Explain Why. Critics Say It's To Keep Republicans From Getting A Win (Daily Caller)

[CA] GOP attorney sues California, alleges 'motor voter' citizenship violations (Washington Times)

Customs and Border Protection

For 25 years, Operation Gatekeeper has made life worse for border communities (Washington Post)

More Than 300 Migrants Died This Year near U.S.-Mexico Border (Breitbart)

US halts import of goods suspected to have been made with forced labor (CNN)

U.S. blocks import of goods from five nations in rare anti-slavery crackdown (Reuters)

[VT] Vermont man gets 3 months for role in human smuggling case (San Francisco Chronicle)

[TX] Contracts Awarded for 65 Miles of New Texas Border Walls (Breitbart)

[AZ] On 25th anniversary, Operation Gatekeeper blamed for border deaths, dehumanization of migrants (San Diego Union Tribune)

[CA] California keeps 100 National Guard troops at Mexico border (San Diego Union Tribune)

[CA] Border Patrol agents find nearly 30 pounds of meth hidden in car at I-8 checkpoint (San Diego Union Tribune)

[Zimbabwe] Zimbabwe Rejects U.S. Claim That Diamond Mine Uses Forced Labor (Bloomberg)

Transportation Security Administration

Planning To Fly A Year From Now? Better Double Check Your Driver's License (NPR)

A year until REAL ID requirements to fly, many passengers could be grounded (ABC News)

Is your ID good enough to travel? It may not be next year. (CNN)

Federal Emergency Management Agency

[TX] A four-man FBI team rescued 150 as Hurricane Harvey flooded Houston (CNN)

[TX] Gov. Abbott asks President Trump for disaster declaration for Imelda (Houston Chronicle)

[TX] Greenspoint among first areas of flood management pilot project (Houston Chronicle)

[TX] Texas wakes up to series of earthquakes (Houston Chronicle)

[MT] Record September snowstorm drops 4 feet of snow on Montana Rockies (Washington Post)

Secret Service

[NH] NH's IT boss seeks 1st complete cybersecurity assessment (Union Leader)

[CT] Two accused of using counterfeit money at Westport businesses (Wilton Bulletin)

[NY] NYSP: Man had \$37K in counterfeit cash during traffic stop (WTen)

[NY] State Police: Traffic stop leads to \$37K in fake cash, Latham man's arrest (Schenectady Daily Gazette)

[VA] Police: 'several cases' of counterfeit bills in Pulaski (WSET)

[GA] Thomasville police detective named a top digital forensic expert examiner (Albany Herald)

[AL] Alabama hospital system halts admissions amid malware attack (San Francisco Chronicle)

[AL] DCH hospitals closed to new patients after ransomware attack (Tuscaloosa News)

[AR] Fake \$20s at revenue office lead to Spa City man's arrest (Arkansas Online)

[AR] Drugs, counterfeit cash allegedly found after traffic stop; man, woman arrested (Hot Springs Sentinel-Record)

[TX] Here's why you can no longer see locations where police have found skimmers (KSAT 12)

[KS] Detecting funny money (Abilene Reflector-Chronicle)

Coast Guard

[NY] 2 Teenagers Missing in Heavy Surf Off Rockaway Beach (New York Times)

[CA] California boat fire: Truth Aquatics suspends all operations amid investigation (Los Angeles Times)

[CA] California boat company suspends tours after fatal fire that killed 34 people (FOX News)

[AK] Coast Guard aircrew rescues 2 hikers, 2 dogs from Alaska mountain (FOX News)

CISA/Cybersecurity

Ransomware hits hundreds of US schools, local governments: study (Breitbart)

Ransomware's mounting toll: Delayed surgeries and school closures (CBS News)

U.S. Warns Cybersecurity Flaws Could Impact Medical Devices (Bloomberg)

FDA warns of potential cyber vulnerabilities in internet-connected medical devices (The Hill)

Pacemakers, Insulin Pumps Could Be Hacking Targets: FDA (US News & World Report)

Terrorism Investigations

[IA] Iowa teen faces terrorism charge after allegedly creating online job posting for 'school shooter' (The Hill)

National Security News

NSA activates Cybersecurity Directorate to protect weapons, industrial base (Breitbart)

The Extra-Secret White House Computer System, Explained (New York Times)

White House ordered ultrasecret system upgraded to prevent leaks (Politico)

Weather forecast accuracy is at risk from 5G wireless technology, key lawmaker warns FCC, seeking documents (Washington Post)

FBI investigating alleged hacking attempt into mobile voting app during 2018 midterms (CNN)

[Turkey] Erdogan says Turkey has no choice but go its own way on Syria safe zone (Reuters)

[Iran] Iran sentences man to death for spying for the CIA (Washington Post)

[Iran] US commander discussed Iranian threats with Saudi counterpart (The Hill)

[\[Ukraine\] State Department greenlights new missile sale for Ukraine \(Politico\)](#)

[\[Ukraine\] Trump admin approves new sale of anti-tank weapons to Ukraine \(ABC News\)](#)

[\[China\] Missiles, drones and tanks: China shows off military prowess \(Breitbart\)](#)

[\[China\] In a Forever Trade War, U.S. Companies Take Cover as Best They Can \(Bloomberg\)](#)

[\[China\] White House links Huawei and ZTE to Chinese Muslim 'concentration camps' \(Washington Examiner\)](#)

[\[China\] California Resident Caught in FBI Sting, Charged with Spying for China \(Breitbart\)](#)

[\[North Korea\] North Korea tests missile soon after announcing resumption of nuclear talks with U.S. \(Washington Post\)](#)

[\[North Korea\] North Korea launches missile into waters near Japan days before nuclear talks set to resume with U.S. \(Los Angeles Times\)](#)

[\[North Korea\] North Korea Tests Trump's Limits With Submarine Missile Launch \(Bloomberg\)](#)

[\[North Korea\] North Korea launches missiles ahead of nuclear talks \(Breitbart\)](#)

[\[North Korea\] North Korea launches ballistic missile a day after agreeing to US talks \(CNN\)](#)

[\[North Korea\] North Korea fires ballistic missile, possibly from submarine, days before talks \(Reuters\)](#)

[\[North Korea\] North Korea says to hold nuclear talks with US on Saturday \(Breitbart\)](#)

[\[North Korea\] US, North Korea to hold working-level talks this week after months of diplomatic standstill \(ABC News\)](#)

[\[North Korea\] North Korea, US officials agreed to meet to resume nuclear talks: report \(FOX News\)](#)

[\[North Korea\] North Korea, U.S. to hold working-level talks at weekend: KCNA \(Reuters\)](#)

[\[North Korea\] U.S., North Korea weigh strategy as talks resume \(Washington Times\)](#)

Presidential Tweets

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.

Top News

Homeland Security Dept. Affirms Threat of White Supremacy After Years of Prodding (New York Times)

New York Times [10/1/2019 9:40 AM, Zolan Kanno-Youngs, 22840K]

The Department of Homeland Security is beginning to address white supremacist terrorism as a primary security threat, breaking with a decade of flagging attention after bigoted mass shooters from New Zealand to Texas took the lives of nearly 100 people in the last six months.

In a little-noticed strategy document published last month to guide law enforcement on emerging threats and in recent public appearances by Kevin K. McAleenan, the acting secretary of homeland security, the department is trying to project a new vigilance about violent white nationalism, beating back criticism that the agency has spent a decade playing down the issue.

“I would like to take this opportunity to be direct and unambiguous in addressing a major issue of our time. In our modern age, the continuation of racially based violent extremism, particularly violent white supremacy, is an abhorrent affront to the nation,” Mr. McAleenan said during an address last month, describing white nationalism as one of the most dangerous threats to the United States.

The department’s new stance contrasts that of President Trump, who has repeatedly dismissed white supremacy as an insignificant fringe movement. But beyond words and documents, many officials trying to combat the threat throughout the country remain skeptical that the full weight of federal law enforcement is finally being used to give bigoted domestic terrorism the attention it deserves.

Mike Sena, who manages one of 79 information-gathering “fusion centers” across the country partially funded by the Department of Homeland Security, said he has witnessed the rise of hate speech and white supremacist terrorism on the internet — and the reluctance of some in local law enforcement to pursue it.

“If it’s ISIS, they’re jumping to it and saying, ‘I got this,’” said Mr. Sena, the president of the National Fusion Center Association. “But if it’s not, they say, ‘What do I have to do with this?’”

Local police officials in turn hope the belated admission by the Homeland Security Department will lead the agency to share more and richer information on the threat.

Mr. Sena said the department’s moves are a good sign. “This is a huge affirmation for what we’ve been trying to do the last 18 years,” he said.

The department’s new public stance is a break with the skepticism that has been rooted within the federal government for years and that Mr. Trump has openly expressed — most

prominently, after the fatal white supremacist march in Charlottesville, Va., and the deadly rampage at two mosques in New Zealand. (He did denounce white supremacy after the mass shooting this summer in El Paso.)

While the Islamic State and Al Qaeda can still inspire homegrown terrorism in the United States, the “Strategic Framework For Countering Terrorism and Targeted Violence” asserts that the leadership at Homeland Security must adapt to the rise of domestic terrorism. The department will invest in counter-messaging campaigns and engage the private sector to combat hateful rhetoric online, according to the report.

Highlighting domestic terrorism is a major shift for a Homeland Security Department that has been accused of underplaying the threat in the aftermath of the department’s 2009 report that warned that economic dislocation and the election of a black president could fuel right-wing extremism and identified newly discharged service members as potential recruits. The political backlash was fierce, and the report was withdrawn.

An earlier recognition of the white supremacist threat could have been felt in communities across the country, according to Daryl Johnson, a former senior analyst for the department who wrote the 2009 report. Such a decision by the department, he said, might have led to trainings for local police departments to scout indicators of potential threats, undercover operations focused on the white nationalist movement and additional investment into organizations that reach out to those who have shown signs of committing violent acts.

Instead “the backlash to my report created a chilling effect across government at all levels,” Mr. Johnson said. “Everyone was kind of afraid or hesitant or didn’t even want to look at this issue.”

Even as the threat shifted from foreign-born terrorist cells to those inspired by racist propaganda on the internet, the department cut resources for programs that former officials say were tasked with analyzing the emerging threat and supporting outreach organizations.

The Department of Homeland Security does not take the lead in terrorism investigations. The agency’s role is rather to analyze data, inform local law enforcement agencies of emerging threats and issue grants to local law enforcement to combat terrorism. The fusion centers are key to its information sharing.

Under the current administration, former and current homeland security officials have expressed concern that the agency formed to combat terrorism in the wake of the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks has been relegated largely to enforce Mr. Trump’s restrictive immigration agenda.

“You would think D.H.S. is really just the department of the southwest border,” said Janet Napolitano, a former homeland security secretary under President Barack Obama. “The responsibilities are so much broader than that, and they include both foreign terrorism and also now domestic terrorism.”

Current department leaders acknowledge an exclusive focus on immigration will not keep the country safe.

“Border security cannot stop violence originating from within America,” the department’s new mission report states.

The domestic terrorism threat has grown clearer as Homeland Security’s capacity to address it has atrophied. Christopher A. Wray, the F.B.I. director, told Congress in July that the bureau had arrested as many domestic terrorists as foreign terrorists this year and many of them were white supremacists.

The department’s mission report also highlights recent attacks committed by white supremacists, including mass shootings at synagogues in Pittsburgh and Poway, Calif., the Christchurch mosque massacre in New Zealand and the deadly shooting at a Walmart in El Paso.

It remains unclear how the Department of Homeland Security will translate its recognition of the threat into action to combat it. Agency officials said they will release an implementation plan in the coming months, and Mr. McAleenan has committed to making it public. But law enforcement officials say simply identifying the threats in an official terrorism report was needed — and overdue.

After Ms. Napolitano rescinded the 2009 report on right-wing extremism, Obama administration officials feared legitimizing white supremacists’ views with more attention. Under the Trump administration, the office tasked with paying out grants and coordinating local police departments to prevent threats has shriveled.

That office, which has been renamed multiple times, went from a budget of more than \$20 million in the Obama administration to less than \$3 million, according to the House Appropriations Committee and former homeland security officials. A department official said the \$20 million figure was mostly grants and other funds that were not part of the program’s core budget.

A midyear budget request by Mr. McAleenan earlier this year was held up by Democrats who worried the administration would use the added resources to target Muslims.

Mr. Johnson, who tried to sound the alarm in 2009, said the new agency document gave him a “glimmer of hope.”

“Better late than never, but we’ve had a threat that’s been around for 10 years, and if we acknowledged this and my report was released, we would be much more ahead on strategies,” he said.

In addition to clearly identifying white nationalism as a pressing threat, the department also warns of the rise of “targeted violence” by those who do not display a clear motivation or hatred for a particular group of people.

The report highlights how hateful posts on the internet, including those that are part of disinformation campaigns by foreign states, have incited violent acts in the United States. Officials said they hope the report cements a resolve in police agencies to better investigate leads issued by fusion centers, even if they do not yet meet the definition of probable cause or do not fall into the traditional definition of terrorism.

Chuck Wexler, the executive director of the Police Executive Research Forum, which represents the police departments that would be on the receiving end of the information gathered by the Homeland Security Department, said calling out domestic terrorism merely brings the department and its fusion centers to the current reality.

“What’s evolved is a recognition that it doesn’t matter if somebody is ideologically driven or just targeting people. We need to know who they are,” Mr. Wexler said. “The challenge in a democracy is the First Amendment. People say things on the internet.”

Law enforcement officials said the Homeland Security Department now needs to give police departments more latitude with grants often seen as restricted to combating foreign-born terrorism.

Some police officials have requested additional federal investment in research to identify warning signs of potential attackers and organizations that conduct outreach to those who may espouse hateful views — no easy task for investigators who must weigh First Amendment rights with public safety.

While officials remained skeptical that the Trump administration would truly invest in combating the new threat, Mr. Sena is optimistic.

“This gives us the ability to look at the threats across America,” he said. “It’s not just finding the terrorist with the pipe bombs and two end caps, the guy espousing Al Qaeda rhetoric.”

Stranded Asylum Seekers Ask Appeals Court to Let Them In (Bloomberg)

Bloomberg [10/1/2019 3:32 PM, Edvard Pettersson, 5350K]

Central Americans seeking asylum in the U.S. said they’ve waited long enough in Mexico for their applications to be assessed under a Trump administration policy they call unlawful.

On Tuesday, their advocates asked the federal appeals court in San Francisco to rule that the policy is illegal. Such a ruling would open the border gates to about 45,000 people, according to the American Civil Liberties Union.

The three-judge panel didn’t decide whether to uphold a judge’s ruling to block the “forced return” policy, as the ACLU asked, but it expressed concern why the government doesn’t ask immigrants whether they had any fears about being sent back to Mexico. It’s standard practice for asylum seekers to be asked if they are fearful of returning to their home countries.

The appeals court previously has allowed the policy to remain in effect during the litigation -- which the ACLU says is endangering the tens of thousands of people.

“Individuals returned to Mexico are sent to areas with some of the highest murder rates in the world,” the ACLU said in a court filing. “They face extreme dangers -- killings, kidnappings, sexual assault, robbery, and other forms of violence -- from cartels, the gangs they fled their home countries to escape, corrupt government officials, and an anti-migrant sentiment.”

The lawsuit is one of the many fronts on which immigrant rights' advocates have been battling the administration's efforts to block entry to the swelling number of migrants from Central American countries.

The government also is trying to stop people from applying for asylum in the U.S. if they didn't make such an application in another country on their way to the U.S. -- so a person from El Salvador should have applied for asylum in Guatemala, or Mexico, according to the U.S.

In another case the appeals court heard Tuesday, the U.S. is seeking to overturn a judge's decision that found it was illegal to require asylum seekers to apply only at official border crossings.

An appeals panel in December rejected the government's request to put the judge's ruling on hold while the case was tried. The panel said it was likely the rule was "arbitrary and capricious."

The cases are: *East Bay Sanctuary Covenant v. Trump*, 18-17274, and *Innovation Law Lab v. McAleenan*, 19-15716, U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth District (San Francisco).

Trump administration asylum policies to be heard in federal appeals court (CNN)

[CNN](#) [10/1/2019 6:06 AM, Priscilla Alvarez, 6094K]

Two of the Trump administration's asylum policies will be heard before a federal appeals court Tuesday.

The policies are part of a concerted effort by the administration to tighten asylum and curb migration to the US-Mexico border. Over the summer, a crush of migrants at the border overwhelmed US Customs and Border Protection. In May, for example, Border Patrol arrested more than 132,000 migrants, many of whom were families, according to Customs and Border Protection data.

Administration officials have argued that the nation's immigration court system is bogged down amid an uptick in asylum claims and that asylum restrictions are intended to provide a reprieve. But immigrant advocacy groups have pushed back, saying the policies put migrants in harm's way.

The arguments before the 9th US Circuit Court of Appeals come on the heels of two rulings Friday that halted moves by the administration to hold families in detention indefinitely and to expand a procedure to speed up deportations for some undocumented immigrants.

At issue Tuesday is a policy that requires some migrants to wait in Mexico for the duration of their immigration proceedings, as well as a policy barring migrants who illegally crossed the border from seeking asylum.

Of the two, the former, known as the Migrant Protection Protocols program, has been allowed to proceed. In February, a coalition of immigrant advocacy groups asked a federal judge for a restraining order that would block the policy. Eleven migrants who are seeking

asylum in the United States and were returned to Mexico under the policy are plaintiffs in the case. Three plaintiffs have been granted asylum, according to Lisa Knox, an immigration attorney who represented two of the plaintiffs.

While the policy was initially blocked by a federal judge in California, the 9th Circuit in May granted the administration's request to implement the policy pending appeal.

The judges, though split on some issues, listed a number of factors that went into the decision, including risk of injury in Mexico and negotiations between the US and Mexico.

"The plaintiffs fear substantial injury upon return to Mexico, but the likelihood of harm is reduced somewhat by the Mexican government's commitment to honor its international law obligations and to grant humanitarian status and work permits to individuals returned" under the policy, the opinion read.

"We are hesitant to disturb this compromise amid ongoing diplomatic negotiations between the United States and Mexico because, as we have explained, the preliminary injunction (at least in its present form) is unlikely to be sustained on appeal."

Since then, the program has gradually expanded. Around 42,000 migrants have been sent back to Mexico under the Migrant Protection Protocols program, and additional locations along the southern border have implemented the policy. Most recently, tent courts were erected in Laredo and Brownsville, Texas, to hear these cases.

The other policy before the 9th Circuit on Tuesday would temporarily bar migrants who illegally cross into the US from the southern border from seeking asylum outside of official ports of entry.

Late last year, a federal judge in California blocked Trump's asylum ban and the Supreme Court later upheld the judge's order. Chief Justice John Roberts sided with the four liberal justices in the ruling.

The Supreme Court also recently weighed in on a separate asylum policy that dramatically limits the ability of Central American migrants to claim asylum. The court cleared the way for the rule to take effect.

Key Trump Asylum Policies Are Tested in Appeals Court (US News & World Report)
US News & World Report [10/1/2019 6:57 PM, Elliot Spagat, AP, 3196K]

Attorneys for the Trump administration and the American Civil Liberties Union sparred Tuesday before a federal appeals court on two major changes to the rules of asylum, a backwater topic in immigration policy debates until the president made it a crucial part of his agenda.

A three-judge panel of the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in San Francisco heard arguments on a policy to make asylum seekers wait in Mexico while their cases wind through U.S. immigration courts. More than 42,000 people have been returned to Mexico since it took effect in January.

Another Trump policy would deny asylum to anyone who crosses the border illegally from Mexico. The Supreme Court declined to lift an order blocking it from taking effect last year following an extraordinary spat between President Donald Trump and Chief Justice John Roberts.

The question before the judges — two appointed by President Bill Clinton and one by President Ronald Reagan — is whether the policies should be in effect while lawsuits proceed. They did not rule immediately.

Judge William A. Fletcher, a Clinton appointee, told a Justice Department lawyer that the administration may be "in real trouble" because immigration authorities don't ask asylum seekers if they fear being sent back to Mexico. The lawyer, Scott Stewart, responded that they can express fears on their own initiative, which didn't satisfy the judge.

"Do you have any evidence of any sort that tells you that you're going to get a high percentage of people volunteering that information?" Fletcher asked, concluding after some back and forth that the administration had none.

ACLU attorney Judy Rabinovitz pressed for additional steps before an asylum seeker is sent back to Mexico, including rights to consult an attorney or have a translator.

Backers of the policy, known officially as "Migrant Protection Protocols and colloquially as "Remain in Mexico," say it prevents asylum seekers from being released in the United States with notices to appear in court, which they consider a major incentive for more people to come. Its expansion coincided with a sharp drop in Border Patrol arrests from a 13-year-high in May.

Opponents say it has exposed asylum seekers to extremely dangerous conditions in violent Mexican border cities while they wait for court hearings. Human Rights First, and advocacy group that has criticized the policy, issued a report Tuesday that said there were more than 340 public reports of rape, kidnapping, torture and other violent crimes against asylum seekers who have been sent back.

The asylum ban on anyone who crosses the border illegally from Mexico also drew pointed questions, including whether it violated U.S. law that says it doesn't matter how people enter the country.

Trump and Roberts clashed last year after the president denounced a judge who ruled against him on the ban as an "Obama judge." Roberts said there was no such thing in a strongly worded statement contradicting Trump and defending judicial independence. Trump defended his own comment, tweeting defiantly, "Sorry Justice Roberts."

The Supreme Court ruled in Trump's favor last month by letting another asylum ban take effect, denying it to anyone who passes through another country on the way to the U.S. border with Mexico without first applying there.

Trump asked about shooting migrants at border in legs if they threw rocks at agents, reportedly wanted a 'trench with deadly reptiles' (FOX News)

FOX News [10/1/2019 10:11 PM, Joseph A. Wulfsohn, 10258K]

A new report from The New York Times on Tuesday shows the extraordinary measures President Trump inquired about as part of his push to secure the southern border.

In an excerpt from their upcoming book, "Border Wars: Inside Trump's Assault on Immigration," Times reporters Michael Shear and Julie Hirschfeld Davis allege that Trump has repeatedly floated the idea of installing a "water-filled trench" filled with deadly reptiles.

"Privately, the president had often talked about fortifying a border wall with a water-filled trench, stocked with snakes or alligators, prompting aides to seek a cost estimate. He wanted the wall electrified, with spikes on top that could pierce human flesh," the excerpt read. "After publicly suggesting that soldiers shoot migrants if they threw rocks, the president backed off when his staff told him that was illegal. But later in a meeting, aides recalled, he suggested that they shoot migrants in the legs to slow them down. That's not allowed either, they told him."

A source who was in the room at the time confirmed the conversation about shooting migrants in the legs to Fox News late Tuesday.

The Times journalists said that their report was based on interviews with "more than a dozen White House and administration officials directly involved" in discussions that took place at the time.

"You are making me look like an idiot," Trump reportedly shouted at the meeting. "I ran on this. It's my issue."

The president also reportedly trashed his then-Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen, who left the administration in April.

The report details about efforts made by top White House advisor Stephen Miller to "get rid" of administration officials he thought were thwarting Trump's immigration agenda, which included Nielsen, then-United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) chief L. Francis Cissna, DHS general counsel John Mitnick, and former acting director of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) Ronald D. Vitiello, all who have since left the administration.

The White House did not immediately respond to Fox News' request for comment.

[Editorial note: consult video at source link]

Trump proposed shooting migrants, using alligators at border, according to book (USA Today)

USA Today [10/2/2019 4:39 AM, Savannah Behrmann, 6620K]

A book excerpt published Tuesday describes a turbulent week inside the Trump administration in March as the president ordered staff to shut down the United States' 2,000-mile border with Mexico.

According to reporting from the New York Times, President Donald Trump had at times

privately talked about “fortifying a border wall with a water-filled trench, stocked with snakes or alligators, prompting aides to seek a cost estimate. He wanted the wall electrified, with spikes on top that could pierce human flesh.”

Additionally, after aides told him that his public suggestion of soldiers shooting migrants if they threw rocks was illegal, he backed down. But, he later suggested that they “shoot migrants in the legs to slow them down.”

“That’s not allowed either, (staff) told him,” according to the excerpt.

The article published Tuesday was adapted from “Border Wars: Inside Trump’s Assault on Immigration,” a book to be published on Oct. 8 by Times reporters Michael Shear and Julie Hirschfeld Davis.

The article is based on interviews with more than a dozen White House administration officials who were granted anonymity, describing a “frenzied week of presidential rages” that included “around-the-clock staff panic and far more White House turmoil than was known at the time,” according to the Times.

Adding profanity, Trump shouted, “You are making me look like an idiot! I ran on this. It’s my issue,” during a meeting that included White House Aide Stephen Miller, former Homeland Security Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, then-Customs and Border Protection chief Kevin McAleenan, acting chief of staff Mick Mulvaney, as well as presidential adviser and son-in-law Jared Kushner, according to the book excerpt.

The comments came around the same time the President publicly threatened to close the border, saying he would if “Mexico doesn’t get with it.” Trump later backed off from that threat.

“The president was frustrated and I think he took that moment to hit the reset button,” Thomas D. Homan, who served as Trump’s acting director of Immigration and Customs Enforcement, told the Times. “The president wanted it to be fixed quickly.”

The book excerpt includes details that Trump “routinely berated” Nielsen as “ineffective and, worse — at least in his mind — not tough-looking enough.”

During a briefing over the necessity for new legal authority to bring down drones, Trump reportedly told Nielsen that she “didn’t hear me the first time, honey. Shoot ‘em down. Sweetheart, just shoot ‘em out of the sky, OK?”

“The happiest [Trump] had been with [DHS Secretary] Nielsen was a few months earlier, when American border agents had fired tear gas into Mexico to try to stop migrants from crossing into the United States,” the Times reported.

Democrats were quick to express their outrage after the excerpt published.

Rep. Alexandria-Ocasio Cortez said that “cruelty has always been the point,” with the

president. Rep. Eric Swalwell tweeted that Trump's actions usually fall "into one of three buckets: cruel, childish, or corrupt."

Judge grills government lawyer on potential violations of international refugee law (CBS News)

CBS News [10/1/2019 5:53 PM, Camilo Montoya-Galvez, 3332K]

As a Justice Department lawyer defended a policy requiring tens of thousands of asylum seekers to wait in Mexico while their cases are processed, a federal appeals judge reminded the Trump administration attorney that his time was running out, advising him to address an area of "real trouble" in the government's arguments.

"You don't even ask whether they have any kind of fear," Judge William Fletcher of the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals, one of three circuit judges hearing the case on Tuesday in San Francisco, told Scott Stewart, a deputy assistant attorney general.

Fletcher referenced the principle of "non-refoulement," a standard in international law that bars countries from sending asylum seekers to countries where they may face persecution. One of the pillars of the legal challenges to the so-called "Remain in Mexico" policy is that the administration is violating this cornerstone of international refugee law by returning migrants — including families with small children — to dangerous Mexican border cities.

Under the Migrant Protection Protocols (MPP) program, U.S. officials do not affirmatively ask migrants if they fear going back to Mexico before sending them there. As of this week, the administration has returned more than 50,000 asylum seekers to Mexico under this policy, according to Customs and Border Protection (CBP), the agency that oversees the returns.

The oral arguments before the three-judge panel on Tuesday represented the latest phase of litigation surrounding the MPP program since the same circuit court last spring delayed an injunction by a district judge and allowed the administration to implement the policy while the merits of the legal challenges to it are reviewed.

On Tuesday, the plaintiffs, a group of immigrant advocacy groups represented by the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), asked the panel to uphold the injunction a judge in San Francisco made in April and to prevent the administration from continuing to implement the policy.

When Stewart defended the practice of not asking migrants placed in this program whether they fear persecution in Mexico as "reasonable," Fletcher quickly interjected.

"But you're giving them nothing," he told Stewart. "That is to say, you're not even asking them the key question with respect to refoulement: that is to say, 'Are you afraid?'"

The Justice Department lawyer suggested migrants could simply inform U.S. officials of any fear they have about staying in Mexico — even if they are not specifically asked.

"Purportedly these plaintiffs are asylum seekers who are, at least according to their claims, fleeing persecution and have fears, including in Mexico," Stewart said. "It would be logical for them and the agency can reasonably conclude that they would volunteer their harm."

But Fletcher remained unconvinced by Stewart's argument. "Do you have anything other than speculation to support that?" he asked the government lawyer.

"It's the logic of the provision," Stewart responded.

"But I'm asking about the real world," Fletcher countered before asking Stewart for evidence that demonstrates people would volunteer that kind of information without being asked for it.

After apprehending or encountering them, CBP officials are typically supposed to ask migrants if they fear returning to where they came from. If migrants say yes, they are then referred to undergo so-called "credible fear interviews" with asylum officers, who work for U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). If the migrants pass the credible fear test, they can formally apply for asylum in the immigration court system.

Migrants placed in the "Remain in Mexico" policy, however, are automatically allowed to apply for asylum. But asylum officers still determine whether they will be sent back to Mexico. A migrant subject to the policy needs to say — without being asked — if he or she fears persecution in Mexico. But advocates say this is something migrants from Central American and other countries in the region are unlikely to do since they may not expect to face persecution in Mexico, having been in the country relatively briefly during their journey to the U.S.

Even if the migrants spontaneously indicate they fear persecution in Mexico, it is almost impossible for them to pass the non-refoulement interviews for the program, according to attorneys and some of the very same asylum officers conducting the screenings.

In the courtroom on Tuesday, Stewart defended the procedures in place for the MPP program, saying the U.S. is returning migrants to "liberty" in Mexico, not to the country they are "claiming to flee." He said the current practice of officials not asking migrants whether they fear returning to Mexico deters what he called "false positives" and claims by migrants who he suggested simply wanted to stay in the U.S. and be released.

As Stewart started to explain that he believed the policy in place stemmed from a "logical conclusion," Fletcher reiterated his skepticism.

"You keep coming back to logical. You don't really have much in the record, do you?" the judge asked.

"Again, your honor, this is a facial—" Stewart said before being interrupted by Fletcher.

"So, the answer is yes — you don't have much in the record," Fletcher said.

[Editorial note: consult source link for video]

[MA] Oxfam, other nonprofits urge feds to raise refugee cap (Washington Post)

Washington Post [10/1/2019 8:44 PM, Philip Marcelo, 9425K]

Massachusetts refugee organizations urged the Trump administration on Tuesday to raise its proposed cap on refugees, noting that crises have forced millions from their homes and that the U.S. has the resources to respond.

The U.S. Department of State last week proposed accepting just 18,000 refugees in the fiscal year that began Tuesday — the lowest since the humanitarian program was created in 1980. Last year, the administration placed the cap at the then-record low of 30,000 refugees. In Barack Obama's last year as president, he set the annual cap at 110,000 refugees.

Leaders of Oxfam America, the International Institute of New England, Catholic Charities of Boston and other groups also called on state policymakers to bolster agencies serving refugees as they deal with layoffs and closures because of cuts to the federal refugee program.

The curtailment of the national refugee quota comes despite great global upheaval, said Eva Millona, executive director of the Massachusetts Immigrant and Refugee Advocacy Coalition. Nearly 26 million refugees have had to leave their homelands due to war, political repression, religious persecution and natural disasters in recent years, she said.

"People are suffering, and we need to help," Millona said, speaking at a forum at Oxfam's downtown Boston office. "We have the resources."

The Trump administration is also now requiring state and local governments to approve most refugee resettlements, which activists said Tuesday could open the door for some states and cities to ban refugees altogether.

The State Department said in a statement resettlement in the U.S. is just one way the administration supports refugees, citing diplomatic efforts to resolve conflicts in the Middle East and Latin America to billions of dollars in aid sent overseas for basic needs like food, shelter and health care.

"Helping refugees and other displaced people in areas close to their homes facilitates their return when conditions allow," the agency said in its statement. "This enables them to participate in rebuilding their homelands, promoting recovery and long-term stability of those countries and their neighbors, which also serves our foreign policy and national security interests."

Republican Gov. Charlie Baker's office said it remains committed to supporting refugees despite the White House policies because they're "vital to Massachusetts' economy, culture and civic life."

The Baker administration said totals for the federal fiscal year that ended Monday weren't available, but the refugee advocacy coalition said 421 refugees were resettled in Massachusetts from Oct. 1, 2018, through May 31. There were 783 refugees resettled in the state in all of the 2018 fiscal year and 1,993 in the 2017 fiscal year, according to state data.

U.S. Sen. Edward Markey said he has proposed legislation that would mandate the country accept at least 95,000 refugees a year, a level that he says is based on the historical average for the nation.

"This is not the time to cut," he said. "This is the time to increase."

Tresor-Alin Nahimana, a 24-year-old refugee from Congo, said he's concerned that the cap on refugees will prevent him from reuniting with his wife and two young children.

He arrived in Massachusetts about seven months ago and has been working at a Starbucks while taking English classes.

But Nahimana said his family remains in Turkey, where they've lived for about three years since fleeing their homeland, where his father, mother and two of his siblings were killed in the country's ethnic strife.

Nahimana said he hasn't had the courage to tell his wife about the new refugee limit because he's afraid of how she'll respond.

"She can't do this alone," he said. "They need me. My kids need their father. They deserve it."

[FL] Pelosi to meet with Venezuelan exiles in Florida (Politico)

Politico [10/1/2019 7:20 PM, Gary Fineout, 2512K]

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and South Florida Democrats plan to meet with Venezuelan exiles this week amid an ongoing stalemate in Congress over whether or not to offer protections to those who fled the South American country.

Democrats have scheduled a forum on Thursday in Weston, a town that has seen an influx of Venezuelans fleeing their country during an economic collapse that began under former President Hugo Chávez and has continued under President Nicolás Maduro.

The Trump administration has taken a hard line against the Maduro regime and backed opposition leader Juan Guaidó, but Maduro has remained in power.

Florida is home to at least 190,000 Venezuelans and the economic crisis in that country reverberates loudly in South Florida. Cuban Americans see parallels between what has happened under socialist rule in Venezuela and under communism in Cuba.

"In South Florida, democracy in Venezuela is a local issue," said Rep. Debbie Mucarsel-Powell, a South Florida Democrat who plans to attend the forum with Pelosi.

An effort to offer immigration protections to Venezuelan immigrants has bogged down due to partisan infighting in Congress.

President Donald Trump has been urged by Florida leaders to shield Venezuelans from deportation but he has taken no action. The House in July passed a bill authorizing temporary protected status to Venezuelans, but the measure has not moved in the Senate.

Sen. Rick Scott (R-Fla.) last week offered an alternative that would have granted protections to Venezuelans and overhauled the program, but Democrats blocked the measure. Scott accused Democrats of using the "Venezuelan community as a political prop instead of working with us to find a solution."

Democrats insist their efforts are serious.

"We cannot champion Venezuelans in Venezuela, then ignore them here," Rep. Debbie Wasserman Schultz (D-Fla.) said in a statement. "Speaker Pelosi led the House in passing tough measures to protect Venezuelans, here and at home. The Speaker and my House colleagues are eager to strategize with Venezuelans in Florida on how to continue these efforts."

Wasserman Schultz and Mucarsel-Powell are scheduled to attend the forum, along with Reps. Donna Shalala (D-Fla.) and Albio Sires (D-N.J.), chairman of the Western Hemisphere subcommittee of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, and Venezuelan Ambassador Carlos Vecchio.

Pelosi is heading to Florida the same day that President Donald Trump is scheduled to discuss Medicare at The Villages, a sprawling central Florida retirement community and Republican stronghold.

[FL] Florida Schools to Teach Students About Child Trafficking Prevention (US News & World Report)

US News & World Report [10/1/2019 2:59 PM, Casey Leins, 3196K]

Florida will be the first state to require schools to teach K-12 students about child trafficking prevention after the state's Board of Education unanimously approved the rule on Monday.

The Sunshine State ranks third in the nation for reported human trafficking cases, according to a press release from the Florida Department of Education. In 2018, there were 767 human trafficking cases reported in Florida, nearly 20% of which involved minors.

Human trafficking crimes include sex trafficking and labor trafficking, where an individual is forced or coerced to work, according to a 2017 report from the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL).

In 2016, there were 439 human trafficking convictions by the U.S. Department of Justice, according to the McCain Institute, a D.C.-based think tank. This was a 48% increase from the 297 convictions in 2015.

"Tragically, human trafficking is an epidemic in our country," Gov. Ron DeSantis, a Republican, said in Monday's press release. "Children of all ages need to know and understand the hazards of human trafficking and how to protect themselves from dangerous predators."

Under the new guidelines, school districts must submit their child trafficking prevention implementation plans to Florida Commissioner of Education Richard Corcoran and post the

plan on their district website by Dec. 1 each year.

By July 1 each year, school districts must provide a report to Corcoran proving that schools completed the mandatory instruction.

The Florida Department of Education specified that the average age of youth trafficked in the state is 11 to 13 years old and that up to 70% of sex trafficking and exploitation begins online. The department also pointed to research indicating that children with histories of sexual abuse, dating violence and low self-esteem are often targeted.

Many states have created task forces or leadership positions to combat human trafficking, and at least 11 states have groups focused specifically on child human trafficking, according to the NCSL report. These groups are responsible for making policy recommendations based on studies, educating the public about human trafficking, and working with key anti-trafficking stakeholders.

As of 2017 when the NCSL report was released, 20 states and Washington, D.C., had passed legislation providing prosecutorial immunity to children who have been trafficked. This way, child human trafficking survivors cannot be charged for prostitution. Some states also apply immunity to other crimes besides prostitution that were committed as a result of being trafficked.

But no other state to date has required that schools provide a human trafficking prevention education.

Geoff Rogers, CEO and co-founder of the U.S. Institute Against Human Trafficking, commended Florida for its leadership.

"We hope more states will follow their lead as we seek to put an end to this terrible crime in the United States," Rogers said.

[IL] CBP commissioner says Chicago's 'reckless' sanctuary city policy will create more American 'victims' (FOX News)

FOX News [10/1/2019 9:24 AM, Nick Givas, 10258K] Video: [HERE](#)

Acting Customs and Border Protection (CBP) Commissioner Mark Morgan took on Chicago's new sanctuary city policy on "Fox & Friends" Tuesday and claimed it will increase violence, and create more American "victims"

Morgan, who also served in the Obama administration, was addressing the city's new policy which states municipal officers are not to assist federal immigration authorities with regard to illegal immigrants.

Instead of assisting Homeland Security, officers are instructed to wait for their supervisor to arrive, the citywide memo said. Once the supervisor arrives, "if the request is to assist with an immigration arrest or detention, [Chicago Police Department] personnel will leave the scene as directed by the CPD supervisor."

"I've been doing law enforcement for a few decades and I can tell you, I'm a lot more than

concerned about this politically-driven policy," Morgan said. "What the citizens of Chicago need to understand is, this policy is going to create more victims in their city.

"[Immigration and Customs Enforcement] priorities [are to] go after criminal aliens," he continued. "Criminal aliens that are here illegally and have committed additional crimes against the city of Chicago... Just last week ICE arrested and apprehended a Mexican national that had been deported twice for sexual abuse. This kind of policy would make that harder for ICE to do. That's outrageous, it's reckless and lives will be in danger because of this."

Morgan also praised his officers for risking their lives to rescue over 4,400 illegal immigrants from the dangers of the southern border this year and called them "heroes" for showing compassion.

"They're risking their lives, while the cartels and the smugglers -- they don't care about these individuals that are illegally in our country. But the border patrol agents and the officers do," he said earlier in the interview.

"They're risking their lives every single day... They don't ask what their nationality is. They don't ask them if they're illegally entering the country. They see a human being [in] need and left at the hands of the smugglers and they're risking their lives to save them -- with humanity and compassion. That's why the men and women of CBP are my heroes."

[IL] Chicago Memo Instructs Police Not To Help DHS With Immigration Arrests (Daily Caller)

Daily Caller [10/1/2019 1:58 PM, Jason Hopkins, 785K]

An internal memo distributed within the Chicago Police Department instructs officers to leave the scene instead of helping DHS personnel with an immigration arrest.

The memo is the latest directive by the Chicago government, which has established itself as a safe haven for illegal aliens for years.

Chicago Mayor Lori Lightfoot openly called ICE "xenophobic" and "racist" during an immigration rally in September, and said her police officers would not cooperate with federal immigration authorities.

Chicago police officers have been instructed not to cooperate with the Department of Homeland Security, particularly involving the arrest of illegal aliens.

The Chicago Police Department is instructing officers to wait for a supervisor to arrive instead of immediately assisting Department of Homeland Security personnel asking for help, according to an internal memo first obtained by Fox News. The memo goes further by also instructing officers to "leave the scene" if the request is related to an immigration arrest.

"Effective immediately, a CPD supervisor is required to respond to all requests for assistance from Department of Homeland Security Personnel," the memo read. "If the request is to assist with an immigration arrest or detention, CPD personnel will leave the scene as directed by the CPD supervisor."

Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) is the agency within DHS that carries out removal operations of illegal aliens. Chicago has been a “sanctuary city” for years, but the directive appears to take the city’s aversion of federal immigration authorities to a new level.

Chicago in 2012 passed the “Welcoming City Ordinance” during then-Mayor Rahm Emanuel’s tenure. The rule forbids police and other law enforcement officers from inquiring about any individual’s immigration status. Since then, the city has repeatedly ignored detainer requests from ICE. The agency accused Cook County, which encompasses the city, of ignoring every single detainer request that was made to them.

Since the emergence of Mayor Lori Lightfoot, who entered office in May, the relationship between the city government and federal immigration authorities has further deteriorated.

“We will never, ever succumb to the racist, xenophobic rhetoric of ICE,” Lightfoot said during an immigration rally in late September. “We will continue to ban ICE from having access to any CPD databases. We’ll not allow any CPD officer to cooperate with anything related to ICE and its immigration raids.”

Chicago police confirmed that the memo originated from a superior, but it is not yet known if Lightfoot was involved. A spokesman for the police department did not respond to a request for comment from the Daily Caller News Foundation.

A spokesperson for DHS said the directive puts both their officers and the community at risk.

“The Department of Homeland Security is deeply concerned with the dangerous anti-law enforcement direction given by the leadership of the Chicago Police Department. The men and women of ICE put their lives on the line every day to protect the citizens of this country from dangerous criminals,” read a statement from a DHS spokesperson provided the DCNF.

The department also noted that it recently arrested a “twice-deported 61-year-old Mexican national” living in Chicago who had been convicted of aggravated sexual abuse.

“Thanks to the hard work by ICE, this criminal is off the streets and in immigration custody pending his removal to Mexico. Failing to support fellow law enforcement officers upon request for assistance not only places our heroic police officers in greater danger but keeps criminals on the streets and makes all of our communities less safe, specifically the great City of Chicago,” the statement continued.

[TX] Border Patrol cares for toddler rescued from smugglers posing as child’s family (FOX News)

FOX News [10/1/2019 2:47 PM, Adam Shaw, 10258K]

Border Patrol agents in Texas last week cared for a toddler after the child was rescued from human smugglers posing as a family -- as officials in Washington sound the alarm about the continued danger of such activity at the border.

The child was rescued by Immigration and Customs Enforcement's (ICE) Homeland Security Investigations, while the two smugglers, who'd been posing as a family, were taken into custody.

After it was determined that the child had no relation to the smugglers, the Uvalde Border Patrol Station took care of the child for nearly 24 hours. The child was then placed in the custody of Health and Human Services.

In a press release, Customs and Border Protection (CBP) said agents "personally cared for the toddler over the course of three shifts." The child's relatives have not yet been identified, while the smugglers are being held by HSI pending charges.

"Of all the people that smugglers exploit, children are the most vulnerable," said Del Rio Sector Chief Patrol Agent Raul L. Ortiz. "Thanks to the cooperative efforts between HSI and Border Patrol, this child was removed from a dangerous situation and properly cared for."

CBP Acting Commissioner Mark Morgan maintained in a Fox News interview last month that agents are being vilified despite efforts to care for children amid a crisis at the southern border.

"The men and women of CBP, they are caring for these kids like they're their own kids, I've seen it," he said. "I've seen where they brought in their own clothes and toys early on during this crisis for these kids."

The toddler's rescue comes as officials and lawmakers have been calling for changes to immigration law to stop children from being used as de facto passports to the U.S. by migrants crossing the southern border.

The 1997 Flores court settlement limits how long unaccompanied children can be held in custody to 20 days. In 2016, a court ruled that the limit also applies to minors accompanied by adults. It has led to a situation where migrants know they are likely to be released into the interior of the U.S. if they are accompanying a child.

The Trump administration has sought to end the settlement, but has been blocked by a legal challenge. But officials have pushed several measures they say have effectively ended "catch and release" for families at the border.

Under one such measure, migrants from Central America will be returned to their country of origin, unless they claim fear of being returned -- if they do, they will mostly be returned to Mexico to await hearings under the Migrant Protection Protocol (MPP).

Democrats have accused the Trump administration of running detention centers with inhumane conditions as part of a "cruel" immigration policy.

"This administration has admitted to using cruelty as a deterrent, and that includes forcing migrants to wait their turn to apply for asylum in Mexico," Rep. Veronica Escobar, D-Texas, said last month.

In the House and Senate, lawmakers have introduced legislation that would require DNA testing to verify relationships between adult migrants and children.

[TX] School district in El Paso hosts mass shooting preparedness (San Francisco Chronicle)

San Francisco Chronicle [10/1/2019 9:37 AM, Molly Smith, El Paso Times, 337K]

The two dozen adults and kids seated in the Del Valle High School library on a recent Wednesday evening weren't at the typical back-to-school presentation.

The El Paso Times reports one of the first items on the agenda was a review of the number of casualties in recent mass shootings.

Last month's event was the second of a series of active shooter training exercises the Ysleta Independent School District Office of Emergency Operations and Preparedness has organized, through mid-October, to educate the public on how to respond in an emergency situation to prevent the loss of life.

"I've done these presentations for four, five years and I always hear it from the crowd: 'It's never going to happen here in El Paso; it can't happen here; El Paso is a safe city,'" El Paso Police Sgt. Alfred Chavez said during the Sept. 25 training exercise. "And look at what we went through last month.

"In the world we live in today, we got to be prepared for (mass shootings). Hopefully we never see it here again, but we got to understand that it's going to happen somewhere."

Juan Jimenez, a YISD parent, attended with his wife and their 7 and 13-year old sons. It's part of the family's effort to know what to do in a range of emergency situations, Jimenez said, which includes being trained in first aid.

Having conversations with your children on how to react in a shooting isn't easy and can be scary, Jimenez said, but is better than completely avoiding the subject.

"He's going to see it on TV anyway, so it's better that this way he can have some training," he said of his elementary school aged son. "TV just scares you; here it's a teaching moment."

Jimenez likens it to knowing how to use a fire extinguisher: you hope you never have to use it, but in the chance you do, you want to be prepared.

His sons said the training motivated them to take "stop the bleed" training.

Chavez, along with Ron Livermore, the director of YISD's office of emergency operations and preparedness, emphasized that having a plan on how to act in an active shooter situation saves lives.

Livermore walked attendees through what happens to the body in a high-stress situation and highlighted the need to stay calm so you don't freeze in fear, a physical reaction that happens as your heart rate rises. Knowing where exits are is crucial, whether you're at a

restaurant, concert, movie theater, store or church, he said, in reference to the places where recent shootings have occurred.

The Cielo Vista Walmart, where 22 people were killed Aug. 3 when a gunman opened fire, had about a dozen exits but only six to seven were actually used, Livermore said.

The community training had been in the works before the shooting, said Robert Basurto, YISD associate superintendent of student support services. Senate Bill 11, a wide-ranging school safety bill Texas lawmakers passed this spring, requires school districts to provide training for employees and parents on what to do if there is a violent incident on a campus. YISD had initially planned to begin the training in 2020, but pushed them up after the Walmart shooting, Basurto said.

It is the first El Paso area district to do so, and the events are open all community members, regardless of whether they are part of YISD.

"Unless you actually practice it and you're talking about it and know what to do, when something bad happens your initial reaction is your gut reaction, and it may be the wrong one," Basurto said.

Locations:

Wednesday, Oct. 2 at Hanks High School Theater

Tuesday, Oct. 8 at Parkland High School Theater

Wednesday, Oct. 9 at Riverside High School Theater

Tuesday, Oct. 15 at the Ysleta High School Auditorium

[CA] 2 guilty of aiding man accused of killing California officer (ABC News)

ABC News [10/1/2019 5:00 PM, Don Thompson, AP, 2702K]

Two men who are in the United States illegally have been convicted of helping a third man as he tried to escape to his native Mexico after killing a California police officer, federal prosecutors said Tuesday.

Jurors on Monday found Erik Quiroz Razo, 28, and Conrado Virgen Mendoza, 34, guilty of conspiring to aid and abet the latter's brother Paulo Virgen Mendoza as he fled. They face up to five years in prison when they are sentenced Jan. 13.

The case rekindled a debate over California's sanctuary law that limits local law enforcement from cooperating with federal immigration authorities. President Donald Trump used it to bolster his call for tougher border security amid a fight with congressional Democrats over funding for a border wall.

Paulo Virgen Mendoza, who is also in the U.S. illegally, was previously identified by authorities as Gustavo Perez Arriaga, an alias that he used when he was arrested. He has pleaded not guilty to murder in the Dec. 26 shooting death of Cpl. Ronil Singh during a

traffic stop.

Investigators say Singh of the tiny Newman Police Department suspected Mendoza of drunken driving. Stanislaus County Sheriff Adam Christianson previously said California's sanctuary law prevented authorities from reporting him to immigration officials for possible deportation after two previous drunken driving arrests.

Authorities said several of Virgen Mendoza's relatives or friends helped him try to flee to Mexico. They helped dispose of his truck and loaded gun or provided him with transportation, a cellphone, clothing, food and shelter. His brother arranged for a smuggler to take Paulo across the border, but he was found and arrested at a house two days after Singh's killing.

Virgen Mendoza's girlfriend, Ana Leydi Cervantes Sanchez, 31, was sentenced Tuesday to a year and a day in prison after pleading guilty to conspiring to help her boyfriend's attempted escape.

Jurors acquitted two others. But Erasmo Villegas Suarez, 36, and Maria Luisa Moreno, 57, are still awaiting deportation proceedings, and Villegas Suarez faces additional federal charges alleging fraud involving identification documents.

Another brother, Adrian Virgen Mendoza, 26, previously pleaded guilty and was sentenced to a year and nine months in prison. Moreno's husband, Bernabe Madrigal Castañeda, 60, also has pleaded guilty and was sentenced to a year and a day in prison.

They and Cervantes Sanchez are in the country illegally and will face deportation proceedings after serving their prison terms.

[Mexico] Over Half A Million Central Americans Entered Mexico Illegally In First Half Of 2019 (Daily Caller)

Daily Caller [10/1/2019 6:21 PM, Jason Hopkins, 785K]

Over 500,000 thousand Central American migrants entered Mexico illegally during the first six months of 2019, revealing the extent of the immigration crisis.

Mexico Interior Secretary Olga Sanchez Cordero revealed that more than half a million Central American migrants have entered her country between January and June of this year, according to the Center for Immigration Studies. The vast majority of the migrants come from Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador, a region in Central America known as the Northern Triangle.

The migration numbers for the first half of 2019 dwarf those for the entire years of 2017 and 2018. The Mexican government reported a total of 138,612 Central Americans entering the country illegally in 2018. There were only 93,486 illegal migrants from that region during 2017.

Most of the Central Americans passing through Mexico are attempting to reach the United States, where many of them then lodge an asylum claim. The White House is working with these Northern Triangle countries to try and reduce the flow of migrants emanating from

their borders.

Led by acting Homeland Security Secretary Kevin McAleenan, the Trump administration has been able to secure asylum deals with Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras within the past few months. The agreements call on their governments to allow U.S.-bound migrants to seek instead protected status within their countries, reducing the number of migrants who ultimately reach the U.S.-Mexico border. The White House will, in turn, help them bolster their asylum capacities.

The asylum deals could not only help reduce migrant flows into the U.S., but also into Mexico. However, none of the three Central American governments have yet to implement them.

The Mexican government, for its part, has significantly ramped up its own immigration enforcement in the face of mounting pressure from Washington, D.C.

Mexican President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador has deployed thousands of his National Guard troops across his country's border. His government is allowing thousands of asylum seekers to wait in Mexico while their claims are processed in immigration courts, a policy known as Remain in Mexico.

The initiatives appear to be having an effect. Border Patrol agents encountered just over 64,000 illegal migrants on the U.S. southern border in August. The numbers were a sharp decline from May, where encounters reached a peak of more than 144,000.

[Mexico] U.S. appeals court questions Trump policy forcing refugee seekers to remain in Mexico (Los Angeles Times)

Los Angeles Times [10/1/2019 4:38 PM, Maura Dolan, 3575K]

A federal appeals court expressed concerns during a hearing Tuesday about a Trump administration policy that requires Central American migrants to remain in Mexico while their asylum requests are processed.

A federal judge issued a nationwide injunction against the policy in April, but a three-judge panel of the U.S. 9th Circuit Court of Appeals decided the following month to put a hold on the order.

Since then, according to a report by The Times, more than 37,000 migrants have been ordered to remain in Mexico, in cities that the U.S. State Department considers some of the most dangerous in the world. Migrants have been attacked, sexually assaulted and extorted, and some have died while waiting, The Times found.

During Tuesday's hearing, a different three-judge 9th Circuit panel appeared critical of the policy.

Judge William A. Fletcher, a Clinton appointee, noted that the new rule does not require asylum officers to ask migrants "a key question" before requiring them to wait in Mexico.

"You don't even ask if they have any kind of fear" about remaining in Mexico, Fletcher told a

lawyer for the federal government.

Richard A. Paez, also a Clinton appointee, suggested the panel might have to allow the injunction to take effect to ensure that refugees without lawyers are asked whether they fear staying in Mexico.

The 1951 U.N. Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees says the government may not return a refugee to a place where his or her life or freedom would be threatened.

Deputy Assistant Atty. Gen. Scott G. Stewart, arguing for the Trump administration, told the panel that nothing prevents refugees from voluntarily telling an asylum officer of specific concerns about remaining in Mexico.

But ACLU lawyer Judy Rabinovitz countered that migrants, many who do not speak English and aren't entitled to interpreters, may not understand the importance of volunteering such information. She told the court that refugees are not allowed to consult with a lawyer, even if they have one.

The 9th Circuit's May 7 order granting the Trump administration's request to place a hold on the injunction was hardly an endorsement of the policy. It was granted by a motions panel that hears urgent matters and whose members change month to month.

Judge Paul J. Watford, an Obama appointee on that panel, agreed to stay the injunction but wrote separately to say that at least some migrants were being returned to Mexico in violation of the 1951 Convention.

"Some belong to protected groups that face persecution both in their home countries and in Mexico, and many will be vulnerable to persecution in Mexico because they are Central American migrants," Watford wrote.

Fletcher, who also was on that month's motions panel, agreed with the decision against the nationwide injunction, but wrote separately to say the policy violated a 1996 immigration law.

During Tuesday's hearing, Fletcher suggested that the decision blocking the injunction does not mean that the 9th Circuit cannot revive it after further consideration.

"We heard argument one week after the [Trump administration] motion was filed," Fletcher said. "That is not a lot of time."

The panel also heard arguments on a Trump rule that denies asylum to people who cross the border at a place other than an official point of entry.

A federal judge in San Francisco issued an order blocking the rule, and the Supreme Court decided 5-4 last December to leave that order in place. Trump acted after caravans of thousands of migrants headed from Central America to the U.S. border.

Paez noted that Congress has specified that refugees may apply for asylum even if they enter the country without presenting themselves for inspection.

He asked how an agency could later pass a regulation “that wipes that out.”

Lee Galernt, another ACLU lawyer, told the panel that “Congress understood how dangerous it was to eliminate asylum for people who couldn’t make it to a point of entry.”

Judge Ferdinand Fernandez, appointed by George H. W. Bush, was the third member of Tuesday’s panel. He did not ask any questions.

The panel may rule at any time. The losing side could ask a larger 9th Circuit panel to reconsider or go directly to the Supreme Court.

[Mexico] Mexican asylum seekers grow frustrated, fearful waiting in border towns from Tijuana to Ciudad Juárez (San Diego Union Tribune)

San Diego Union Tribune [10/1/2019 7:05 PM, Wendy Fry and Molly Hennessy-Fiske]

As the Trump administration cracks down on migrants seeking asylum in the U.S., thousands of Mexican asylum seekers have been forced to wait at multiple U.S. border crossings in recent weeks, including families and pregnant women.

In Tijuana, Mexican migrants gathered Monday at the El Chaparral pedestrian crossing, across the border from San Ysidro, to hear names read from a large, ledger-style notebook.

A volunteer reading names from the list — which included about 11,000 individuals — said the majority of those waiting were Mexican.

Among those, fisherman Javier Contreras, 40, said he fled Michoacán two months ago, after gang members kidnapped his two oldest boys.

“We were lucky to get them back,” said Contreras. Contreras and his family, including his wife and youngest son, left Michoacán immediately after his older sons’ ransom was paid and the boys were returned. They got on the first bus they could catch, he said.

“It’s because of the cartel. It’s a war over there,” said Contreras, adding he doesn’t think the government of Mexico is capable of combating cartel-fueled violence or protecting migrants at the border.

“We’re not safe over here,” he said, referring to Mexico’s northern border.

Contreras said he is so worried about being spotted by criminals who target migrants in Tijuana that he will not bring his wife and three children to the line to check their numbers, until he’s positive it’s their turn to cross. He said he comes every day to monitor the progress and get a better idea when that might be.

He was number 3,763. On Monday, the list reached 3,055 — Contreras and his family would have to keep waiting. Each number represents 10 people.

The Trump administration has returned nearly 50,000 migrants from Central America to Mexico under the “Remain in Mexico,” program this year, and recently added an asylum ban for migrants from other countries. Mexican migrants are not subject to the those

conditions, but nevertheless are finding they may have to wait weeks to months for processing in about a half dozen Mexican border cities.

U.S. Customs and Border Protection officials issued a statement Monday saying the agency would process those who are waiting as capacity allows and that migrants without identification or other documents may face longer waits.

“When our ports of entry reach capacity, we have to manage the queues and individuals presenting without documents may need to wait in Mexico as CBP officers work to process those already within our facilities,” the statement said.

Rather than add capacity to process arriving asylum seekers, Homeland Security has devoted resources to expanding the “Remain in Mexico” program and building temporary tent courts. (The program is officially called the “Migrant Protection Protocols” or MPP by the U.S. government.)

Last year, U.S. Customs and Border Protection stationed officers at the midpoints of border bridges to force Central American asylum seekers, many families from Central America, to wait in Mexico, a process called metering.

Migrants were expected to maintain some of the lists, while others were supervised by Mexican immigration officials who faced allegations of corruption.

Late last year, Mexican officials took control of the lists, which have grown to include more than 26,000 people, according to Human Rights Watch.

In Tijuana, volunteers, who are themselves asylum-seekers waiting to cross, call out names from “la lista,” or the list of migrants waiting for a chance to apply for asylum.

The number of people called changes every day. U.S. Customs and Border Protection officers give Mexican immigration officials a daily number based on how many migrants they say they can accept that day. Mexican immigration officers then tell the volunteers how many names they can call.

A spokesman for the American Civil Liberties Union called metering Mexican asylum seekers to wait at the border illegal.

“The practice of metering has no basis in U.S. law,” said Shaw Drake, policy council for the ACLU Border Rights Center in El Paso. “By turning away a Mexican you’re sending them back into the arms of the country they are fleeing.”

Drake said the ACLU was aware of Mexican asylum seekers waiting for weeks and months in Juarez, Matamoros, Nogales and Tijuana.

He said CBP was supposed to ensure asylum seekers were processed quickly and not subjected to waiting lists supervised by fellow migrants.

“That entire system of chaos exists because CBP is breaking the law and rejecting people at ports and also refusing to take responsibility for the systems that crop up. It’s been a

trend with metering,” Drake said of the migrant waiting lists.

At Ciudad Juárez’s Bridge of the Americas, also known as Puente Libre, dozens of frustrated migrants — some holding newborns — confronted Mexican soldiers last week, challenging a waiting list they worried was keeping them out of the U.S. unfairly.

“We have been here eight days,” shouted a woman. “How much longer?”

“We all have rights!” a man yelled.

Migrants from Chiapas and Guerrero have been waiting for processing in Matamoros, where volunteers helped at least one Mexican family of three claim asylum Saturday, said local immigration lawyer Jodi Goodwin.

About 300 Mexican asylum seekers were waiting in Nogales Monday, said Joanna Williams, director of education and advocacy for the Kino Border Initiative.

She said Mexican migrants were also being forced to wait south of Douglas, Ariz.

More than 800 Mexican asylum seekers were waiting south of Yuma, Ariz. as of last week, according to Stephanie Leutert, director of the Mexico Security Initiative at the University of Texas at Austin.

“This is one of the last groups that hasn’t been completely cut off from the U.S. asylum system,” said Leutert, who has been visiting the border to track asylum waiting lists.

Many of the migrants said they were fleeing organized crime.

During the first eight months of this year, 23,724 people were murdered in Mexico, a 3.5% increase compared to the same period the year before, which was the most violent year since the government started recording statistics in 1997.

Some of the states asylum seekers were fleeing — Guerrero, Michoacan and Zacatecas — were among those with the highest per-capita homicide rates last year. The border cities they flee toward aren’t always safer, especially for migrants who can become easy targets for criminal groups because of their vulnerable status. Tijuana topped the list for cities with the highest per-capita homicide rate in 2018.

The recent increase in Mexican migrants may be due to a recent uptick in violence between drug trafficking gangs in places like Michoacan, Leutert said, but it could also be because the U.S. has blocked asylum seekers from other countries, creating fear among Mexicans.

“You are creating an incentive that says go now before they close that last door on you,” Leutert said.

In Ciudad Juárez, at least 1,000 Mexican migrants were camped at three border bridges last week, according to a briefing by the State Population Council.

Migrants advocates and shelter managers put the number even higher, between 1,700 and

3,000 waiting to cross.

Mexicans recently became the second highest nationality seeking asylum in Juarez after Cubans, according to the Chihuahua Population Council.

At Puente Libre, the waiting list was written in ink in a blue spiral notebook, managed by the next migrants slated to cross.

Pregnant women, families with young or disabled children and LGBTQ migrants were not given priority.

After some names were suspiciously crossed off in pencil last Wednesday, migrants complained to soldiers guarding the bridge.

The soldiers, alarmed by the increasingly irate crowd, said the list was not their responsibility.

“If you cause problems, they are going to close the bridge!” one soldier shouted. “Organize yourselves!”

Some of the Mexican migrants were staying at shelters in Ciudad Juárez, but hundreds more were camped in the streets near the Paso del Norte, Ysleta-Zaragoza and Americas bridges, as well as a nearby park, worried that if they left, they would miss their chance to cross when their names were called from the list.

Many had relatives they hoped to join in the U.S., and said they came to Ciudad Juárez because it was the shortest route to the border.

Migrant Jose Sepulveda, 23, fled rural Michoacán after he said he was stabbed by drug traffickers who forced his family from their home. His forehead and chest was still scarred from the attack.

The farm worker arrived in Ciudad Juárez Sept. 19 with his wife and parents and has been sleeping beside a busy street leading to the Paso del Norte bridge. Mexican officials have not provided food, water or shelter — local businesses charge migrants five pesos to use the bathroom, about a quarter.

Sepulveda’s family was 39 on a list of 96, and only a few were allowed across daily. He had hoped to join his sister, a legal resident, in Chicago.

He asked Mexican immigration officials why his family was not allowed to cross, and was told U.S. officials didn’t have enough space for them.

“We can’t ever go back,” Sepulveda said as he sat on a cot donors had brought the family.

Silvia Lazaro, 32, fled Guerrero last month with her family of five after an armed gang tried to enlist her husband, a farmworker.

They didn’t have relatives in the U.S., and were not sure how long they could camp on the

street with their children, ages 8, 5 and 2.

“People give us food sometimes,” Lazaro said.

Hundreds more Mexican migrants were camped in tents to the east in Chamizal Park near Puente Libre, worried they would lose their place on the waiting list, which had swelled to 414.

At least seven of the women were pregnant; some had newborns, including a 22-day-old baby. Yenifer Gonzalez Salazar, 22, was waiting, four months pregnant. She had fled Zacatecas the week before with her husband Oswaldo and 2-year-old son Tadeo after relatives were almost kidnapped by a drug gang.

Her husband has cousins in Houston; uncles in Fort Worth and Maryland. They were number 298 on the wait list.

“We asked if we could go ahead because we are more vulnerable, but they said no because there are people who have been here longer,” she said of fellow migrants managing the list.

And so they will wait as long as it takes, she said: “Everyone has to take that risk, to claim asylum.”

[Mexico] Appeals court blasts DHS ‘return-to-Mexico’ border policy (Washington Times)

Washington Times [10/1/2019 10:16 AM, Stephen Dinan, 452K]

A federal appeals court expressed skepticism Tuesday over the Trump administration’s policy making some asylum-seekers wait in Mexico, saying it’s troubling the government doesn’t even ask the migrants whether they might be in danger if they are forced back across the border.

“You don’t even ask whether they have any kind of fear,” Judge William A. Fletcher told the government’s lawyer, as he and the others on the three-judge panel of the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals pondered how to fix things.

At issue is the administration’s Migrant Protection Protocols, a key part of the president’s attempt to stop the flow of illegal immigrants from Central America surging across Mexico en route to the U.S. with bogus asylum claims.

Under the MPP, Homeland Security is making many of them return to Mexico and wait for their court dates in U.S. immigration courts. The philosophy is twofold — if they crossed Mexico, they have no fear of that country, and making them wait outside the U.S. could discourage those without legitimate claims from attempting to make the journey.

Immigrant-rights advocates say the policy, dubbed “Return to Mexico,” is unfair and even dangerous for some of the migrants who do have legitimate fears and for whom waiting in Mexico could be just as treacherous as being in their home countries.

At least two of the judges during oral argument in the 9th Circuit on Tuesday were

sympathetic to that complaint.

“You’re giving them nothing, that is to say you’re not even asking them the key question ... that is to say, are you afraid?” Judge Fletcher prodded Scott Stewart, the deputy assistant attorney general defending the policy.

Migrants who do express fear of waiting in Mexico are allowed into the U.S.

Mr. Stewart said the administration figures migrants will volunteer the information on their own, and there’s no need to prod them with specific questions.

“Someone can raise this claim at any time,” he said.

Judge Fletcher said it was “speculation” that people would come forward on their own.

Both U.S. law and treaties the country has signed commit the government not to ship refugees to any country where they face persecution or abuse.

The Trump administration acknowledges that duty, but says there’s a difference between permanently sending someone back to their home country they fled, and asking them to wait in a third country they just crossed through.

Judy Rabinowitz, a lawyer for the American Civil Liberties Union who argued against the Trump administration Tuesday, said the government should still ask whether migrants believe they could be harmed by being returned — even temporarily — to Mexico.

She also said she wants the standards lowered so it’s easier to prove fear, and she questioned the speedy nature of the government’s decisions.

“You have no time to prepare, you have no notice you should even be talking about your fear of return to Mexico, if you have an attorney you can’t even consult with that attorney,” she told the court.

Mexico says it did not agree to the MPP, but is still working to accommodate U.S. efforts by offering protections to the people the U.S. is shipping back across the border.

A district court had blocked the MPP earlier this year but another panel of the 9th Circuit lifted that block, ruling the policy could take effect while the case was being battled.

The panel Tuesday did not issue an immediate ruling.

[Honduras] DHS Signs Deal To Send Asylum-Seekers From U.S. Border To Honduras (NPR)

[NPR \[9/30/2019 5:21 PM, Staff, 5041K\] Audio HERE](#)

NPR’s Mary Lousie Kelly talks with Clara Long of Human Rights Watch about the Trump administration’s agreement that would allow the U.S. to send asylum-seekers from the border to Honduras.

Immigration and Customs Enforcement

[NY] New York City bans term 'illegal alien,' institutes fines up to \$250K (The Hill)

The Hill [10/1/2019 7:36 AM, Morgan Gstalter, 2806K]

New York City has banned the term "illegal alien" when it is used "with intent to demean, humiliate or harass a person" and instituted fines up to \$250,000 for the offense.

The city's Commission on Human Rights released new guidelines last week to define discrimination on the basis of perceived or actual immigration status or national origin in public accommodations, employment or housing.

The guidance bans discrimination or harassment against someone for their limited English proficiency or use of another language.

In addition, threatening to call Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) on someone as a discriminatory measure is now considered a violation of the law.

Hypothetical examples of this kind of discrimination were provided in the commission's 29-page directive. They included a hotel prohibiting housekeepers from speaking another language because it would "offend" guests or a store owner telling customers speaking Thai to "speak English" or "go back to your country."

"We are proud to have worked with the NYC Commission on Human Rights to produce and release this important guidance as we combat the federal government's rhetoric of fear and xenophobic policies that have threatened the health and well-being of immigrant communities," Bitta Mostofi, commissioner of the Mayor's Office and Immigrant Affairs, said in a statement to CNN published Tuesday.

The Department of Homeland Security defines "alien" as "any person not a citizens or national of the United States."

President Trump came under fire in July when he told four non-white progressive congresswomen to "go back and help fix the totally broken and crime infested places from which they came."

The group of freshmen Democrats — Reps. Ilhan Omar (D-Minn.), Rashida Tlaib (D-Mich.), Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (N.Y.) and Ayanna Pressley (D-Mass.) — are all U.S. citizens and only Omar was born in another country.

Many on social media began pointing to a federal guidance from the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) that identifies the phrase "Go back to where you came from" as language that could violate anti-discrimination laws in the wake of Trump's attacks.

The federal agency, which enforces the government's employment discrimination laws, states that "ethnic slurs and other verbal or physical conduct because of nationality are illegal if they are severe or pervasive and create an intimidating, hostile or offensive working environment, interfere with work performance, or negatively affect job opportunities."

"Examples of potentially unlawful conduct include insults, taunting, or ethnic epithets, such as making fun of a person's foreign accent or comments like, 'Go back to where you came from,' whether made by supervisors or by co-workers," it adds.

[NY] You can now be fined up to \$250,000 if you call someone an 'illegal alien' in New York City (CNN)

CNN [10/1/2019 4:27 AM, Christina Maxouris, 6094K]

New York City has banned the term "illegal alien" when used "with intent to demean, humiliate or harass a person," the city said.

The city's new guidelines, announced last week, also ban discrimination against someone based on their English proficiency and threats to call immigration authorities on someone "based on a discriminatory motive." These violations can result in fines up to \$250,000.

The guidance is for all public accommodations, employment and housing, the city's Commission on Human Rights said.

"We are proud to have worked with the NYC Commission on Human Rights to produce and release this important guidance as we combat the federal government's rhetoric of fear and xenophobic policies that have threatened the health and well-being of immigrant communities," said Bitta Mostofi, Commissioner of the Mayor's Office and Immigrant Affairs.

The Department of Homeland Security defines "alien" as "any person not a citizens or national of the United States."

In a 29-page directive, the commission outlined the ways discrimination can be based on someone's "actual or perceived 'alienage and citizenship status,' and 'national origin.'"

The commission listed hypothetical examples of violations, including:

A hotel prohibiting its housekeepers from speaking another language because it would "offend" guests.

A landlord threatens to call US Immigrations and Customs Enforcement if an Indian immigrant family complains in housing court, after they find mold and cockroaches in their unit.

A store owner tells two people speaking Thai to "speak English" or "go back to your country."

Earlier this month, a New York judge recommended a landlord pay \$17,000 after threatening to call immigration authorities on an undocumented tenant. The city's Commission on Human Rights represented the tenant and filed a complaint on her behalf in January 2018, citing the landlord's discrimination against her.

According to the judge's written report, some of the texts the landlord said included "HAVE MY MONEY OR IM CALLING ICES [sic] THAT DAY PERIOD," and "I REPORTED YOU TO

IMMIGRATION BOO THEY KNOW IM THE LANDLORD TO PROVIDE THEM KEYS
COME DIRECTLY TO YOU."

And following ICE raids in July across major US cities, New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio called for a path to citizenship for millions of undocumented immigrants in the US.

The president's slogan, the mayor said, should be "Make America hate again, because he's trying to foment division as a political campaign."

[VA] Fairfax County officer suspended for turning driver over to ICE after accident, police say (Washington Post)

Washington Post [10/1/2019 5:37 PM, Justin Jouvenal, 9425K]

A Fairfax County police officer has been suspended for allegedly detaining a driver involved in a traffic accident and turning the person over to Immigration and Customs Enforcement after discovering the individual had an immigration violation, the department announced Tuesday.

Fairfax County Police Chief Edwin C. Roessler Jr. apologized for the incident, saying the unnamed officer apparently violated the department's long-standing policy against performing civil immigration enforcement for ICE. An investigation was underway.

The incident comes as immigrant communities in Fairfax County and across the nation are on edge amid stepped-up immigration enforcement by the Trump administration. Many liberal jurisdictions such as Fairfax County have sought to limit their cooperation with ICE amid anger over the president's policies.

"This is an unfortunate issue where the officer was confused," Roessler said. "We have trained on this issue a lot. This is the first time we've had a lapse in judgment, and the officer is being punished."

Police said the incident began when the officer was called to a traffic accident in the Groveton area the afternoon of Sept. 21. The officer discovered one of the drivers did not have a Virginia driver's license and obtained the person's information to run a check with the Department of Motor Vehicles, police said.

The check showed ICE had issued an administrative violation to the person for failing to appear for a deportation hearing.

The officer verified the warrant through the Fairfax County Department of Public Safety Communications' teletype section, which is responsible for checking on all warrants with originating agencies, police said.

The officer then contacted the ICE agent listed on the warrant, who was close by and came to the scene, police said. The officer issued the driver a ticket for driving without a license, which would normally result in the person being let go.

But the officer held the driver under custodial detention and the person was turned over to the federal agency.

Since 2007, the Fairfax County Police Department has barred officers from confirming individuals' immigration status and taking them into custody solely on civil violations of immigration law. Individuals who are accused of crimes and are arrested have their immigration status checked when they are booked at the county jail.

Roessler said the officer had been on the job for only a "few years" but that it did not excuse the error. He said the officer was aware it was a mistake and had not willfully violated the department's policy on cooperation with ICE.

Roessler said officers train on the policy at the police academy and during in-service refreshers. The officer involved has been relieved of all law enforcement duties pending the outcome of the investigation. Roessler declined to say what punishment the officer could face.

The driver was released by ICE after several hours and issued an ankle monitor.

Roessler said that the incident was brought to his attention by email and that it is the first time the department has had to deal with this type of case.

The incident troubled immigrant advocates.

"It's clear that more training is needed within the ranks of FCPD," said Simon Sandoval-Moshenberg, legal director for the Legal Aid Justice Center. "This is complicated stuff, but lives are on the line and families can be destroyed when an officer gets it wrong."

Roessler said that he was reminding officers of the department's policy toward ICE and that the officer involved in the incident would go for remedial training.

Fairfax County has taken steps to help immigrants and cut ties with ICE in recent years as controversy has grown over President Trump's immigration policies.

This week, federal authorities scrapped plans to put a center for unaccompanied minor children in Northern Virginia, after protests. In May, Fairfax County approved a legal fund for undocumented immigrants fighting deportation. Last year, the Fairfax County sheriff dropped an agreement with ICE to hold inmates suspected of being in the country illegally past the end of their sentences.

Luis Aguilar, the director of CASA in Virginia, applauded Roessler for quickly investigating the incident and publicly releasing details, but he said the relationship between immigrant communities and authorities remains fragile, potentially leading to fewer people coming forward to report crimes and serve as witnesses.

"There is a very low trust with any government institution given the current situation with the Trump administration," Aguilar said. "With incidents like this, they've added to the distrust."

[VA] Sanctuary Police Chief Suspends Officer Who Helped Catch Illegal Alien Fugitive (Breitbart)

Breitbart [10/1/2019 6:29 PM, John Binder, 2034K]

The police chief of Fairfax County, Virginia — a sanctuary county that shields criminal illegal aliens from deportation — has suspended one of his officers who helped federal immigration officials catch an illegal alien fugitive.

Fairfax County Police Chief Edwin Roessler Jr. announced on Tuesday that he suspended an officer from his duties pending an investigation after he learned that he aided the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) in locating and arresting a wanted illegal alien, a violation of the county's sanctuary policy that shields illegal aliens from arrest and deportation.

According to Roessler, an officer was handling a traffic accident in Alexandria, Virginia on September 21 when he noticed that one of the drivers involved did not have a driver's license. That's when the officer obtained the man's information to check state DMV records.

At this time, the officer received confirmation from ICE agents that the man was, in fact, an illegal alien who was wanted by federal officials after he skipped his deportation hearing. Then, the officer contacted ICE agents who advised him that they were in the area and wanted to pick up the illegal alien.

The officer issued a uniform summons to the illegal alien for driving without a license and took him into custody before turning him over to ICE agents. The illegal alien was released from ICE custody three hours later with an ankle monitor — a practice often used by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS).

Roessler said in the statement:

"When I learned of this event, I directed an immediate internal investigation to look at all factors in this matter to ensure that all are held accountable for this violation. Our county is one of the most diverse counties in the nation and no one should have the perception that FCPD is acting as a civil immigration agent for ICE. This matter damages our reputation and the longstanding policy that I have stated many times that our officers shall not act as immigration agents."

In response, Roessler said the officer violated Fairfax County's decades-long sanctuary county policy that bans officers from taking illegal aliens into custody solely because they are wanted by ICE and thus has been "relieved of all law enforcement duties pending the outcome" of an investigation.

As Breitbart News has chronicled, Fairfax County has become a central home to the violent MS-13 Gang from El Salvador in part thanks to the generous sanctuary county policy. The gang is made up mostly of illegal aliens from El Salvador who crossed the U.S.-Mexico border, posing as unaccompanied minor children.

[VA] Virginia officer suspended for turning driver over to ICE after accident: police (The Hill)

The Hill [10/1/2019 7:08 PM, Owen Daugherty, 2806K]

A Virginia police officer was suspended after he allegedly helped Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) officials detain an undocumented immigrant after a traffic accident.

Fairfax County Police Chief Edwin Roessler Jr. announced the suspension Tuesday but did not name the officer. The incident stemmed from a Sept. 21 car accident where the officer in question detained one of the drivers who was suspected of being undocumented and alerted ICE officials, according to The Washington Post.

Roessler apologized for the incident and said it violated the department's policy.

Roessler noted the officer acted against a department policy that has been in place since 2007 that prohibits officers from confirming individuals' immigration status and detaining them based solely on civil violations of immigration law.

"This is an unfortunate issue where the officer was confused," Roessler said Tuesday, according to the Post. "We have trained on this issue a lot. This is the first time we've had a lapse in judgment, and the officer is being punished."

He added that an investigation into the matter is underway.

The Post reported the incident in September occurred as the officer arrived on the scene of a traffic incident and discovered one of the drivers did not have a Virginia driver's license. The officer ran a check on the driver's information through the Department of Motor Vehicles, which showed ICE had issued an administrative violation for failing to appear for a deportation hearing.

The county's system confirmed the ICE warrant, and the officer then called ICE, which responded to the scene.

[VA] Fairfax County suspends officer who cooperated with ICE (Washington Times)
Washington Times [10/1/2019 5:25 PM, Stephen Dinan, 452K]

Fairfax County Police Chief Edwin C. Roessler Jr. said Tuesday he suspended an officer who cooperated with federal deportation officers by turning over an illegal immigrant he encountered during a traffic stop — a move the chief said violated department policy.

Chief Roessler didn't name the officer, but said he "deprived a person of their freedom" by cooperating with U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

The chief called that unacceptable.

"Our county is one of the most diverse counties in the nation and no one should have the perception that FCPD is acting as a civil immigration agent for ICE," he said in a statement.

The chief said the officer was working a traffic accident in the Huntington section of the county on Sept. 21 and came across someone without a driver's license. When the officer ran the name it returned a flag from ICE, which said the migrant was a fugitive after failing to appear for a deportation hearing.

The county's own system confirmed the ICE warrant, and the officer then called and an ICE employee responded.

Chief Roessler said the county officer should not have detained the migrant to turn over to ICE, saying that move broke department policy, which says officers should not bother to confirm administrative warrants through the county's system. The majority of administrative warrants are from ICE.

"This matter damages our reputation and the longstanding policy that I have stated many times that our officers shall not act as immigration agents," the chief said. "The officer involved in this event has been relieved of all law enforcement duties pending the outcome of this investigation."

Luis Aguilar, director of CASA Virginia, a leading advocacy group for immigrants, said Chief Roessler's decision to suspend an officer was bold — and correct.

"We think it's a very appropriate action," Mr. Aguilar told The Washington Times. "This is local law enforcement, this is the local police department, and they cannot be enforcing federal immigration laws. ... This is a clear message of where and how the chief of police thinks."

ICE did not respond to a request for comment, but the agency's acting director last week used a press conference at the White House to complain about communities that refused to cooperate with his deportation officers.

Matt Albence, the ICE chief, said police departments routinely cooperate with other departments on warrants and detention requests, and he said there's no reason they should treat ICE — a federal law enforcement agency — differently.

"I guarantee you, I can go into Fairfax County [court] today and there will probably be sheriffs from Loudoun County, sheriffs from Prince William County, maybe a couple of marshals guys that are there waiting for somebody," he said. "It's a common occurrence in law enforcement. The only reason it's being made controversial is because politicians are looking to exploit it."

Jessica Vaughan, policy studies director at the Center for Immigration Studies, said Fairfax County's police department is getting the law enforcement equation backwards.

"The police chief is ordering an investigation of an officer who did exactly the right thing by responding to an active ICE warrant on an illegal alien who was a fugitive," she said. "It's astonishing that a police chief is more intent on punishing his officer than seeing to it that legitimate laws are enforced."

She disputed the police department's suggestion that the county officer was acting as an agent of ICE. She said that's no more true than if he'd held someone for a warrant issued by neighboring Montgomery County, in Maryland.

She said Fairfax police intended to "shame" the officer.

Chief Roessler said the illegal immigrant in question was in fact picked up by ICE and has since been processed and released on an ankle bracelet, pending the outcome of

deportation proceedings.

Mr. Aguilar said it's likely the migrant will be deported, and the police officer will be responsible.

"We don't even know about the family itself, who's going to be separated. We don't know if there's kids involved," he said.

[VA] Officer suspended; alerted feds to immigrant's traffic stop (San Francisco Chronicle)

San Francisco Chronicle [10/1/2019 4:14 PM, Associated Press, 2613K]

A northern Virginia police officer has been suspended after authorities say he violated policy by alerting federal immigration authorities he was detaining a driver who missed his deportation hearing.

Since 2007, Fairfax County Police policy bars officers from alerting the Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement when they encounter someone wanted on administrative immigration violation, provided that the individual is not otherwise being taken into custody.

Chief Edwin Roessler issued a statement Tuesday saying one of his officers temporarily detained an individual involved in a Sept. 21 traffic accident and who had no driver's license after learning he was wanted by ICE.

Roessler says ICE released the driver after fitting him with an ankle monitor, and the officer has been relieved of law enforcement duties while an investigation is conducted.

[FL] Florida law banning sanctuary cities takes full effect (The Hill)

The Hill [10/1/2019 5:01 PM, Aris Folley, 2806K]

A controversial Florida law passed earlier this year that bans so-called sanctuary cities took full effect on Tuesday.

The measure was passed by the Florida Legislature back in May and was signed into law by Gov. Ron DeSantis (R), who campaigned on the immigration issue, the following month.

The law bars Florida cities from having "sanctuary policies," or those that restrict a law enforcement agency's ability to work with federal immigration authorities, particularly regarding matters of detainment and deportation.

The law also requires law enforcement agencies that have custody of someone subject to an immigration detainer to notify the judge of the detainer, record in the person's file the existence of the detainer and comply with the detainer.

One portion of the law previously authorized officials to transport an undocumented immigrant in custody across state lines in cooperation with federal immigration authorities, according to the Miami Herald. However, that particular provision was blocked by a federal judge on Monday.

Though provisions of the legislation banning sanctuary cities took effect at the start of July, the remaining section of the measure that establishes penalties for elected officials who violate the law didn't take effect until Tuesday. Officials who don't comply with the law are now able to be removed from office.

[FL] Florida's ban on sanctuary cities begins today. It requires police officers to help ICE (CNN)

CNN [10/1/2019 11:18 AM, Catherine E. Shoichet, 6094K]
Florida's ban on sanctuary cities just went into effect.

What will that mean in a state that demographers estimate is home to nearly 800,000 undocumented immigrants?

That depends on who you ask.

Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis, who made passing the ban a campaign promise, argues it will make communities safer by requiring police to help ICE.

The city of South Miami and several immigrant-rights groups, who filed a lawsuit challenging the ban, say it endangers public safety by fueling fear of law enforcement in immigrant communities.

Florida's measure forbids law enforcement agencies and local governments from adopting such so-called sanctuary policies that limit cooperation with federal immigration authorities.

But there's one key detail to keep in mind: No Florida municipalities had designated themselves as sanctuary cities before SB 168 passed. So the actual effect of the ban, beyond political symbolism, remains to be seen.

The measure requires local jurisdictions to hold undocumented immigrants who've been jailed for up to two additional days to give ICE officers a chance to pick them up and says local law enforcement agencies must use their "best efforts to support the enforcement of federal immigration law." On Monday a federal judge blocked part of the law that said local police officers could transport immigration detainees across state lines if ICE requests it, but allowed the rest of the law to go into effect.

Many of the largest cities in the United States have sanctuary policies in place. More than 30 bills related to sanctuary policies -- both for and against them -- are pending across the country, according to the National Conference of State Legislatures.

Citizenship and Immigration Services

Dick Durbin Stalls Landmark Immigration Bill, But Won't Explain Why. Critics Say It's To Keep Republicans From Getting A Win (Daily Caller)

Daily Caller [10/1/2019 12:57 PM, William Davis, 785K]

While an impeachment inquiry into President Donald Trump captivates the media and politicians across the country, the U.S. senate is debating a landmark immigration bill.

The “Fairness For High Skilled Immigrants Act” has already passed the House of Representatives and has bipartisan support in the Senate. The bill would eliminate the cap on the number of immigrants who come from certain countries, which would in turn increase the number of high-skilled immigrants who come to the U.S. Currently, the U.S. government hands out roughly 1 million green cards every year, but mandates that no country can receive more than 7% of all employment-based green cards.

So, when Democratic Illinois Sen. Dick Durbin objected to the bill’s passage last week, it disappointed the bill’s advocates.

“The reason why Durbin is holding this up is that Democrats have created this impression that they are the party of immigrants,” Aman Kapoor, co-founder of Immigration Voice told the Daily Caller. “Durbin just doesn’t want Republicans to get a win.”

The legislation has been a top priority for Indian-American groups as high-skilled immigrants from that country often find themselves waiting in an endless line to receive a green card due to the per-country cap. In fact, the average wait time for Indians who have had their green card applications approved is 75 years. Kapoor and other immigration activists argue that current immigration laws are unfair to both applicants and the U.S., which would benefit from more high-skilled immigrants. Even as the U.S. enjoys record-low unemployment numbers, millions of jobs remain unfilled. It stands to reason that an influx of more high-skilled immigrants would increase economic growth.

“Green cards are not given to a country,” Kapoor said. “They’re given to a human being.”

Durbin also drew the ire of some immigration activists over the weekend during a constituent meeting when he jokingly took a fake green card from an Iranian man who was urging him to oppose the bill.

“Niv,” a current Illinois resident and immigration activist originally from India, attended Durbin’s town hall and told the Daily Caller that Durbin is attempting to amend the legislation to increase the number of green cards issued annually by the U.S. government, a poison pill that would almost certainly result in losing Republican support. The bill in its current form does not increase the number of green cards, but simply removes the per country cap.

“The solution he’s proposing is getting more green cards,” Niv said. “He’s worried it will shift the backlog to other nationalities.”

The proposed legislation has the chance to be the biggest revamp of America’s immigration system since the 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act, but is getting little if any attention from the press due to the impeachment drama currently unfolding on Capitol Hill.

While the White House has not officially commented on the bill, supporters are confident that Trump would sign it, especially now that it has the support of all 53 Republican senators. The bill would also move America’s legal immigration system closer to a merit-based system, which is something that the president has repeatedly prioritized in his stump speeches and immigration proposals.

If passed, the change would also mark a major win for Republicans on immigration and contradict the narrative from Democrats and the media that the Republican Party is an anti-immigrant. Some of the bill's supporters believe, precisely for that reason, that Durbin is holding up the bill for cynical and partisan reasons rather than a genuine concern for immigrants from other countries.

"He's just trying to kill the bill and then blame Republican for not stepping up," Kapoor said of the senator. "He just wants to make the Republicans look bad."

Durbin has not released a statement explaining his reasoning for stalling the bill, and the senator's office did not respond to a request for comment from the Daily Caller.

[CA] GOP attorney sues California, alleges 'motor voter' citizenship violations (Washington Times)

Washington Times [10/1/2019 12:26 PM, Jocelyn Gecker, AP, 452K]

A Republican lawyer who has waged lawsuits on behalf of the Trump administration sued the state of California and its Department of Motor Vehicles Tuesday, saying the agency is failing to verify citizenship for voter registration.

A federal lawsuit filed by attorney Harmeet Dhillon comes after a state audit found the California DMV's "motor voter" program that started last year was riddled with technical problems that led to hundreds of thousands of discrepancies in voter registrations. Dhillon said that audit helped bring issues raised in her lawsuit to light.

The lawsuit alleges that California Secretary of State Alex Padilla and the director of California's DMV, Steve Gordon, have violated the National Voter Registration Act and that Padilla has "forsaken his duty to ensure that non-citizens" are kept off voter rolls. She said the lawsuit does not allege voter fraud but that the state is neglecting one of its duties as outlined by the voter act.

"It is important for the sanctity of our elections that only people who are entitled to vote, which for federal elections means citizens, be allowed to vote," Dhillon said at a news conference.

Dhillon, a Republican National Committee member, filed the lawsuit on behalf of three U.S. citizens living in California, Roxanne Beckford Hoge and Ali Mazarei, both of whom are naturalized citizens, and Corrin Rankin.

Dhillon said all three are Republican voters but that the lawsuit was nonpartisan. The plaintiffs "feel passionately that the right to vote should be restricted to citizens only, as the law requires," she said.

The lawsuit asks a court to rule that California be required to use a variety of data to verify citizenship eligibility before enrolling people to vote.

Padilla said in a statement that the lawsuit was "a fundamental misrepresentation" of the voter act.

“The plaintiffs claim they are protecting voters, but this is nothing more than an underhanded attempt to bring their voter suppression playbook to California,” Padilla said in a statement. “California remains committed to ensuring the integrity of our elections, empowering citizens to participate in democracy and defending the right to vote.”

Dhillon said the secretary of state’s office has 90 days to respond. Padilla’s office did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

California launched the “motor voter” program in April 2018. It automatically registers people to vote when they visit the DMV unless they opt out. Potential errors in voter registration and other issues prompted former Gov. Jerry Brown to initiate an audit by the Department of Finance, which then hired the private firm Ernst & Young to help.

The audit, released in August, found that the system was confusing to voters and full of technical problems that led to discrepancies in voter registrations sent to the secretary of state. It said none of the discrepancies in about 3 million voter records reviewed resulted in major voter registration efforts, such as recording the wrong political party for a voter or allowing someone to vote who should not have but the audit did not rule out the possibility of major errors in other registrations.

Last year, DMV officials said an error may have allowed about 1,500 people, perhaps including non-citizens, to incorrectly register to vote. After the report’s release, the secretary of state’s office said six people who were registered to vote despite opting out cast ballots in 2018.

Customs and Border Protection

For 25 years, Operation Gatekeeper has made life worse for border communities (Washington Post)

Washington Post [10/1/2019 6:00 AM, Pedro Rios, 9425K]

The militarization of border communities did not start with President Trump. Twenty-five years ago Tuesday, the Border Patrol launched “Operation Gatekeeper” with President Bill Clinton’s approval. It was a massive undertaking, involving the construction of walls and fences along parts of the border that were easier to cross and dramatically increasing the Border Patrol’s personnel and the technology it uses for border surveillance, trends that continue to this day.

Now, the Trump administration and Congress want to pour even more funds into fortifying the border, even though border militarization disrupts communities, damages sensitive habitats and creates a dangerous situation for migrants. We need to learn from the failures of Operation Gatekeeper and its deadly legacy and reject further funding of these destructive policies.

The border has not always been militarized. Even before the United States and Mexico made any claim to the land, indigenous peoples like the Kumeyaay in California, the Tohono O’odham in Arizona and the Lipan Apache of New Mexico and Texas inhabited the Southwest for generations. Their descendants now must contend with physical structures that partition the lands their ancestors traversed without any barriers.

The location of the border itself changed considerably during the 19th century, with the United States occupying increasingly larger parts of northern Mexico. The Border Patrol was not created until 1924 to enforce immigration restrictions, initially without a clear mandate from Congress. Nonetheless for decades afterward, there remained few physical barriers between the United States and Mexico.

That began to change in the late 1960s, when the Nixon administration began fighting its “war on drugs” at the border through “Operation Intercept,” which was run by future anti-immigrant sheriff Joe Arpaio. The piecemeal enforcement of those years became more formalized under Ronald Reagan. In 1986, Congress reformed immigration laws to allow people in the United States to adjust their legal status. The trade-off was increased immigration enforcement and employer sanctions that led to worksite raids and migrant detention.

The George H.W. Bush administration introduced a more punitive approach to immigration. Bush’s attorney general, William P. Barr — who now serves as attorney general under President Trump — oversaw the expansion of immigrant detention and a push for eliminating due process rights for immigrants with criminal convictions. And in 1989, the administration launched Joint Task Force Six to coordinate military support to jurisdictions in key border states involved in drug interdiction efforts. Foreshadowing the tragedies that would accompany further border militarization, the creation of Joint Task Force Six led to an incident in 1997 in which a platoon of Marines killed 18-year-old U.S. citizen Esequiel Hernández in Redford, Tex., raising questions about the role of the military at the border.

It was in this environment, against the backdrop of rising nativist sentiment, that the Clinton administration launched Operation Gatekeeper on Oct. 1, 1994. The operation promised “prevention through deterrence.” It beefed up enforcement in urban areas around San Diego and pushed migration to rural, less visible areas. Operation Gatekeeper also disrupted border communities by instituting checkpoints, boots on the ground, technology and border wall infrastructure.

The Border Patrol’s public rationale was that making it harder to cross the border would mean fewer people would try to come to the United States. Policymakers theorized that people might not cross the border at all if it meant making a risky, potentially deadly journey.

That did not happen, because this approach ignored both the reasons people migrate and the enduring ties between communities on both sides of the border.

Operation Gatekeeper began less than a year after the signing of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), which destabilized the agricultural economy in Mexico and drove hundreds of thousands to leave the country in search of work elsewhere. Migrants have a long history of doing agricultural work in the United States, which the U.S. economy depends on.

But poor conditions exacerbated by NAFTA caused the number of migrants to increase, and the increased border militarization stemming from Operation Gatekeeper pushed migrants to take more dangerous and treacherous routes through the deserts and mountains. Conservative estimates are that more than 8,300 people have died trying to cross the

border since Operation Gatekeeper began — a rate of nearly one each day for the last 25 years.

It is likely that the administration suspected migrants would die in the desert but thought this would serve as a deterrent to future migrations. As former commissioner of Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) Doris Meissner said in 2000, “We did believe that geography would be an ally to us. It was our sense that the number of people crossing the border through Arizona would go down to a trickle once people realized what it’s like.”

At the same time, the ramping up of personnel on the southern border also led to more border deaths. In the last decade alone, at least 90 people have died after an encounter with border agents. These agents are hardly ever held accountable for their actions, and there is little to no transparency in the investigations.

Operation Gatekeeper and the policies that followed it have also created a permanent community of longtime residents without status, trapping people in the United States who might want to go back temporarily, while denying any meaningful access to permanent status. This has trapped families on opposite sides of both a literal and metaphorical wall. In San Diego, families meet at Friendship Park, located on both sides of the border, where loved ones can communicate across the massive steel wall that stands between them.

Friendship Park was actually inaugurated in 1971, by then-first lady Pat Nixon, whose husband accelerated border militarization through Operation Intercept just a few years before. In the spirit of friendship between the United States and Mexico, she said, “I hope there won’t be a fence here too long.” Nearly 50 years later, it has only expanded.

Despite the violence and expansion of border militarization, the border region has always been a place of cultural exchange, one that reflects a dynamic social and economic relationship between neighboring communities. That’s why San Ysidro, the border neighborhood in San Diego, has the world’s busiest land port. Its growth is directly related to a spirit of mutual development.

All of this has been threatened by a flawed approach to the border. After 25 years, it is abundantly clear that Operation Gatekeeper and the enforcement strategies surrounding it are a failure. It has cost thousands of people their lives, led to massive human rights violations and harmed border communities and the environment.

It is past time for a new direction.

The good news is that many in border communities are already modeling what just and humane policies could look like. I work with hundreds of people every year to monitor human rights abuses and aid those who have made the difficult journey to the United States. I see migrant communities and allies in San Diego and across the border region mobilizing to demand meaningful change.

It is time for Congress to join these efforts. Instead of continuing to spend billions to expand failed policies, Congress must cut funding for Customs and Border Protection and invest in revitalized border communities.

More Than 300 Migrants Died This Year near U.S.-Mexico Border (Breitbart)

Breitbart [10/1/2019 9:52 AM, Bob Price, 2034K]

More than 300 migrants died this year while or shortly after crossing the U.S. border with Mexico. Nearly 200 of those occurred in Texas alone.

The International Organization for Migration's Missing Migrant Report details the deaths of 323 migrants who died this year in the southwestern United States or northern Mexico. The report shows that nearly 200 of those deaths occurred near the Texas border and the remaining 125 near the Arizona, California, and New Mexico borders.

The number of deaths is the second-highest in the past five years. Year-to-date numbers for 2019 show that 323 migrants lost their lives. This represents a decrease of nearly 10 percent despite the massive number of migrants apprehended by Border Patrol agents.

Year-to-Date Numbers 2014-2019:

2019 — 323

2018 — 355

2017 — 276

2016 — 307

2015 — 164

2014 — 306

Year 2019 sets a high-mark for the past five years in the deaths of women and children. At least 44 women died so far this year while attempting to cross into the U.S. The number of child deaths sets at 15. This compares to last year when only 27 women and nine children died. On average, during the past five years, slightly over 20 women and nearly 6 children died per year.

Of the 232 migrants who died this year along the border, at least 37 of them (11.5 percent) died in a single county in Texas — Brooks County. Brooks County is not a border county. It is located about 80 miles north of the Texas border with Mexico between McAllen and Corpus Christi. The deaths are still border-connected due to a U.S. Border Patrol immigration checkpoint located on U.S. Highway 281 — nearly in the center of the county. Human smugglers force migrants to march through the hazardous terrain of the ranches surrounding the checkpoint. If a migrant gets sick, injured, dehydrated, overheated, or for any other reason cannot keep up, the smugglers simply leave them behind to die.

Most recently, a Brooks County Sheriff's deputy faced the gruesome task of recovering the half-eaten remains of a migrant who died on a ranch located south of the checkpoint, Breitbart Texas reported. A few days earlier, deputies recovered yet another migrant who died in a similar area.

In October 2018, Martinez sat down with Breitbart Border/Cartel Chronicles Editor-in-Chief Brandon Darby and border journalist Ildefonso Ortiz to discuss the humanitarian

consequences of the United States' failure to secure the border with Mexico.

"Our county is not located on the border," Sheriff Martinez said, "But we have more migrant deaths than probably any other county in the country."

"It is a horrible death faced by these people who are abused throughout the entire smuggling process. And, it is an extremely frustrating and emotional burden put on our deputies who must recover the remains, Martinez concluded. "As long as Congress fails to take action to fix the laws that are encouraging Central American migrants to cross the border in unprecedented numbers, we will continue to see these deaths."

[Editorial note: consult source link for video]

US halts import of goods suspected to have been made with forced labor (CNN)

CNN [10/1/2019 11:16 AM, Geneva Sands, 6094K]

US Customs and Border Protection halted the import of products from five countries on Monday in a rare move aimed at countering forced labor abroad.

The agency issued what is known as withhold release orders (WROs), which are intended to prevent goods suspected to have been made with forced labor from entering the US.

The products include rough diamonds, gold and disposable rubber gloves, and are from a range of countries, including China, Malaysia, Zimbabwe, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Brazil.

"CBP's issuing of these five withhold release orders shows that if we suspect a product is made using forced labor, we'll take that product off U.S. shelves," said acting CBP Commissioner Mark Morgan.

CBP has issued only one other order in 2019, against tuna and tuna products, according to agency data.

Enforcing the forced labor rules is one of the most "challenging trade enforcement issues" for the agency, said Brenda Smith, CBP's executive assistant commissioner of trade.

"Forced labor can be difficult to detect because although it is outlawed and not condoned in many parts of the world, it still occurs in the shadows and goes undetected," she said.

Merchandise produced with forced labor is also difficult to trace due to long, opaque supply chains, according to Smith.

The US has had a ban on goods that use forced labor since 1930, but enforcement was rare until Congress changed the law in 2016, according to the law firm Arnold & Porter.

CBP needs information that reasonably, but not conclusively, indicates that merchandise being imported had used forced labor for it to be banned. Investigations can be triggered in several ways, including through news reports and tips from the public or trade community, according to the agency.

For instance, CBP found evidence of isolation, restricted movement, and physical and sexual violence during production of one of the imported garments from Xinjiang, China. According to Smith, there has been a significant amount of news reporting on forced labor in this region, but the challenge is linking general reports to specific imports coming into the US.

At the diamond mine in Zimbabwe, there was evidence that the police, military and other security officers, in charge of guarding the mines, forced people to stay in the mines or face punishment, according to CBP. And at the gold mines in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, the "most prevalent" indicator of forced labor was the presence of armed forces, said Smith.

Importers affected can either export their products or demonstrate that forced labor wasn't used in order to have them released into the US.

U.S. blocks import of goods from five nations in rare anti-slavery crackdown (Reuters)

Reuters [10/1/2019 5:19 PM, Kieran Guilbert, 5436K]

The United States has blocked the import of goods suspected to have been made with forced labor from five countries, including clothing from China and diamonds from Zimbabwe, officials said on Tuesday following a rare crackdown on slave labor abroad.

The U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) said it seized five different products this week based on information indicating the goods were made using slave labor overseas.

The other items included rubber gloves made in Malaysia, gold mined in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and bone black - charred animal bones - manufactured in Brazil.

Under a 2016 law, it is illegal to import goods into the United States that are made entirely or in part by forced labor - which includes prison work, bonded labor and child labor.

"A major part of CBP's mission is facilitating legitimate trade and travel," said Acting CBP Commissioner Mark Morgan.

"CBP's issuing of these five withhold release orders shows that if we suspect a product is made using forced labor, we'll take that product off U.S. shelves," he said in a statement.

A company hit with a withhold release order can decide to reroute the shipment and try to sell their products elsewhere or persuade CBP to change its decision by providing documents to demonstrate due diligence and argue the goods are slavery-free.

More than \$400 billion worth of goods likely to be made by forced labor enter the U.S. market each year, according to estimates by the Human Trafficking Institute, a non-profit.

Yet reporting by the Thomson Reuters Foundation in April found that only \$6.3 million worth of goods had been blocked since the law banning slave-made imports was passed in 2016.

Prior to the latest crackdown, the CBP had issued seven detention orders since 2016, including chemical compounds, peeled garlic and toys from China and cotton from Turkmenistan.

"It's exciting to see CBP's progress toward robust enforcement of this law," said Annick Febrey, head of government and corporate relations at the Human Trafficking Institute, who in April described the agency's impact until then as "minimal".

"This is a clear signal to companies that they need due diligence procedures in place that prevent forced labor in their supply chain if they want to sell in the United States."

Neha Misra, senior specialist in migration and human trafficking for advocacy group Solidarity Center, welcomed the "significant step" and said economic pressure could boost the drive for full labor rights for workers in global supply chains.

The U.S. Department of Labor said last year it was boosting its fight against slave-made goods "to safeguard American jobs" for its 325 million citizens and that it was playing a key role in protecting vulnerable workers from abuse worldwide.

About 25 million people globally are victims of forced labor, according to the U.N. International Labor Organization.

[VT] Vermont man gets 3 months for role in human smuggling case (San Francisco Chronicle)

San Francisco Chronicle [10/1/2019 5:06 PM, Wilson Ring, AP, 2613K]

A Vermont man was sentenced to three months in jail Tuesday for trying to help five Mexican citizens who had entered the country illegally from Canada on a known smuggling route.

Matthew Prue was taken into custody to begin serving the sentence for the misdemeanor conviction at the conclusion of the sentencing hearing in U.S. District Court in Burlington.

Prue pleaded guilty to the charge against him in April and was released with conditions pending the sentencing. His attorney had argued that Prue be sentenced to time served, but U.S. Magistrate Judge John Conroy rejected that, saying Prue had violated the conditions of his release by using illegal drugs and failing to keep in touch with authorities as required.

"All I want to do is take care of my children," Prue, 40, told Conroy.

In court, Assistant United States Attorney Matthew Lasher said Prue, of Island Pond, had cooperated with the authorities. Lasher said the smuggling organization that Prue was working with was known to the Border Patrol, but that Prue had never been involved with the organization before and he played a small role in the case.

"A guy called me up and asked if I wanted to make some money," Prue said during the hearing. "I said yes."

Border Patrol agents detained the five people after spotting them along the road just inside

the United States. They were later linked to Prue via electronic messages.

The Border Patrol has said that in 2018 the focus of human smuggling in the region was in the Derby area where Prue had tried to pick up the immigrants earlier this year. Since then the focus of the smugglers has apparently moved west into upstate New York.

"I'd like to say that when their tactics change, ours change to identify them and dismantle them and when that happens, they move," Chris Buskey, the Border Patrol agent in charge of the Burke Station in upstate New York, said Tuesday.

While the final toll for the just-completed fiscal year won't be known for some time, the number of people arrested in the region was on track to double from last year's figure of 736 with most of that increase in New York, said Michael McCarthy a spokesman for U.S. Customs and Border Protection, the umbrella agency that includes the Border Patrol. Last year's figure was up from 449 in 2017 and 291 in 2016.

But the entire northern border apprehension numbers, which totaled 4,316 last year, are a fraction of those caught on the southern border where agents apprehended 396,579, statistics show.

[TX] Contracts Awarded for 65 Miles of New Texas Border Walls (Breitbart)

Breitbart [10/1/2019 11:29 AM, Bob Price, 2034K]

Federal officials announced the awarding of approximately 65 miles of new walls along the Texas Border. Officials reported the new wall is not funded under President Donald Trump's National Emergency Declaration or any other Department of Defense funding.

U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) announced on Monday, the awarding of contracts to build three sections of new border barriers totally approximately 65 miles. Construction under the contracts is slated to begin early next year, according to information obtained from CBP officials. The new sections will be built in the nation's busiest border crossing region, the Rio Grande Valley Sector. Officials awarded all three contracts on September 29.

The first contract provides up to \$257,808,800 for a new bollard wall to be built in the area west of the Falcon Dam Port of Entry and extending eastward for approximately 21 miles. The wall will be built in two non-contiguous segments in Starr County, Texas, intended to connect to other new border wall segments, officials reported. Approximately \$120 million of the contract covers the base project while the remaining \$139 million is allocated for options.

The second contract provides up to \$258,085,400 for a new bollard wall to be built in Starr and Hidalgo Counties. The wall will be built in two non-contiguous segments east of the Rio Grande City Port of entry and extending eastward for approximately 22 miles. It is intended to connect to other new border wall segments, officials reported. Approximately \$110 million of the contract covers the base project while the remaining \$148 million is allocated for options.

The third contract provides up to \$296,709,805 for a new bollard wall to be built in Cameron and Hidalgo Counties. The wall will be built in 12 non-contiguous segments east of the

Pharr Port of entry and extending eastward for approximately 22 miles. It is intended to connect to other new border wall segments, officials reported. Approximately \$155 million of the contract covers the base project while the remaining \$142 million is allocated for options.

“The border wall system will include an 18-30 foot tall steel bollard wall, all-weather roads, lighting, enforcement cameras, and other related technology to create a complete enforcement zone,” officials stated. “Construction is anticipated to begin in early 2020, pending availability of real estate, and will take place in locations where no barriers currently exist.”

Approximately 40 percent of all migrant apprehensions along the southwest border with Mexico take place in the Rio Grande Valley Sector. While some barriers exist, there are many gaps in the existing walls that will be closed by these construction projects. “The majority of its activity is occurring in areas where RGV has limited infrastructure, access and mobility, and technology,” officials reported.

Officials stressed that these contracts are not undertaken “pursuant to the National Emergency Declaration, 10 U.S.C § 284, 10 U.S.C. § 2808, or any other source of funding available to the Department of Defense.” The barriers will not be constructed in the Santa Ana National Wildlife Refuge, La Lomita Historical Park, Bentsen-Rio Grande Valley State Park, within or east of the Vista del Mar Ranch tract of the Lower Rio Grande Valley National Wildlife Refuge, or the National Butterfly Center, the report states.

“These projects will improve the RGV Sector’s ability to impede and deny illegal border crossings and the drug and human smuggling activities of transnational criminal organizations, CBP officials concluded.

[AZ] On 25th anniversary, Operation Gatekeeper blamed for border deaths, dehumanization of migrants (San Diego Union Tribune)

San Diego Union Tribune [10/1/2019 6:39 PM, Kristina Davis]

Marking the 25th anniversary of Operation Gatekeeper, a coalition of migrant advocacy groups gathered at Chicano Park Tuesday to condemn the border enforcement campaign as one of dehumanization and death.

Notably absent was Eli Ortiz.

The night before, Ortiz had set out from San Diego with a team of volunteers on a combined rescue-recovery mission to the Arizona desert. An unauthorized immigrant had called in distress, saying he couldn’t walk any farther. The man’s father, who’d crossed illegally with him, had already perished on the journey.

The Águilas del Desierto — Eagles of the Desert — are hoping they only have to recover one body on this trip, not two.

“Stories like these are far too common,” Ortiz’s daughter, Stephanie Ortiz, said during a news conference held by the Southern Border Communities Coalition.

Harsh border policies, beginning with Operation Gatekeeper, are largely to blame, the

coalition said.

Operation Gatekeeper launched Oct. 1, 1994, with much fanfare from the federal government. The goal was to stem the tide of unauthorized border crossings in San Diego's urban areas and force migrants still willing to make the journey deeper into the wilderness areas.

The strategy called for the deployment of additional Border Patrol agents to stand sentry in highly visible areas, deterring illegal entry. The sector was also infused with new technology, including seismic sensors, radios and fingerprint identification.

At the time, San Diego had been the busiest corridor for illegal crossings, with many migrants headed to Los Angeles. But apprehensions dropped dramatically in the years following Gatekeeper — from more than 524,000 in fiscal 1995 to about 38,500 last year.

The chaos of hundreds to thousands of people a day rushing into San Diego had been calmed, border authorities said. Residents who lived in neighborhoods along the border told local officials that they felt safer.

Hailed a success by the government, parts of the campaign spread to other border regions.

Stephanie Ortiz blames Gatekeeper for killing her uncle and his cousin.

Her father was the one who searched relentlessly for their remains in the Arizona desert in 2009, finally discovering their bodies on a remote Arizona military base five months after they went missing. It's what prompted Eli Ortiz to form Águilas del Desierto, to rescue and recover migrants pushed to cross in inhospitable environments.

At least 8,300 migrants have died along the U.S.-Mexico border since 1998, and some estimates put the toll at thousands greater.

"We have an obligation to ask, and the U.S. government to respond, to the humanitarian crisis taking place along the border by rejecting policies that violate human rights," she said Tuesday.

Jenn Budd witnessed Gatekeeper from a different lens, that of a Border Patrol agent hired during the ramp-up in 1995. She quickly grew disillusioned with what she saw and quit six years into her career. She's become an outspoken critic of the Border Patrol since.

Her first apprehension was a family, complete with children and grandparents.

"I thought, 'Where are the narcotics, where are the weapons I was told these groups would have that I'm supposed to be defending us from?'"

She saw as the dusty and rugged border region patrolled by Campo station changed, with Gatekeeper and continued construction of a border fence shifting migrants farther east into the mountains and desert. The region lost its sense of a cross-border community, she said. And the body count grew.

"They knew what they were doing," Budd said of Gatekeeper's architects.

She added: "I contributed to it. For that I am forever ashamed."

The coalition is using Gatekeeper's anniversary to call for a new vision on the border, one based on dignity and respect that upholds human rights. It includes decriminalization of migration, keeping families together and turning the border into a welcoming system rather than one that resists entry, according to the proposal.

Lillian Serrano, chair of the San Diego Immigrant Rights Consortium, said the country's current immigration policies "have no reflection for the values we have here at the border."

"It's about time the federal government listens to our border communities," Serrano said. "We need a new vision."

A rally protesting Gatekeeper is set for 10 a.m. Oct. 12 at Larsen Field in San Ysidro.

[CA] California keeps 100 National Guard troops at Mexico border (San Diego Union Tribune)

San Diego Union Tribune [10/1/2019 9:50 PM, Staff]

California Gov. Gavin Newsom said Tuesday that he is keeping a small contingent of National Guard troops at the state's southern border for another six months, with the added mission of helping stop the smuggling of a deadly pesticide that is increasingly found at illegal cannabis cultivation sites.

Newsom is allowing up to 100 troops to remain through March to help the U.S. Customs and Border Protection Counter Terrorism Operations Center. But he said they still won't aid the federal government's immigration operations.

Instead, the troops will continue focusing on deterring smuggling of illegal drugs and disrupting other forms of organized crime.

They have helped seize nearly 40,000 pounds of illegal pot, 5,000 pounds of methamphetamine, 27 pounds of heroin and more than 900 pounds of cocaine since February, with a street value of \$179 million, the governor said in his executive order.

Newsom said he's also ordering them to help block the smuggling of illegal pesticides, including carbofuran, which since 2009 has been banned from use on any crops meant for human consumption. Yet California researchers last year found it at 85% of illegal marijuana growing operations, where even small amounts can kill deer and bear as well as other animals that might consume the illegal crop.

He said the Guard's statewide Counter-Drug Task Force has helped seize more than 180 pounds of illegal chemicals used at illicit pot grows, even as California encourages a legal trade in licensed recreational marijuana.

Newsom announced in February that he would withdraw most of the troops from the border, devoting some to help with fire prevention efforts instead.

[CA] Border Patrol agents find nearly 30 pounds of meth hidden in car at I-8 checkpoint (San Diego Union Tribune)

San Diego Union Tribune [10/1/2019 5:43 PM, Karen Kucher]

Two women were arrested Saturday after Border Patrol agents found nearly 30 pounds of crystal methamphetamine in a compartment above their car's gas tank, officials said.

The 19-year-old driver, and her 19-year-old passenger, pulled into the Interstate 8 checkpoint in Campo around noon Saturday and were referred to secondary inspection. A police dog alerted to the 2008 Saturn Aura sedan's rear passenger tire and agents noticed discrepancies to the undercarriage of the vehicle, Border Patrol Agent Theron Francisco said in a statement.

After putting the car on a hydraulic lift, agents discovered 48 plastic-wrapped bundles in the aftermarket compartment near the gas tank. The drugs have an estimated street value of more than \$67,000, officials said.

The women, who are both U.S. citizens, were arrested and the drugs were turned over the Drug Enforcement Administration. The vehicle was seized by the Border Patrol.

[Zimbabwe] Zimbabwe Rejects U.S. Claim That Diamond Mine Uses Forced Labor (Bloomberg)

Bloomberg [10/1/2019 2:07 PM, Ray Ndlovu, 5350K]

Zimbabwe accused the U.S. of ignorance after the U.S. Customs and Border Protection announced it's blocking rough diamond imports from the Marange fields because they were produced with forced labor.

"It's unfortunate that the U.S. authorities have been misinformed or misled to believe that Zimbabwe is mining diamonds through forced labor," government spokesman Nick Mangwana said Tuesday by text message. "As a government we have a very strong revulsion towards any form of slavery or servitude. To even suggest that Zimbabwe has some form of corporate forced labor is either mischievous or simply ignorant."

Imports from Zimbabwe are not the only ones targeted by the ban. The U.S. agency listed a range of products earlier Tuesday, from garments from China to gold from the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Transportation Security Administration

Planning To Fly A Year From Now? Better Double Check Your Driver's License (NPR)

NPR [10/1/2019 4:31 PM, Brian Naylor] Audio: [HERE](#)

Starting Oct. 1, 2020, when the REAL ID law takes effect, you'll need a star at the top of your driver's license if you plan to fly anywhere in the U.S. Essentially an enhanced driver's license, it will be required at the airport gate, unless you have another accepted form of ID. And officials are worried that one year out, many people don't yet have one.

Congress approved the REAL ID Act in 2005 to address concerns of the 9/11 commission, which found that it was too easy for people to obtain drivers licenses, posing a security risk. To get a REAL ID you typically need to show a birth certificate, or green card, social

security card, and two documents that show your address.

A study done for the U.S. Travel Association shows only three out of four Americans have gotten a REAL ID driver's license (indicated by a star at the top.) Erik Hansen, vice president for government relations at U.S. Travel says that's going to be problem for would-be airline passengers next year.

"Unfortunately it means they're gonna learn the hard way what the Department of Homeland Security has said," Hansen tells NPR. "If you don't have one of the compliant IDs, either a REAL ID or one of the alternatives like a passport, you're actually gonna be turned away at the checkpoint and you're not going to be allowed to board your flight."

Hansen says an estimated 78,000 people could possibly be turned away on the first day of the new requirement, at an estimated cost to the economy of \$40 million in lost travel related spending.

A REAL ID-compliant license will also be needed to access most federal buildings and military bases.

As Hansen noted, there are alternative forms of ID that are acceptable, including passports and military IDs. But at a recent hearing, Sen. Roger Wicker, R-Miss., who chairs the Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation committee, said that's not really going to help. "I think we we need to heighten awareness about this," Wicker said. "Most people don't have a passport. And most people are not in the military or veterans, so it's going to be that driver's license nine times out of 10."

At that hearing, acting TSA Deputy Administrator Patricia Cogswell said her agency is "doing everything it can to get the word out" about the upcoming deadline, but it's complicated. Some people have valid licenses that are not REAL ID compliant. And some states issue both compliant and non-compliant licenses. "So they may be renewing their license not fully understanding that they are getting a non real I.D. compliant license."

Real ID has been fought by many states that objected to the new law, saying it's a form of national ID and/or too expensive to implement. And Congress has extended the deadline to give them a chance to comply in the past. Hansen at U.S. Travel, is not expecting TSA to move the deadline again. But, he says, there are things the government could do.

"I think realistically we just can't solve this by trying to send 182 million Americans to the DMV within the next year," he says. But Congress can take steps to modernize the REAL ID Act. For instance, Hansen says, allowing travelers who are enrolled in the TSA PreCheck program, which was implemented after the REAL ID act became law, to go through the checkpoint regardless of whether they have the Real I.D. Hansen says that would assure "we're not just racing to catch up with the past."

The TSA has put up signs and is verbally warning travelers of the looming deadline. And the agency advises travelers who aren't sure if their license is compliant to check with their state driver's license agency.

A year until REAL ID requirements to fly, many passengers could be grounded (ABC News)

ABC News [10/1/2019 4:26 PM, Michelle Stoddart, 2702K]

A year to the day -- Oct. 1, 2020 -- before every airline passenger will need a REAL ID compliant driver's license or other acceptable form of identification to fly within the U.S., the Transportation Security Administration worked Tuesday to raise awareness and keep them from getting grounded.

At a news conference, as well as by using social media and advertising, TSA again put out the word that passengers who do not present an acceptable form of identification will not be permitted through security checkpoints.

"We need an all-hands on deck effort or we're going to have a meltdown at our airports on October 1st," Roger Dow, president and CEO of the U.S. Travel Association, said.

REAL ID was enacted in 2005 as a recommendation from the 9/11 Commission, according to TSA Acting Deputy Administrator Patricia Cogswell.

REAL ID-issued documents go through a secure identity verification process "specifically designed to prevent criminals and terrorists from using fraudulent documents," Cogswell said.

Airports, TSA officials and state officials are working to inform passengers about the upcoming change with a public awareness campaign that includes signs in airports and reminding passengers in person at security checkpoints.

However, the U.S. Travel Association estimates nearly two-thirds of Americans do not even know they need a REAL ID compliant identification, leaving many officials to say the lack of public knowledge could have a disastrous impact.

"What worries me is those people who fly infrequently who will show up at an airport thinking they're going to go visit their grandkids and realizing their licenses doesn't work without that star in the corner," Dow said.

How can you tell if your license/ID is REAL ID compliant?

REAL ID compliant cards are marked with a star located in the upper portion of the card.

TSA says if you're not sure, contact your state driver's licensing agency on how to obtain a REAL ID compliant identification card.

How can you obtain your REAL ID?

To get a license with a REAL ID star, individuals will need to appear at their local Department of Motor Vehicles in person and bring specific documents to prove U.S. citizenship and residency.

Some airports, including Washington Reagan National Airport and Dulles International Airport are setting up satellite enrollment facilities to make sure travelers have access to

necessary identification. But if passengers do not have the proper documents, "they will not be able to fly," Cogswell said.

As of Oct. 1st, 47 of 50 states were issuing REAL ID compliant licenses.

Oregon, Oklahoma, New Jersey -- along with the U.S. territories Northern Mariana Islands and American Samoa -- are not issuing REAL IDs yet, but according to Anne Ferro, CEO of the American Association of Motor Vehicle Administrators, all states are on track to become compliant ahead of the October 2020 deadline.

If you do not a REAL ID compliant credential, what else can you use to board a flight?

TSA will accept identification documents such as passports, military ID cards and Global Entry cards and provides a full list of acceptable identification documents on their website.

Passengers being unable to fly could have a huge economic impact. It's estimated that if REAL ID were implemented today, it could result in up to \$40.3 million in lost travel spending in the first day.

Officials encouraged the public to check their identification and make plans in advance. Without that, "we will have chaos at our airports," Kevin Burke, the CEO of the Airports Council International North America, said.

Is your ID good enough to travel? It may not be next year. (CNN)

CNN [10/1/2019 2:39 PM, Katia Hetter, 6094K]

Think your driver's license is enough to get you through US airport security and onto your domestic flight?

Better make sure soon.

One year from today, travelers will need a "REAL ID-compliant" driver's license, US passport, US military ID or other accepted identification to fly within the United States.

The REAL ID Act established minimum security standards for the issuing of state licenses and their production.

It also prohibits federal agencies from accepting licenses from states not meeting those minimum standards for certain activities. That includes boarding federally regulated commercial aircraft, entering nuclear power plants and entering federal facilities.

To get a REAL ID-compliant state driver's license, the US Department of Homeland Security requires applicants provide documentation showing their full legal name, their date of birth, their Social Security Number, two proofs of address of principal residence and lawful status. (States may impose more requirements.)

No REAL ID, no clearing security

If you can't produce acceptable identification, your US airport's Transportation Security

Administration (TSA) checkpoint will not clear you for flight.

That could lead to serious backups at US airports starting October 1, 2020.

"We have real concerns, based on some recent surveys we did, that 99 million Americans do not have any form of REAL ID-compliant identification," said Tori Emerson Barnes, executive vice president of public affairs and policy at the U.S. Travel Association, a national, non-profit industry organization.

Which leads to another concern: Over half of Americans (57%) have no idea this deadline is coming, said Barnes, according to a recent U.S. Travel survey.

The Department of Homeland Security reported Tuesday that 47 out of 50 states are currently REAL ID compliant, up from January of 2017, when only 26 states were REAL ID compliant.

Those slow-to-adopt states -- New Jersey, Oklahoma and Oregon -- aren't yet issuing REAL ID-compliant cards. In Pennsylvania, REAL ID-compliant documents are available, but not required, which can lead to confusion.

And while most states offer more secure identification, only 27% of Americans have been issued a REAL ID, according to the Department of Homeland Security.

Many states have been issuing compliant documents for years, but driver's licenses and other documents issued before the adoption of REAL ID standards don't meet the requirements.

For example, Georgia became compliant in 2012 while California became compliant in 2018. But driver's licenses issued prior to that time in those states are not compliant.

The easiest way to check if your state driver's license or identification card is REAL ID compliant is to see if there's a star in the upper right hand corner. Some state departments of motor vehicles will confirm REAL ID status online.

A post-9/11 security measure

Passed by Congress in 2005, the REAL ID Act's requirements have been delayed for years, despite being included in the 9/11 Commission's recommendation that the federal government set standards for the issuance of sources of identification, according to the Department of Homeland Security.

Since the act's 2005 passage, the federal government has implemented TSA Pre-Check and other programs that offer more security than REAL ID, says Barnes. That's why the U.S. Travel Association is talking with federal authorities to see if they'll consider membership in those programs as a substitute for REAL ID.

It's a real concern to U.S. Travel, which represents major airlines, hotels, state and local tourism boards and other travel industry members that could lose customers who suddenly can't fly within the United States starting October 1, 2020.

What qualifies as REAL ID

REAL ID-compliant state driver's licenses or other state photo identity cards

US passport

US passport card

DHS trusted traveler cards (Global Entry, NEXUS, SENTRI, FAST)

US Department of Defense ID, including IDs issued to dependents

Permanent resident card

Border crossing card

State-issued Enhanced Driver's License

Federally recognized, tribal-issued photo ID

HSPD-12 PIV card

Foreign government-issued passport

Canadian provincial driver's license or Indian and Northern Affairs Canada card

Transportation worker identification credential

US Citizenship and Immigration Services Employment Authorization Card (I-766)

US Merchant Mariner Credential

Check the Department of Homeland Security website for more information.

Federal Emergency Management Agency

[TX] A four-man FBI team rescued 150 as Hurricane Harvey flooded Houston (CNN)
CNN [10/1/2019 2:44 PM, Meridith Edwards, 6094K]

The rain pounded the streets and neighborhoods of Houston for more than four days following the landfall of Category 4 Hurricane Harvey in late August 2017. The downpour caused historic flooding and triggered thousands of rescues. The situation became so dire and resources were so strapped, that the most unlikely law enforcement members were called to step up as first responders.

"We didn't have specific training, but we knew people needed help," said FBI Special Agent David Ko, part of the bureau's SWAT unit in Houston. "Part of being a SWAT team is when the call comes out you go out and help people ... and this is what we did."

As Harvey stalled over Houston, the FBI team received a desperate call from the Houston Police Department. Dozens of police officers, including the chief of police, were trapped at a substation in an inaccessible area. So FBI Special Agent Mike Walker sent out an email asking the 37 FBI agents to come in and help. Only four agents were able to circumvent the surging floodwaters to get in to where the high-water trucks, boats and equipment were stored.

The four-man team quickly formulated a rescue plan to reach the trapped Houston police officers and citizens. Since it was his first time driving the high-water vehicles into deep water, Agent Ko was concerned. "It's supposed to drive underwater but does it really? Or is it gonna flip over? Or are we going to hit a fire hydrant?"

But the team knew they had a mission to complete. They successfully navigated the fast-moving current and positioned the five-ton truck, anchoring themselves from being swept away. Then, they began the high-water rescue efforts.

"We had taken five or six loads and it's still pouring down rain," Agent Mike Walker said.

The team worked through the night, filling the truck to its 30-person capacity several times and bringing people to safety. These FBI agents didn't let up on their rescue efforts for nearly a week.

This summer, the four men were awarded the Law Enforcement Congressional Badge of Bravery by Houston Mayor Sylvester Turner and Sen. John Cornyn of Texas.

"Special Agents David Ko, Jack Walker, Michael Walker, and Justin Widup went above and beyond to rescue more than 150 Houstonians during Harvey's peak," Cornyn said at the July 26 ceremony. "In receiving the Congressional Badge of Bravery, they join an elite group of heroes whose acts of courage make our communities and country safer."

The agents lauded for their heroism and sacrifice are all assigned to the Houston field office's SWAT unit.

"They represent the helpful spirit of Houstonian people who wanted to put themselves at risk for the benefit of somebody else," Mayor Turner said.

The Law Enforcement Congressional Badge of Bravery was introduced in 2008 to honor exceptional acts of heroism by law enforcement officers at every level -- state, local, and federal -- while in the line of duty.

"It was definitely humbling," said Special Agent Justin Widup. "You never get into this job for awards. I've been in law enforcement 15 years and I've never done it to be recognized. You want to help people. I think we all would like to share with all the officers in this city that we're out there helping everybody because everybody is deserving of it."

[Editorial note: consult video at source link]

[TX] Gov. Abbott asks President Trump for disaster declaration for Imelda (Houston Chronicle)

Houston Chronicle [10/1/2019 3:26 PM, Jeremy Wallace, 245K]

Texas Gov. Greg Abbott has requested a presidential disaster declaration for six counties — including Harris County — slammed by Tropical Storm Imelda last month.

“The recent severe weather in the Gulf Coast region has impacted thousands of Texans, leaving many without the resources they need to recover,” Abbott said in a press release. “That is why the State of Texas is requesting federal assistance for the individuals affected by the horrific flooding. I ask the President to grant this request swiftly, so that the state, in collaboration with our federal partners, can help those recover as quickly as possible.”

If granted by President Donald Trump, it would open homeowners and businesses in the six counties up to a variety of federal grants and loans to recover from the storms. The six counties Abbott included in the request are Chambers, Harris, Jefferson, Liberty, Montgomery, and Orange.

Imelda made landfall on Sept. 17 in Freeport. By Sept. 19, as much as 40 inches of rain fell in some locations, according to Abbott’s request. This extensive rainfall resulted in dozens of roadways, including interstate highways, being closed across the region, as well as hundreds of water rescues and evacuations. Based on reports, a minimum of five fatalities were attributed to Imelda. At the storm’s height, nearly 80,000 customers lost power.

Since 2015, the six counties covered by the request have been included in six major disaster declarations for storms and flooding, most notably Hurricane Harvey in 2017.

If Trump grants the disaster declaration, it will be his second for flooding in Texas since July. In July he signed a disaster declaration because of flooding Cameron, Hidalgo, and Willacy counties.

[TX] Greenspoint among first areas of flood management pilot project (Houston Chronicle)

Houston Chronicle [10/1/2019 11:25 AM, Paul Wedding, 245K]

The devastation Hurricane Harvey caused two years ago changed how some people thought about flooding, which is part of why a new project is taking a closer look at flood risks: to be better prepared.

The new project, “Measuring, Mapping and Managing Flood Risk in the Built Environment: A Pilot Project in Southeast Texas” is being conducted by the Center for Texas Beaches and Shores. Several agencies are funding the two-year project, including Texas A&M University, Rice University, the University of Houston, FEMA and the Texas General Land Office.

The project’s principal investigator, Sam Brody, said much research has shown flood risks and impact tends to stay around the 100-year floodplain, areas where there’s a 1% chance of flooding any given year, but in areas like Houston, more than half of all flood losses are outside that boundary. Brody said the plan will start by looking at areas where they know there is chronic flooding, including Orange; Richwood and Lake Jackson; and Greenspoint.

Because of that risk to uninformed or unaware residents, Brody said there needed to be better ways to measure and articulate flood risks, particularly at a local level. So with this project, Brody said they will be using a combination of machine learning and artificial intelligence techniques to better measure and delineate flood risks.

“We’re taking a human-centered, statistical approach where we’re using previous planes of damage—info based on calls, 911 calls—to project and predict where flooding is going to occur and goes in and outside of these traditional boundaries,” Brody said.

Identifying which areas are at risk is just half of the project, Brody said, because once the maps are drawn, they will be going into local communities to meet with stakeholders and references to get feedback.

“We’re gonna literally fold that insight back into calibrating our models” Brody said. “These are now human-centered, human-informed models that are more than just showing or predicting where the water might go. We’re interested in who’s at risk and how much damage these people might expect.”

This won’t replace the 100-year floodplain, he added, but it would act as a complement and a communication tool to better inform local communities to have them better prepared for future risks.

Brody said they are already seeking an additional two-year extension to the project to possibly expand it to other areas other than the three they are already looking at, and while those three areas are where they are putting their most focus on, they would be mapping most of the state.

“Texas is gonna lead the way in how we’re thinking about flood risks, how we’re mapping for it, how we’re preparing for it,” Brody said. “Thanks to Harvey, there’s a lot more interest in doing things better than we did in the past.”

Brody said these maps would be released publicly online for everyone to be able to see, and that it should be available for the public just after the start of next year.

Karen Hastings, the communications director of the Harris County Flood Control District, said the project could be beneficial across the country because there are multiple watersheds, areas where stormwater and rainfall runoff drains, in various areas and people need to know how they function and where they are. Hastings said HCFCD is moving forward with a watershed-based community effort to better inform the public.

HCFCD currently maintains a flood warning system online, which gives a real-time look at where floods may be currently happening in Harris County, showing the amount of rainfall in inches in multiple areas across the county.

[TX] Texas wakes up to series of earthquakes (Houston Chronicle)

Houston Chronicle [10/1/2019 11:53 AM, Sergio Chapa, 245K]

From the Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex to the edge of the Panhandle, the Lone Star State

woke up to series of three earthquakes.

The U.S. Geological Survey reported a 4.0-magnitude earthquake hit in a rural area about 12 miles north of Snyder in Scurry County just after 2 a.m. Tuesday.

A 3.2-magnitude earthquake was recorded about 6.5 miles southwest of the Fort Worth suburb of Mansfield just before 3:30 a.m. Tuesday.

USGS officials reported that a 2.5-magnitude earthquake was recorded about 13 miles north of Snyder just before 6:30 a.m. Tuesday.

There were no immediate reports of damage but the 4.0-magnitude earthquake near Snyder tied with a Monday afternoon earthquake in the same area as the strongest earthquake in Texas so far this year, data from the University of Texas at Austin-run TexNet Seismic Monitoring Program shows.

Tremors: 4.0-magnitude earthquake hits edge of Texas Panhandle

Environmentalists blame the tremors on saltwater disposal wells, which inject wastewater generated in the hydraulic fracturing process and other oil and natural gas activities deep underground.

Past scientific studies from Southern Methodist University and the U.S. Geological Survey have confirmed that some of the earthquakes were man made, but oil & gas industry experts dispute those findings.

Sharon Wilson, a Dallas-based organizer with environmental group Earthworks, said in a tweet that stronger earthquakes can crack walls and foundations.

"No telling what it will do the bore pipe on all the wells out there," Wilson said.

Saltwater disposal wells are regulated by the Railroad Commission of Texas, the state agency that regulates the oil and natural gas industry.

Railroad Commission officials adopted stricter regulations for saltwater disposal wells in November 2014. Over the last four years, the agency received 540 disposal well applications in areas of historic seismicity.

Of those proposed projects, 222 permits were issued with special conditions that include reducing maximum daily injection volumes and pressures as well as being required to record volumes and pressures on a daily basis as opposed to monthly.

Applications for 68 disposal sites were returned or withdrawn. Another 32 applications were sent to hearing while 25 permits were issued without special conditions and 193 applications are pending technical review.

[MT] Record September snowstorm drops 4 feet of snow on Montana Rockies (Washington Post)

Washington Post [9/30/2019 11:22 AM, Matthew Cappucci, 9425K]

Some people grab their rakes and leaf blowers during the first few weeks of fall. Montanans broke out their snow shovels instead.

Up to four feet of snow fell in a historic September snowstorm, which prompted Montana governor Steve Bullock to declare a winter storm emergency Sunday evening. Numerous accidents and spun-out semis have been reported on area roadways, with a number of roads impassible. The majority of roadways on the Blackfeet Indian Reservation remained closed Monday morning.

Precipitation began as rain showers around midday Saturday at the lower elevations. Rain and drizzle flipped to snow, some heavy at times, as chilled air swept in from the north. An approaching weather disturbance helped intensify the storm even more, increasing snowfall rates Sunday morning. In combination with strong winds, it brought near whiteout conditions to parts of the region.

The 48-inch jackpot total came from Browning, a town of about 1,000 in Glacier County, which is about two hours northwest of Great Falls on the Blackfeet Indian Reservation.

"All roads in and out are blocked or pretty bad," said Remington Boushie, a dispatcher with the Browning Police Department.

These conditions were expected, as the Pondera County Disaster and Emergency Services office issued a message Sunday morning requesting that roadways be used only by emergency vehicles "until further notice."

"I had to hike about a half mile in it and get picked up by another officer," Boushie said. "Some officers made it out, but we have two officers stuck in their units. Lots of people are working extra. We're making do with what we can."

Boushie noted that the four-foot total exceeded the highest-end forecasts. "We were expecting 15 to 36 inches of snow. So even if we had prepared for the worst, we still got it worse than that." Boushie added that the snow was light and powdery, making it a bit easier to move in.

What makes this storm unusual is that the bull's eye of heavy snowfall occurred well east of the mountains, in the flatlands leading up to the foothills.

"What happens with the storm system we had was that we had east to northeast low-level flow," said Ray Greely, a meteorologist at the National Weather Service in Great Falls. "You have what we call the upslope, which with the dynamics, provides additional uplift." As moisture-rich air is forced upward toward the higher elevations east of the mountains, it cools and rids itself of moisture, falling into chilly air near the ground.

In these cases, "somebody can get a real dumping," Greely said.

Meanwhile, in Great Falls, initial forecasts called for roughly a foot of snow. The city wound up with 19.3 inches, along with visibility dropping to a quarter-mile Saturday evening as the heaviest bands moved in. The entire episode lasted about 36 hours there.

Of the total, 9.7 inches fell Saturday and 9.6 inches came Sunday. It marked the highest and second-greatest single-day snowfall totals recorded in Great Falls for the month of September. These totals were also the 15th- and 16th-highest daily snowfalls in any month. Records at Great Falls International Airport date back to 1937.

Perhaps most impressive is that this storm marks Great Falls' second-highest two-day snow total on record, behind only the 24.2 inches that fell on April 28-29, 2009.

"Early" or "late" season snow is not uncommon for the region. Of the 10 biggest two-day totals in Great Falls, only one occurred during meteorological winter (December-February). In other words, nine of the top 10 heaviest winter storms weren't truly in winter.

"Typically, we do [get our snowstorms on the fringe seasons], since that's when the moisture is really available," Greely said. "You can get some storm systems in the winter, but you just don't have the moisture. That's why we get our biggest snowstorms in the spring."

Greely said this latest system would be impressive for any time of year, but he called it "unheard of" for September or October.

"In the fall, you can occasionally get [a snowstorm], but it's a little more difficult." And the amounts, he said, are usually nothing like this.

Meanwhile, rain on the storm's warmer side helped clinch top spots for the wettest September on record for parts of eastern Montana. Glendive saw 8.32 inches this month, beating its former record by more than 2 ½ inches. Sidney saw just under 11 inches this month, with Glasgow also having its wettest September on record.

Now, the concern turns to falling temperatures, which will likely reach record lows in some spots. Great Falls is forecast to drop to 14 degrees Monday night, obliterating the record low of 22 set in 1959. If realized, that low temperature would also be the second-coldest reading on record for so early in the season.

"We'll be seeing teens and, if it clears out, maybe even a little lower than that," said Greely, referencing the potential for additional cooling if the blanket of cloud cover exits, allowing any meager warmth to escape into the atmosphere.

In the meantime, temperatures will remain near or below freezing over the next three days, warming into the upper 40s on Thursday. By Friday, the forecast calls for more showers of snow.

Secret Service

[NH] NH's IT boss seeks 1st complete cybersecurity assessment (Union Leader)

Union Leader [10/1/2019 7:12 PM, Kevin Landrigan, 57K, Neutral, Secondary]

The state's information technology chief executive will ask the Executive Council Wednesday to endorse the first independent, cybersecurity assessment of IT operation

throughout state government.

Information Technology Department Commissioner Denis Goulet is recommending NuHarbor Security Inc. of Essex Junction, Vt. to conduct the near-\$500,000 review over the next year with a one-year renewal option at the consent of both parties.

The state's two-year public works or capital budget is paying for the \$499,000 contract.

NuHarbor was chosen from among 12 regional and national experts in the field who competed for the job.

"Cybersecurity is hot now and we ended up with a roomful of responses," said Goulet of the request for proposal process that started last January. "What we are looking for is what is the best fit for New Hampshire and think we have found it."

The council will take up the contract at its meeting Wednesday morning at the Seacoast Science Center in Rye.

Goulet said its privacy controls get audited "almost continually" by commercial and government actors from the credit card industry and the FBI to the IRS and the Centers for Medicaid and Medicare Services.

"All of them are looking at security and compliance and we do fine in those audits. They are all focused on their little segment of the world. This is more comprehensive," Goulet said.

"We want this looking at strategy and activities around those policies; not only are our policies effective but are there any soft spots? I expect the findings to teach us how we can improve our cybersecurity posture in New Hampshire.

"I operate under the principle that we can always get better."

Last May, the council confirmed Goulet to a second four-year term as IT chief and both Republican and Democratic governors have recommended him for the post.

The bids ranged from a low of \$111,000 to more than \$500,000. NuHarbor's core bid was \$259,000 but Goulet is asking for the council to allow him to use other activities beyond the basic risk assessment that would include the cost to fix any flaws that are found in the system.

"As a public entity, the State of New Hampshire is exposed to the full range of cyber threats on a continual basis: malware, botnets, ransomware, and denial of service attacks do not discriminate — any network connected to the Internet is exposed to these threats," Goulet wrote in a memo to the council on the contract.

"The old boundaries of cybersecurity and cyberattacks are disappearing — from the network perimeter, to distinct types of malware, to nation-state tactics vs. that of the cybercriminal."

The bad actors are getting more and more creative, he said.

"These actors doing the ransomware continue to get more sophisticated and this is a real challenge for municipalities that is a real budget crunch for them," Goulet said

The state on its own would not be able to do this assessment, he said.

"In addition to determining gaps or shortfalls in the State's cybersecurity posture, a key outcome of this assessment will be a roadmap to improve the security, readiness and effectiveness of the state of New Hampshire's cybersecurity posture," Goulet said.

"The alternative — without this contract — would leave DoIT and the state executive branch agencies with minimal ability to assess cybersecurity gaps and vulnerabilities across our enterprise networks, servers and applications that contain sensitive and confidential citizen and state data."

Last July, federal officials with the U.S. Secret Service began a criminal investigation after hundreds of computers with Strafford County were infected with a virus believed to have originated overseas.

In 2017, the Weare Police Department reported it had been the victim of a hack and malware cyber-attack for an entire week and attackers were selling sensitive data including payroll information for cryptocurrency.

Goulet's agency is working with Margaret M.L. Byrnes, executive director with the NH Municipal Association, on co-hosting a cybersecurity summit for local officials.

In late July, the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA), Multi-State Information Sharing and Analysis Center (MS-ISAC), National Governors Association (NGA), and the National Association of State Chief Information Officers (NASCIO) all issued a joint advisory to local government partners.

"The leading authorities refer to the big three to keep your operations safe. Backup your systems, do cyber awareness training and have an incident response plan so you know what you are going to do when bad things happen," Goulet added.

[CT] Two accused of using counterfeit money at Westport businesses (Wilton Bulletin)

Wilton Bulletin [10/1/2019 10:44 AM, DJ Simmons, 3K, Negative, Secondary]

A New York City man and woman are facing charges after allegedly using counterfeit money at a Westport store.

On March 2 at 9:45 p.m., Westport officers were called to assist the Fairfield Police Department with a motor vehicle stop that had been made on the Post Road in Westport. The vehicle had been stopped by a Fairfield officer in connection with an investigation into the passing of counterfeit bills in their town, police said.

Upon stopping the vehicle, police said suspected counterfeit currency was located along with three merchandise bags from two Westport businesses. This led officers to believe the

suspects had potentially passed counterfeit currency within Westport on that same date.

A follow-up investigation was conducted by a member of the detective bureau which included information sharing with other agencies.

Of the two Westport stores identified as possibly having been visited by the suspects, police said one was able to recover a counterfeit \$100 bill among the cash receipts from the date on which the suspects were arrested.

According to police, a review of video surveillance showed one of the individuals arrested during the traffic stop had entered the store, selected the merchandise, and made the purchase using counterfeit money. An arrest warrant was then sought and granted for all four suspects.

On Sept. 27, the Westport Police Department was contacted by the Stamford Office of Adult Probation reporting Destiny Poole, 20, and Dayvon Jordan, 25, were currently being held in connection with the active warrant.

Poole was charged with conspiracy to commit first-degree forgery, and conspiracy to commit sixth-degree larceny.

Jordan was charged with first-degree forgery, sixth-degree larceny, conspiracy to commit first-degree forgery, and conspiracy to commit sixth-degree larceny.

They were each released on \$5,000 non-surety bonds and are scheduled to appear at state Superior Court in Norwalk on Oct. 9 for arraignment.

[NY] NYSP: Man had \$37K in counterfeit cash during traffic stop (WTen)

WTen [10/1/2019 4:27 PM, Staff, 25K, Negative, Secondary]

New York State Police arrested a man accused of having thousands of dollars of counterfeit money in his possession during a traffic stop.

Police say they stopped Ali Sheroze, 22, of Latham, who was operating a vehicle on Scully Ave. in Colonie without a headlight.

When troopers interviewed Sheroze, they say they smelled an odor of marijuana coming from the vehicle.

Following a search of the vehicle, police say they found 80 counterfeit \$100 bills and 294 counterfeit \$100 bills located in a backpack on the rear seat.

Sheroze was charged with first-degree criminal possession of a forged instrument.

He is due in court on Wednesday.

[NY] State Police: Traffic stop leads to \$37K in fake cash, Latham man's arrest (Schenectady Daily Gazette)

Schenectady Daily Gazette [10/1/2019 10:08 PM, Steven Cook, 23K, Negative, Secondary]
A traffic stop early Tuesday led to the discovery of more than \$37,000 in counterfeit cash, state police said.

The arrest came as police in Gloversville warned of circulating fake cash found there. It was unclear if there was any connection between the two.

The Tuesday arrest happened shortly before 3 a.m. Tuesday on Scully Avenue in Colonie. Troopers made the stop after observing the man's car with a headlight out.

As the trooper spoke with the driver, identified as Ali Sheroze, 22, of Latham, the trooper could smell marijuana coming from inside the vehicle, state police said.

A subsequent search then uncovered the counterfeit cash, troopers said. Troopers found 80 fake \$100 bills in the vehicle's center console and another 294 in a backpack in the rear seat.

Sheroze was charged with first-degree criminal possession of a forged instrument, a felony and released to appear in court later.

State police did not describe the counterfeit cash they said they discovered in Sheroze's vehicle, but the arrest came as Gloversville Police warned of circulating fake \$100 bills. The bills Gloversville warned about had Asian characters on them, but otherwise looked like real U.S. currency.

Gloversville Police also released images of the fake currency they were warning about.

[VA] Police: 'several cases' of counterfeit bills in Pulaski (WSET)

WSET [10/1/2019 8:58 PM, Kirkland Gee, 33K, Neutral, Secondary]

The Pulaski Police Department has worked several cases recently involving counterfeit \$5 bills that have been passed around a few businesses in the town.

Police said residents should keep their eyes out for the counterfeit bills. They also recommend marking them with a counterfeit money detection marker to be safe.

If you find any of these bills or think someone is trying to pass them, please contact 540-994-8680 to file a report.

[GA] Thomasville police detective named a top digital forensic expert examiner (Albany Herald)

Albany Herald [10/2/2019 4:30 AM, Staff, 7K, Neutral, Secondary]

One of Thomasville's finest recently earned a national award from the United States Secret Service.

Detective Lisa Maxwell, a crime scene investigator with the Thomasville Police Department, was recently named one of the top digital forensic expert examiners in the nation.

Maxwell is no stranger to this award.

"I've been honored to receive top honors for this distinction since 2016," Maxwell said. "It's a privilege each year to receive recognition from the Secret Service for the efforts I have made in digital forensics.

"I am grateful for this opportunity to serve."

Maxwell has been with Thomasville Police Department since 1999 and joined the USSS task force in 2013. She covers all of southwest Georgia, from Perry to the north, Eufaula to the west and Waycross to the east.

This year, Maxwell was No. 11 in the country in terms of the number of devices and data she has processed. During a recent Thomasville City Council meeting, she was recognized by the U.S. Secret Service Resident Agent in Charge Clint Bush.

Police Chief Troy Rich also recognized the accomplishments Maxwell has made.

"Detective Maxwell's expertise and skill in this area of forensic science and her commitment to our community make her an outstanding asset to our team," Rich said. "Her ability to find a digital footprint and follow the trail that suspects unknowingly leave behind has saved countless potential victims and helped to protect our entire community."

Maxwell processes hundreds of devices annually in her current capacity. She said everyone leaves behind a digital footprint.

"No matter if material has been deleted or even if a device was destroyed, evidence is always left behind," she said. "There is almost always a trail to follow, be it on smartphones, computers or other devices."

The work Maxwell is doing is never easy.

"The work is often dark and involves crimes including harassment, stalking, assault, child exploitation, child pornography and even homicide," Maxwell said. "Knowing I am making a difference and potentially saving lives makes the work worth it."

Maxwell has assisted in cases involving the Georgia Bureau of Investigation, Drug Enforcement Administration and FBI.

"In each case I work, it is very rewarding to uncover evidence that brings justice to victims," she said. "Through dedication, training, and hard work, I have been lucky enough to positively contribute to the safety and security of our community and surrounding areas."

[AL] Alabama hospital system halts admissions amid malware attack (San Francisco Chronicle)

San Francisco Chronicle [10/1/2019 2:40 PM, Jay Reeves, AP, 2613K]

A hospital system that serves a large part of rural west Alabama temporarily quit accepting new patients after a ransomware attack crippled some of its computer systems Tuesday.

Brad Fisher, a spokesman for DCH Health System, said its hospitals in Tuscaloosa, Northport and Fayette began diverting most new patients to Birmingham and elsewhere after the attack became apparent in the pre-dawn hours.

The most critically ill new patients were still being treated, he said, and officials didn't anticipate having to discharge patients because of the attack.

Ransomware software made it impossible for some computer systems to communicate with each other, but no patient data was believed to be lost, Fisher said. Medical staff members had to use paper copies in place of digitized records.

"Your nurse can chart on you and that information is still there," he said. "But things like being able to take images and making them available to be read, that sort of thing ... has been truncated."

It was unclear how much money the hackers were demanding to relinquish control, but both the FBI and Secret Service were contacted and federal agents were on the way, he said.

The three hospitals have about 850 beds total and admitted more than 32,000 patients last year. Surgeries were being performed as normal, and a decision would be made on what to do about procedures set for Wednesday and later, Fisher said.

Ransomware typically involved hackers installing malicious software on a computer network and demanding money in exchange for releasing information. Such attacks have become much more common since cryptocurrency made it easier for hackers to receive and spend money.

Fisher said it wasn't clear how the hospitals' common computer system was attacked.

[AL] DCH hospitals closed to new patients after ransomware attack (Tuscaloosa News)

Tuscaloosa News [10/2/2019 12:07 AM, Stephanie Taylor, 14K, Neutral, Secondary]
The three hospitals in the DCH Health System stopped accepting new patients Tuesday after a ransomware attack shut down their computer operations.

New patients were admitted to DCH Regional Medical Center in Tuscaloosa, Northport Medical Center or Fayette Medical Center only if they were in critical condition and required immediate treatment, spokesman Brad Fisher said.

It was unclear Tuesday when normal operations would resume. Elective procedures and surgical cases scheduled for Wednesday will proceed as planned.

"We are confident that our downtime procedures will allow us to provide safe and effective care for those patients," DCH officials posted on the system website at 7 p.m. "As for appointments for tests or other procedures, if you have not been contacted by DCH, please call before you come. For the time being, we will continue to divert any new admissions, other than those that are critical, to other facilities."

Federal authorities are working with DCH information technology staff, vendors and consultants to restore systems late Tuesday night.

The network became infected when someone opened an email with an infected attachment, Fisher said.

Hospital staff learned during the early morning hours Tuesday that the system used by the three hospitals that serve several West Alabama counties had been hacked, Fisher said. The staff were able to care for existing patients and use a paper system to keep records, but new patients were diverted to hospitals in Birmingham and Mississippi.

Ransomware is a type of malicious software, or malware, that hackers use to deny access to a computer system or data until a ransom is paid. Ransomware typically spreads through phishing emails or by unknowingly visiting an infected website, according to the Department of Homeland Security. Such attacks have become much more common since cryptocurrency made it easier for hackers to receive and spend money without getting caught.

Fisher said no patient data has been lost. Staff were waiting Tuesday for FBI and Secret Service agents before opening the file containing the hacker's monetary demand to release control of the network.

The three hospitals have about 850 beds total and admitted more than 32,000 patients last year. Surgeries were being performed as normal, and a decision would be made on what to do about procedures set for Wednesday and later, Fisher said.

"Our hospitals have implemented our emergency procedures to ensure safe and efficient operations in the event technology dependent on computers is not available," a statement on the DCH System site said, in part. "That said, we feel it is in the best interest of patient safety that DCH Regional Medical Center, Northport Medical Center and Fayette Medical Center are closed to all but the most critical new patients. Our staff is caring for the patients who are currently in the hospital, and we have no plans to transfer current patients."

"We are constantly evaluating our situation, and we will provide updates."

Tuscaloosa Mayor Walt Maddox said the Tuscaloosa Fire and Rescue Service has been authorized to assist DCH with medical transports until the ransomware attack is over.

No fire department personnel had been used to transports as of midday Tuesday, but overtime charges could begin accruing quickly as it keeps staffing to provide aid, if needed.

"We'll have to keep additional personnel on the clock until this is resolved," Maddox said.

The U.S. Senate has approved legislation to combat ransomware attacks. The "DHS Cyber Hunt and Incident Response Teams Act" would authorize the Department of Homeland Security to create response teams to protect governments and private companies from cybersecurity incidents.

[AR] Fake \$20s at revenue office lead to Spa City man's arrest (Arkansas Online)

Arkansas Online [10/2/2019 3:21 AM, Steven Mross, 61K, Negative, Secondary]

A Hot Springs man who, police said, tried to use counterfeit money to pay for his vehicle tags Monday at the state revenue office was arrested there on 18 felony counts of forgery.

Michael Louis Gagliardi, 53, who lists a Lakeland Drive address, was taken into custody shortly before 11 a.m. at 200 Woodbine St. on 18 counts of first-degree forgery, each punishable by up to 10 years in prison. He remained in custody Tuesday in lieu of \$90,000 bond and is set to appear today in Garland County District Court.

According to the probable cause affidavit, the Hot Springs Revenue Office called police to report a forgery in progress. An employee told officers that a man had attempted to pay for his tags with several counterfeit \$20 bills.

The employee noted that the bills failed the test of the detector pen, and they also had no watermarks.

Officers made contact with Gagliardi and reported finding 18 of the bills in his possession. They noted that all the bills were duplicates of the same three serial numbers, and Gagliardi was arrested.

Detective Nathan Rines interviewed Gagliardi at the Hot Springs Police Department, and he reportedly stated he had received a large sum of money from a recent lawsuit and had been carrying the cash with him for several days. He said he was with several other people during this time and had some money stolen from him.

He claimed he did not know how he came into possession of the fraudulent bills and that he didn't know they were counterfeit until the clerk at the revenue office told him. The affidavit notes that no money was lost from Monday's incident.

According to court records, Gagliardi pleaded no contest on Feb. 14 in district court to a misdemeanor charge of theft of property, amended from an original felony charge, and was sentenced to one year in jail, all suspended, and ordered to pay \$730 in court costs and \$1,249 in restitution to Walmart.

On June 6, 2013, Gagliardi pleaded guilty in Desha County Circuit Court to possession of methamphetamine or cocaine with purpose to deliver and possession of drug paraphernalia. He was sentenced to five years in prison, with all of it suspended.

[AR] Drugs, counterfeit cash allegedly found after traffic stop; man, woman arrested (Hot Springs Sentinel-Record)

Hot Springs Sentinel-Record [10/1/2019 4:00 AM, Steven Mross, 3K, Negative, Secondary]

A traffic stop by Hot Springs police late Saturday resulted in the arrests of a local man and woman on multiple felony charges after drugs and counterfeit money were reportedly found.

Matthew Eric Moore, 33, who lists a Grimmitt Loop address, and Amy Nichole Tucker, 37, who lists a Hamilton Dairy Road address, were both charged with possession of meth with purpose to deliver, unauthorized use of another person's property to facilitate a crime and

possession of drug paraphernalia, each punishable by up to 20 years in prison, and second-degree forgery, punishable by up to 10 years.

They were each being held in lieu of \$10,000 bond and were set to appear Monday in Garland County District Court.

According to the probable cause affidavit, around 11:45 p.m. Saturday, Officers Justin Bradbury and Chris Schreck were on stationary patrol within the boundaries of Hot Springs National Park when Officer Mark Spain, who was northbound on Gorge Road, observed a silver sedan driving off the roadway and then heading south toward East Grand Avenue.

Spain alerted Bradbury the sedan should be passing him momentarily and Bradbury states he got behind a silver Toyota Camry after it passed him. A check of the license plate showed it returned to a different vehicle so he stopped it in the 1000 block of East Grand.

He made contact with the driver, identified as Moore, who stated he didn't have a driver's license or proof of insurance and that the car belonged to his girlfriend, identified as Tucker, who was the front seat passenger. Tucker was reportedly unable to provide any documentation or proof of ownership for the car so it was decided to impound it since it had fictitious tags and was found to be registered to someone else.

While Spain was telling Tucker to exit the passenger seat, Schreck allegedly saw her attempting to hide syringes between the seat and center console. During an inventory of the vehicle prior to towing, officers located a black box with two different padlocks. During a search of Moore, two keys were found on his belt loop which opened the locks.

Inside the box, officers reportedly found syringes, containers with marijuana residue, baggies with meth residue, a baggie with 6 grams of what later tested positive for meth, 4 grams of marijuana, electronic scales and five counterfeit \$100 bills. One of the two syringes shoved between the seats was found to contain a bloody liquid.

At that point, an agent with the 18th Judicial District East Drug Task Force was notified and responded to assume the investigation.

[TX] Here's why you can no longer see locations where police have found skimmers (KSAT 12)

KSAT 12 [10/2/2019 3:29 AM, Amy Davis, 79K, Neutral, Secondary]

Credit card skimmers cost people, businesses and banks millions of dollars in losses every year. More than a third of those financial losses nationwide are from skimmers in Houston.

A new state law to crack down on skimmers just went into effect this month; but with it, consumers lost access to some valuable information. House Bill 2945 says we can no longer find out where law enforcement agencies are finding the devices that steal our credit card data.

Who passed the law?

State Representative Mary Ann Perez (D-Pasadena) authored HB2945.

It received unanimous support in both the House and the Senate.

What is the intent of the law?

HB2945 does several things to prevent and deter skimmers in Texas.

Authorizes the Texas Attorney General to set up a payment fraud fusion center in Tyler, Texas where law enforcement agencies all over the state can coordinate and compare investigations, helping agencies track skimming rings and thieves that move from one city to the next. A spokesperson for the AG's Office told Channel 2, "Details of the implementation of the center are still being worked out."

Requires gas stations to report any skimmers that they find to police within 24 hours.

Requires gas stations to implement safety designs and features, a sort of best practices and standards, on pumps to minimize the risk of skimmers. These "best practices" will be handed down from the AG's Office. They are still in the works.

Gas stations that do not comply with the best practices or stations that fail to report skimmers can face fines of up to \$5,000.

Law enforcement is no longer allowed to share the names of businesses where officers found skimmers except to report the information to the AG, other law enforcement agencies, the payment fraud fusion center and any financial institution that may be impacted.

Why did lawmakers make the locations of skimmers private information?

According to Perez's chief of staff, lawmakers made the concession to the food and fuel lobby that represents gas stations in exchange for their support of the bill.

When regulators like the Texas Department of Agriculture have released the names of businesses where they found skimmers in the past, the business owners say they lost customers for weeks and months afterward, even though the skimmers were removed.

"From their point of it, it was bad business to let people know that they'd been allowing skimmers in their pumps," explained TDA Commissioner Sid Miller.

Investigators said calling out gas stations that are also victims of the financial crime isn't always fair. They need gas stations to work with law enforcement. When owners are worried they'll be put on blast for self-reporting devices they found, they will be less likely to do so for fear of losing business.

How to protect yourself from skimmers at the pump:

Pay inside with cash.

Use the pumps closest to the gas station and within view of the station employees inside.

Check for signs that the pump seal has been tampered with or cut

If you frequent a gas station that offers a payment app, investigators say you should use it. When you do, your credit card data is processed through the station's main point of sale terminals and not at the pumps.

[Editorial note: consult video at source link]

[KS] Detecting funny money (Abilene Reflector-Chronicle)

Abilene Reflector-Chronicle [10/1/2019 10:53 AM, Tim Horan, Neutral, Secondary]

When taking cash, take time to inspect the bill to make sure it is not counterfeit, Abilene Assistant Police Chief Jason Wilkins advises.

Using a detection pen alone may not detect a counterfeit bill, he said.

"In the past, a common way individuals would counterfeit currency was to 'wash' a low denomination bill and reprint it as a higher denomination bill," Wilkins said. "This allowed counterfeit bills to avoid detection from businesses utilizing counterfeit detection pens."

Recently an Abilene man was arrested for passing counterfeit currency. A fake \$50 bill was found at a restaurant and an attempt was made to pass \$150 in counterfeit currency at a convenience store.

The Abilene Police Department recovered an additional \$1,800 in counterfeit currency.

Wilkins also said that, more recently, there has been an increase in counterfeit cases where individuals are passing film prop money and money that contains Chinese writing on the note.

"The easiest way to spot film prop money is to look for the phrase 'Only Motion Picture Purposes' on the front and back of the bill," he said.

Restaurants and convenient stores are targets of individuals looking to utilize counterfeit money likely due to the large volume of customers.

"Oftentimes, a business is unaware that they've received a counterfeit bill until they attempt to deposit the money into the bank," Wilkins said. "Individuals utilizing websites like Marketplace and Craigslist can also be susceptible to receiving counterfeit money."

The easiest way to avoid becoming the victim of counterfeiting is to take time to visually and physically inspect the bill, he said.

There are several resources available online that can assist with identifying a counterfeit bill. If local citizens suspect they may have received a counterfeit bill, we encourage them to contact the Abilene Police Department.

Coast Guard

[NY] 2 Teenagers Missing in Heavy Surf Off Rockaway Beach (New York Times)

New York Times [10/1/2019 8:13 PM, Michael Wilson and Azi Paybara, 22840K]

Police divers, boats and helicopters on Tuesday were searching the water off Rockaway Beach, where the churning surf has long been a notorious site of drownings, looking for two missing teenage boys last seen in the ocean.

The initial report of three missing teens came in at 3:32 p.m. on Tuesday. When rescue crews arrived, they found one of the teenagers, a 15-year-old boy, had been rescued by a good Samaritan, the police said. A witness said the rescuer was a surfer.

That boy told officers that his friends, one 15, the other 16, were still in the water. No lifeguards have been on duty there since the end of beach season last month, a park official said.

The police, Fire Department divers and the Coast Guard began a rescue operation, with the latter sending crews from stations in Jones Beach and Sandy Hook. Police boats cruised slowly along the surf as the sun descended.

But by evening, the operation had shifted to recovery, with officers searching for swimmers presumed drowned.

The arrival of rescuers is a grimly familiar sight to regulars at the beach. "When you see them pull up to the beach, you just know," said Daniel Volpe, 37, who lives nearby. "You know when you see the helicopters circling that someone drowned."

Tuesday's events followed a particularly deadly summer at the popular Queens beaches. A 15-year-old who drowned in Jamaica Bay in August was the fourth drowning in the Rockaways in about a month, prompting Donovan Richards, the city councilman from that area, to call for "a state of emergency."

"It's hotter than normal, and a lot of our folks don't have access to air conditioning," he said in August.

All four deaths were on or near the east side of the Rockaway Peninsula, Mr. Richards said. Two of the deaths were a couple — a young woman teaching her boyfriend how to swim.

After those deaths, Crystal Howard, a spokeswoman for the parks department, implored New Yorkers to only go swimming in designated beaches with lifeguards on duty.

Luis Jimenez, 26, a sous-chef from Harlem, arrived for a swim, but when he set his bag down on the beach to change, the wind carried away his shorts. "Thank God my shorts blew away," he said later, "or else I would have gone in the water and I might have drowned, too."

Most beach drownings in New York City have occurred after hours.

Thirty-four people drowned at public beaches from 2009 through the beginning of August, according to figures from the city's Department of Health and Mental Hygiene.

Only six of the drownings happened while a lifeguard was on duty.

Lifeguards are on duty during beach season, from Memorial Day weekend through Sept. 8. Swimming is prohibited when lifeguards are not present.

A higher rate of drownings in New York have occurred at beaches compared to pools.

Between 1987 and 2010, 171 drownings have occurred at New York State facilities, according to figures from the state Department of Health. Nearly half of the drownings were at pools; the rest were at beaches.

But there are more than 6,000 pool facilities, compared with about 1,600 beach facilities.

New York City has eight beaches and 53 outdoor pools, and about 1,400 lifeguards.

[CA] California boat fire: Truth Aquatics suspends all operations amid investigation (Los Angeles Times)

Los Angeles Times [10/1/2019 3:21 PM, Richard Winton, 3575K]

The operator of the Conception dive boat, which burned in a Labor Day fire that killed 34 people, announced Tuesday it was suspending all operations as the investigation into the deadly blaze continued.

The company has come under scrutiny since the fire, with the FBI and other agencies spending several days searching its Santa Barbara offices and at least one of its other boats. Despite the intense inspections, U.S. Coast Guard officials say there are no restrictions on Truth Aquatics operating its vessels.

"With the continued calls and request for tours, we want to announce that we are officially suspending all operations of our Truth Aquatic fleet for a to-be-determined amount of time," Truth Aquatics said in an Instagram post. "Right now we feel it's important [to] dedicate our entire efforts to make our boats models of new regulations that we will continue to work on with the NTSB and Coast Guard."

The National Transportation Safety Board's preliminary report found that the entire crew was asleep before the blaze was discovered, and the Conception did not have a roaming night watchman, as required by the U.S. Coast Guard for vessel certification.

The NTSB investigation is continuing, and it's possible investigators could return to inspect the salvaged vessel, a board spokesman said.

Those who died in the inferno were sleeping below deck and could not escape the flames. Crew members above deck were able to jump overboard to safety.

Federal investigators last week concluded their examination of the charred wreckage, but officials said Friday that the investigation into the origins and cause of the blaze was far from over.

The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives completed a painstaking

examination of the burned-out Conception, which was hauled to a Ventura County dock from the ocean floor on Sept. 12.

Experts have worked to piece together the remains of the dive boat, and parts of the vessel were sent to high-tech laboratories. Authorities also have scoured the seabed for missing pieces.

But a month after the fire — the deadliest boat fire in modern California history — authorities still have not determined the cause of the blaze, according to two law enforcement sources familiar with the investigation. Sources say, however, a forensic examination is likely to reveal the origin.

[CA] California boat company suspends tours after fatal fire that killed 34 people (FOX News)

FOX News [10/1/2019 7:28 PM, Louis Casiano, 10258K]

The Southern California boat company whose vessel caught fire earlier this month, killing 34 people, announced a voluntary indefinite suspension of its fleet on Tuesday.

In a Facebook post, Santa Barbara-based Truth Aquatics said the company thinks it's important to "dedicate our entire efforts to make our boats models of new regulations." It said it would continue to work with the Coast Guard and National Transportation Safety Board.

The company apologized to customers with reservations and those seeking reservations. It said it has received calls and requests for tours.

Authorities are still conducting criminal and safety inquiries regarding the Sept. 2 fire aboard the Conception. The vessel was on a three-day Channel Islands excursion when it caught fire.

Thirty-three passengers and a crew member died when they were sleeping below deck and became trapped, authorities said. The captain and four deckhands jumped into the water. The ship later sank.

The Conception had passed its most recent safety inspections with no violations. The company's two other boats, the Truth and Vision, have not been in operation since the Labor Day conflagration.

Investigators concluded an examination of the 75-foot-long vessel Friday at Port Hueneme, a naval base northwest of Los Angeles.

Pieces of the boat were sent to labs for additional testing and documents seized from the company by federal investigators are still being analyzed.

Truth Aquatics owners Glen and Dana Fritzler have filed a lawsuit under a pre-Civil War provision of maritime law to avoid liability.

The suit said the Fritzlers "used reasonable care to make the Conception seaworthy, and

she was, at all relevant times, tight, staunch and strong, fully and properly manned, equipped and supplied and in all respects seaworthy and fit for the service in which she was engaged."

Ryan Sims, a cook on the Conception, filed a separate lawsuit alleging the vessel was not seaworthy and the crew not properly trained.

The diving community has rallied around the Fritzers and has raised more than \$18,000 to help crew members who have become unemployed since the fire.

[AK] Coast Guard aircrew rescues 2 hikers, 2 dogs from Alaska mountain (FOX News)

FOX News [10/1/2019 3:56 PM, Melissa Leon, 10258K] Video: [HERE](#)

An aircrew from Coast Guard Air Station Sitka in Alaska on Sunday came to the rescue of two hikers, one of them injured, and two dogs.

One hiker had suffered a severe ankle injury on Cupola Mountain in Sitka and could not hike out, officials said. The hikers were at a 2,300-foot elevation.

Alaska state troopers notified the Coast Guard at 9:30 a.m., according to the branch.

A Coast Guard rescue swimmer was lowered from a helicopter onto the mountain, and later a small basket hoisted the hikers and their dogs.

The hikers were taken to a local hospital and treated by Sitka emergency services personnel, the Coast Guard said.

The Sitka Fire Department received the initial call from one of the hikers via her cellphone. She said she'd been hurt, said Coast Guard Lt. Michael Klakring.

"The helo crew arrived on scene about five minutes after takeoff and visually spotted the hikers," Klakring said. "The rescue swimmer deployed, assessed the hiker's condition and splinted the injured leg before hoisting them off the mountain."

"In this case, there was enough daylight left to visually spot the distressed party once we arrived," the pilot pointed out, adding that a signaling device and distress beacon "will always make searching easier and allow for a quicker rescue."

A similar incident took place on June 15, when an aircrew from Coast Guard Station Sitka rescued a 50-year-old man who fell from a steep cliff while hiking in the Sisters Mountains in Sitka.

The man suffered head injuries but was in stable condition after being taken to Sitka emergency services personnel, the Coast Guard said.

CISA/Cybersecurity

Ransomware hits hundreds of US schools, local governments: study (Breitbart)

Breitbart [10/1/2019 2:38 AM, AFP, 2034K]

Hundreds of US municipalities, schools and health organizations have been hit by ransomware in 2019, leading to massive service disruptions, researchers said Tuesday.

The security firm Emsisoft said at least 621 government entities, healthcare providers and school districts, colleges and universities were affected by ransomware in the first nine months of 2019.

The attacks which lock up computer networks if a ransom is not paid has led to disruption of municipal and medical services and the closing of some schools, the report noted.

The researchers had no prior year data for comparison but said ransomware appears to be surging as hackers seek vulnerabilities in older computer networks and use cryptocurrencies to anonymously get payments.

"There is no reason to believe that attacks will become less frequent in the near future," said Fabian Wosar, chief technology officer at Emsisoft.

"Organizations have a very simple choice to make: prepare now or pay later."

The researchers said the use of cyber insurance may be making ransomware more profitable than it otherwise would be and "incentivizes further attacks."

A report earlier this year by the Internet Society found global losses from ransomware rose by 60 percent last year to \$8 billion.

Emsisoft said at least 68 state, county and municipal entities were hit by ransomware including widely publicized incidents in Baltimore, Maryland, and New Bedford, Massachusetts, where a \$5.3 million demand was issued.

The report found 62 incidents involving school districts and other educational establishments, which potentially impacted up to 1,051 individual schools, colleges and universities.

At least 491 ransomware attacks this year affected US health care providers, in some cases forcing hospitals to turn away emergency room patients or cancel surgeries, the researchers said.

While law enforcement and security experts say it is unwise to pay hackers, many organizations have ended up accepting ransom demands which cost less than rebuilding computer systems.

Ransomware's mounting toll: Delayed surgeries and school closures (CBS News)

CBS News [10/1/2019 4:15 PM, Aimee Picchi, 3332K]

Ransomware has impacted at least 621 entities this year through September, a new study finds.

The targets include hospitals, health care centers, school districts and cities.

The total cost so far this year could be about \$186 million.

"Ransomware" attacks, in which hackers hijack computer systems or websites and demand payment to release them, are taking a growing toll on government agencies, hospitals and many other organizations. A new study documents 621 such cyberattacks this year, including incidents that closed public schools and delayed surgeries as administrators sought to respond to the threats.

The costs could be upwards of \$186 million, based on the publicly disclosed costs of ransomware attacks, according to cybersecurity firm Emsisoft, which issued the report on Tuesday. It based its calculation on the \$300,000 cost to Albany, New York, to restore its data following a ransomware attack.

Ransomware creates havoc for both workers and the customers of targeted organizations. Baltimore delayed sending out water bills after its systems were frozen for weeks earlier this year due to a ransomware attack. Other disruptions have included delayed home sales, disruptions in collecting taxes and issues with paying bills.

On Tuesday, a health center in Alabama said it was closing to new patients because of ransomware.

In a case last month in Wyoming, a county health center canceled some surgeries after its systems were held hostage. Campbell County Health, the Wyoming medical center, also said it canceled lab, respiratory therapy, and radiology exams and procedures and wasn't taking new patients as it coped with the ransomware, according to a news release.

In another case, an Arizona school district shut its schools for at least two days in early September after its systems were hit by ransomware. The closing "is really in deference to school security, making sure we are able to operate in a timely and effective manner," Zachery Fountain, director of communications for the district, told a local TV station.

More attacks, bigger ransoms

Hackers are likely to step up ransomware attacks, Emsisoft said in its study. The attackers are also demanding larger ransoms from their victims, the study found, although it didn't specify an average ransom. Emsisoft didn't immediately return a request for comment.

"There is no reason to believe that attacks will become less frequent in the near future," said Fabian Wosar, CTO at Emsisoft, in a statement.

Ransomware attacks have been on the rise in recent years because of how profitable they can be for attackers. Experts say smaller cities have proved to be attractive targets. Because they lack resources and are dealing with taxpayer money, they may elect to pay a ransom rather than try to recover their data through other methods.

More than 50 ransomware attacks during the first half of the year targeted cities, with about half of them smaller localities with fewer than 50,000 residents, a study published earlier this year found.

The average ransom payout in the second quarter of 2018 was \$36,295, according to a report by security company Coveware. That's nearly triple the average payment in the prior quarter. In the third quarter of 2018, when Coveware first started tracking payments, the average was \$5,973.

U.S. Warns Cybersecurity Flaws Could Impact Medical Devices (Bloomberg)

Bloomberg [10/1/2019 3:39 PM, William Turton, 5350K]

U.S. government officials on Tuesday issued a warning about cybersecurity vulnerabilities in operating systems that power a variety of medical devices.

Computer security researchers discovered 11 vulnerabilities that could allow a hacker to take control of medical devices, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration warned in an "urgent" advisory along with the Department of Homeland Security.

"These vulnerabilities may allow anyone to remotely take control of the medical device and change its function, cause denial of service, or cause information leaks or logical flaws, which may prevent device function," the FDA's advisory states.

The flaw rests within software called IPNet, developed by Swedish software company Interpeak AB, which is owned by Wind River Systems Inc. The company licenses this software to real-time operating system developers, and those systems power a range of medical devices. IPNet is highly technical software that facilitates the transfer of data between computers and the internet.

In a statement, Wind River said it is a "strong proponent of responsible disclosure practices" and that it was important that "the extent of industry impact is determined and disclosed as soon as possible."

Affected vendors include Microsoft Corp., Green Hills Software Ltd., and Enea AB, according to DHS. Microsoft told federal authorities that its product, ThreadX, no longer includes the IPNet framework, but that earlier versions of the software released prior to Microsoft's acquisition of ThreadX earlier this year may contain the affected software.

"We've investigated these reports and confirmed that these vulnerabilities do not impact any ThreadX release," a Microsoft spokeswoman said via email.

According to an April statement announcing Microsoft's purchase of Express Logic, the original developer of ThreadX, the real-time operating system is used in 6.2 billion devices, including more than 12 million medical devices.

The FDA advisory states that some medical-device manufacturers are addressing and remediating the flaws found in IPNet software. DHS is advising customers of IPNet to contact the developer for information on how to fix the flaws.

FDA warns of potential cyber vulnerabilities in internet-connected medical devices (The Hill)

The Hill [10/1/2019 5:28 PM, Maggie Miller, 2806K]

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) on Tuesday warned patients, providers and manufacturers about cybersecurity vulnerabilities in certain medical devices and health care networks.

The vulnerabilities, referred to by the agency as URGENT/11, have the potential to harm operating systems for medical devices connected to communications networks like Wi-Fi and equipment such as routers and phones.

According to the FDA, the cyber vulnerabilities could allow a remote actor to “take control” of the device, leading to a change in function, information leaks or causing the device to stop functioning.

The FDA emphasized that it had not received any reports of “adverse events” that have occurred as a result of the cyber vulnerabilities.

However, Suzanne Schwartz, the deputy director of the Office of Strategic Partnerships and Technology Innovation in the FDA’s Center for Devices and Radiological Health, said in a statement that the “risk of patient harm if such a vulnerability were left unaddressed could be significant.”

“It’s important for manufacturers to be aware that the nature of these vulnerabilities allows the attack to occur undetected and without user interaction. Because an attack may be interpreted by the device as a normal network communication, it may remain invisible to security measures,” she added.

The cyber vulnerabilities exist as part of IPnet software, which is used by computers to communicate over a network. The FDA warned that this software is incorporated into multiple operating systems involved in medical and industrial devices.

“Though the IPnet software may no longer be supported by the original software vendor, some manufacturers have a license that allows them to continue to use it without support,” the FDA wrote in its warning. “Therefore, the software may be incorporated into a variety of medical and industrial devices that are still in use today.”

Amy Abernathy, the FDA’s principal deputy commissioner, said in a statement that the agency “urges manufacturers everywhere to remain vigilant about their medical products—to monitor and assess cybersecurity vulnerability risks, and to be proactive about disclosing vulnerabilities and mitigations to address them.”

The FDA said patients with medical devices should talk to their doctors about whether their device could be impacted by the cyber vulnerabilities, and that medical device manufacturers should work to quickly address whether their devices are open to the vulnerabilities.

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) first warned of the cyber vulnerabilities in July.

This is not the first time the FDA has warned of cyber vulnerabilities related to medical

devices. The agency in June warned of vulnerabilities in certain insulin pumps that were later recalled.

Pacemakers, Insulin Pumps Could Be Hacking Targets: FDA (US News & World Report)

US News & World Report [10/1/2019 4:00 PM, Steven Reinberg, HealthDay, 3196K]

Medical devices that can connect to the internet might be at risk for hacking, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration warned Tuesday.

"While advanced devices can offer safer, more convenient and timely health care delivery, a medical device connected to a communications network could have cybersecurity vulnerabilities that could be exploited resulting in patient harm," said Dr. Amy Abernethy, the FDA's principal deputy commissioner.

"The FDA urges manufacturers everywhere to remain vigilant about their medical products to monitor and assess cybersecurity vulnerability risks, and to be proactive about disclosing vulnerabilities and mitigations to address them," Abernethy said in an agency news release.

This warning concerns several operating systems that could affect medical devices connected to a network like Wi-Fi and public or home internet, and equipment such as routers, phones and other communications gear, the agency said.

It's possible that an attacker could exploit these vulnerabilities and take control of a medical device, change its function, cause denial of service, or cause information leaks. Logical flaws can also be introduced that could cause the device not to work properly or at all.

So far, the FDA hasn't received any report of a device being hacked.

"While we are not aware of patients who may have been harmed by this particular cybersecurity vulnerability, the risk of patient harm if such a vulnerability were left unaddressed could be significant," said Dr. Suzanne Schwartz, deputy director of the Office of Strategic Partnerships and Technology Innovation in the FDA's Center for Devices and Radiological Health.

"The safety communication issued today contains recommendations for what actions patients, health care providers and manufacturers should take to reduce the risk this vulnerability could pose," Schwartz said in the release. "It's important for manufacturers to be aware that the nature of these vulnerabilities allows the attack to occur undetected and without user interaction."

These vulnerabilities are in software called IPnet that computers use to talk to each other over networks.

Systems that include IPnet are:

VxWorks (by Wind River)

Operating System Embedded (OSE) (by ENEA)

INTEGRITY (by Green Hills)

ThreadX (by Microsoft)

ITRON (by TRON)

ZebOS (by IP Infusion).

The FDA urges patients to talk to their doctors to see if their device could be affected and to get help right away if they notice that the functioning of their device has changed.

The agency is also working with manufacturers to identify products that could be vulnerable and come up with plans to thwart any potential breaches.

Terrorism Investigations

[IA] Iowa teen faces terrorism charge after allegedly creating online job posting for 'school shooter' (The Hill)

The Hill [10/1/2019 2:00 PM, Jessica Campisi, 2806K]

A 14-year old in Iowa is reportedly facing a terrorism charge after he allegedly created an online job posting asking for a "school shooter."

Police in Fort Dodge, Iowa, became aware of an entry on Indeed.com — a popular website for job postings — that asked for a school shooter but was otherwise slim on details, the Des Moines Register reports.

In an attempt to gather information on the person who posted the entry, police tried to apply for the position but were not able to complete the application, local news station KCCI reports.

Authorities contacted Indeed about the "concerning" post and determined it had been public since Friday afternoon, the Register reports.

Their investigation led to the Fort Dodge teen, whose name was not made public due to his age and was only identified as a 14-year-old boy.

Police charged the teen with a felony charge of threat of terrorism, and officers obtained a search warrant at his home to search for potential evidence. He is now in custody at the Central Iowa Juvenile Detention facility.

"With student safety being of utmost importance, we always are working in collaboration with the Fort Dodge Community School District anytime a potential threat or concern is raised," police wrote in a release. "This incident was no different. Once information was gathered, we worked closely with the school staff to identify the individual involved and hold them accountable."

National Security News

NSA activates Cybersecurity Directorate to protect weapons, industrial base (Breitbart)

Breitbart [10/1/2019 8:58 AM, UPI, 2034K]

The National Security Agency on Tuesday launched a Cybersecurity Directorate to bring the agency's foreign intelligence and cyberdefense missions together.

The new directorate will focus initially on the defense industrial base and the weapon's security improvement, the agency said, calling it an effort to "unify as a nation against our threats."

"The Cybersecurity Directorate will reinvigorate NSA's white hat mission by sharing critical threat information and collaborating with partners and customers to better equip them to defend against malicious cyber activity," the agency said in a statement.

NSA Director General Paul Nakasone tapped Anne Neuberger, who has been leading the NSA's "Russia Small Group," a joint NSA-Cyber Command task force to combat Russian election interference, in July to head the new cybersecurity arm.

"Integrating all of our cyber mission so there's one focus," is the goal, Neuberger said regarding the new directorate. "Sharing all our unclassified information as early as possible, as quickly as possible, so we can target that sharing to the right entity and then partner with DHS [Department of Homeland Security] on critical infrastructure ... to build the security of that sector."

The NSA has had a cyberdefense organization, the Information Assurance Directorate, for decades to safeguard the government's classified and sensitive networks, and when asked, the private sector's networks as well.

NSA officials said what's new is putting together threat detection, cyberdefense and future technologies personnel under one roof to more closely align its offensive and defensive operations.

"If you build secure products, it is so much easier and less costly to defend," Neuberger said.

The President's National Security Telecommunications Advisory Committee warned in a 56-page report to the White House last year that the United States will see more severe and destructive cyberattacks over the next decade than it has faced to date.

The committee had urged the Trump administration to make cybersecurity a top priority, adopting the term "Cybersecurity Moonshot Initiative," likening it to the mission to put a man on the moon in 1969.

In May 2018, the Trump administration had already begun streamlining cybersecurity with the elimination of the cybersecurity coordinator position on the National Security council, which former National Security Advisor John Bolton said at the time was no longer necessary.

About a month later, Chinese hackers breached a U.S. Navy contractor's sensitive data,

including secret plan to develop a supersonic anti-missile to use on U.S. submarines by 2020, calling attention to cybersecurity needs.

The Extra-Secret White House Computer System, Explained (New York Times)

New York Times [10/1/2019 8:10 AM, Charlie Savage, Matthew Rosenberg and Adam Goldman, 22840K]

The whistle-blower who revealed President Trump's attempt to pressure Ukraine's leader to open investigations that could benefit him politically also accused White House officials of essentially hiding a rough record of the conversation by placing it in the same highly restricted computer system for closely guarded government secrets.

In his complaint, the whistle-blower cited White House officials who portrayed the storage of the call record in that system as "solely for the purpose of protecting politically sensitive — rather than national security sensitive — information" and labeled it an "abuse." Here is how the restricted storage system works, according to interviews with more than a half-dozen former National Security Council staff members who spoke on the condition of anonymity.

How do aides usually store records of presidential calls with foreign leaders?

Most of the time, the National Security Council — the foreign policy arm of the White House — memorializes presidential phone or video calls with foreign heads of state on the so-called TNet system, the officials said. This is a top-secret-level computer network that is the main platform the aides use to do their jobs. It connects with a top-secret network called JWICS, which is more widely used elsewhere in the executive branch.

TNet has access controls and auditing safeguards. For example, it keeps track of who created or uploaded files, who looked at them, who modified them and how and who printed them out. When officials create a "package" — essentially, a new file — in TNet, they can set controls so any colleague who works on a particular subject, like European affairs or counterterrorism, has access.

What goes in TNet?

Officials can store any file that is classified to the top-secret level — the highest classification — so long as it is not "code word," a term referring to a specialized category of even more delicate top-secret information that officials are permitted to know about only if they have been granted specific access to it.

Officials with a general top-secret security clearance will not be given code-word clearance to learn about covert activities unrelated to their work. For example, an aide working on North Korea policy would not have been told about planning for the 2011 raid on Osama bin Laden's compound in Pakistan. Similarly, files containing intelligence supporting the planned raid were not stored in the ordinary TNet system.

Where does the National Security Council store its more sensitive files?

The council also has an even more locked-down system called NICE, for N.S.C. Intelligence Collaboration Environment. NICE appears to be what the whistle-blower was referring to as

a “stand alone” computer system managed by the council’s directorate for intelligence programs. One former official said it was better understood as a subdomain of TNet.

Foreign policy aides typically use NICE to develop and store documents related to code-word programs. For example, staff members working on a covert activity might use NICE to draft a presidential finding or decision memo about it. When they are done, they would print a copy for the president to sign.

Why store secrets in NICE?

It significantly reduces the number of people who can gain access to it. About only 20 percent of National Security Council staff members are NICE users, one former official said. They can log into the system from their work computers using virtual private network software that limits each of them to using that particular workstation.

When NICE users create or upload a new file, they can give only other individual NICE users access to it by name; unlike in TNet, they cannot invite entire groups, the former official said.

Is it an “abuse” to use the NICE system to store a file that is not top-secret code word?

Using the NICE system to curtail access to the record of Mr. Trump’s call with the leader of Ukraine, Volodymyr Zelensky, may very well be, as the whistle-blower also wrote, a sign “that White House officials understood the gravity of what had transpired in the call.” But calling it an “abuse” appears to be subjective.

Generally, the national security adviser can decide who can see what files. No rule prohibits putting a file with a lower-level classification into the NICE system in order to take advantage of its greater access restrictions, a former official said.

By contrast, the official said, it would clearly be an abuse — violating a specific prohibition in an executive order governing classified information — to mark something classified at an unjustifiably higher level in order to conceal violations of the law or prevent embarrassment. Here, however, the released call record was merely marked “secret,” the next highest level of classification after top secret.

How do readouts of head-of-state calls get put together?

According to multiple former officials who have helped create the records, the process typically starts with a note-taker who works for the White House Situation Room and monitors the call. The Situation Room uses voice-to-text software to create a rough transcription in real time — no recording is made — and then the note-taker takes a first pass at cleaning it up by correcting any obvious garbled moments.

That draft is then passed to a subject-matter expert on the National Security Council staff who was also listening to the call. That specialist — who has a greater familiarity of foreign names and places — edits the record. At the end of the process, the aides give the record to the national security adviser.

Is the White House account of Trump's Ukraine call accurate and complete?

Beyond the fact that the memo is not a verbatim transcript, it contains three ellipses where Mr. Trump was speaking — and each in a place where he was asking the Ukrainian president for investigations.

It is not clear if this indicates that Mr. Trump trailed off or that something was cut out of the reconstruction. It is also not clear whether any notes exist by American officials that would indicate whether he said anything more in those spots.

But one official said that any notes or draft documents discussed by two or more National Security Council officials counts as a “record” that may not lawfully be destroyed under the Presidential Records Act. However, the initial file produced by the voice-to-text software would not count as a record and could be lawfully deleted, the official said.

What about in Ukraine?

It is not clear whether the administration of Mr. Zelensky recorded his call with Mr. Trump. Previous Ukrainian governments did not record calls with world leaders, according to a former senior Ukrainian official familiar with the process. Instead, with high-profile and strategically important foreign officials, Ukrainian leaders would have advisers listen in and take detailed notes, he said.

The transcript released by the White House of Mr. Trump's July call with Mr. Zelensky was accurate and comprehensive, a Ukrainian official familiar with it said, adding that significant information was not omitted, including by the ellipses.

White House ordered ultrasecret system upgraded to prevent leaks (Politico)

Politico [10/1/2019 6:56 PM, Daniel Lippman and Natasha Bertrand, 2512K]

The Trump White House upgraded the security of the National Security Council's top-secret codeword system in the spring of 2018, according to two former Trump White House officials familiar with the matter, as part of an effort to ferret out and deter leaks.

The changes included a new log of who accessed specific documents in the NSC's system — known as NICE or “NSC Intelligence Collaboration Environment” — and was designed in part to prevent leaks of records of the president's phone calls with foreign leaders and to find out the suspected leaker if transcripts did get disclosed, one of the former officials said. Prior to the upgrade, officials could only see who had uploaded or downloaded material to the system but usually not who accessed which documents.

That highly classified system is being newly scrutinized in light of a whistleblower complaint alleging that national security officials used the system—meant for storing information classified at the highest level — to conceal politically embarrassing conversations, including a phone call with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky on July 25 in which President Donald Trump urged Zelensky to investigate his political rival, former Vice President Joe Biden.

If hiding politically embarrassing material, rather than protecting national security secrets,

was the motivation, experts and former officials said, it would be an abuse of the codeword system. While not necessarily an illegal act, it does run counter to an executive order signed by President Obama in 2009 that says information can't be classified to "conceal violations of law, inefficiency, or administrative error" or "prevent embarrassment to a person, organization, or agency," they said.

POLITICO first reported last week that the White House began to use the codeword system to restrict the number of officials who had access to these transcripts following leaks in 2017.

As part of Democrats' impeachment inquiry, lawmakers are interested in learning who was involved in uploading the call records to that system—a stark departure from how the system is typically used and how memos of the president's exchanges have traditionally been handled, former officials and experts said.

The basic concept of logging who went in and out of top-secret NSC-wide systems is not unique to the Trump administration, according to three former National Security Council officials.

One of those officials with direct knowledge of the system also said the ability to log who accessed specific documents in the codeword system "seems consistent with some of the controls in place" on the system under President Obama. "It's a way to further tighten controls on the information," the former official said.

When asked for comment, a senior administration official said: "We're not going to discuss how we handle classified materials."

But the administration's external supporters have defended the move. Former White House press secretary Sarah Sanders, speaking on Fox News Tuesday morning, said, "I think they were acting responsibly. We have to protect our relationships. We have to be able to communicate with our allies and partners. The president should be able to do that without those classified conversations and exchange maybe of national security information being leaked to the press."

While only a certain number of NSC staffers have the codeword system installed on their workstations, only a subset of those staffers, in turn, has access to specific documents on that system. The former official with knowledge of the system added that he had never seen transcripts put on that codeword system during his time in the Obama administration.

The changes came months after entire transcripts of President Trump's calls with the leaders of Australia and Mexico were leaked to the Washington Post, setting off a furious internal search for the source of the unauthorized disclosures and widening the mistrust between the president and his own staff.

Before the upgrade, the White House began restricting the distribution of the transcripts of the president's calls with foreign leaders to a narrower group of officials. Previously, the transcripts had been put on a shared drive that all NSC staffers had access to, which made it easier for leaks to happen, according to a former Trump White House official.

Officials in the NSC's intelligence directorate had to take the matter up to the principals level because "it was a pretty fundamental change to the system." John Kelly and H.R. McMaster, the respective chief of staff and national security adviser at the time, signed off on the change.

A former White House official said the upgrade came amid "a hard look at who had a 'need to know', which is fundamental to managing classified info and highly sensitive documents, conversations, emails, etc." This former official characterized the changes as the White House merely adopting the standard classification practices used at the Pentagon and intelligence agencies.

Still, intelligence and national security experts called it "highly unusual" for these kinds of routine calls between world leaders to be placed into a system that's intended to be used only for information about the nation's most highly compartmented programs -- for instance, covert actions like the secret raid in Pakistan that led to the assassination of al Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden.

"It risks undermining a whole host of important national security activities," said April Doss, who served as senior minority counsel for the Russia investigation on the Senate Intelligence Committee and, prior to that, as a top attorney at the National Security Agency. "Most, if not all" officials who would need to have access to call readouts as part of carrying out their regular duties in advising on foreign affairs and implementing the administration's policies, she added, "would not have access" to the codeword system.

Only a small number of NSC staffers have access to NICE, and an even smaller subset of those people had the ability to upload or download documents from the system. The person who most likely put the transcript into NICE would have been one of the NSC staffers responsible for maintaining this highly compartmentalized system for intelligence storage at the NSC.

"There's really no one else who would have been trusted to do it," said the former official.

People who likely had access to the Ukraine call transcript included people like the NSC's Ukraine country director, the senior director for Europe and Russia, a number of people from the legal office, a couple of West Wing staffers, the staff secretary and several others in the Situation Room, this person said.

CNN and the New York Times reported that transcripts of Trump's calls with Russian President Vladimir Putin and Saudi leader Mohammed Bin Salman were also placed into that highly classified system to prevent them from being leaked.

The Russian calls "were pretty much what you would expect, you can take the first part of the Zelensky call with all of the over the top effusive praise and basically copy and paste onto pretty much any head of state call with Trump, whether it was Emmanuel Macron or Vladimir Putin," said the former NSC official. "Every one of them knew to start the call by praising him for the thing that he had just done that week."

On his calls with Putin, most of the time Trump talked about wanting to put the relationship between the U.S. and Russia on a friendlier footing, but complained that the media and

other people in the government were preventing him from doing so.

“They were certainly the type of thing that you would not want in public because they were just really embarrassing from the standpoint of just national pride,” said the official.

Weather forecast accuracy is at risk from 5G wireless technology, key lawmaker warns FCC, seeking documents (Washington Post)

Washington Post [9/30/2019 2:00 PM, Andrew Freedman, 9425K]

On Sept. 1, all hell was breaking loose on the Abacos Islands and Grand Bahama as Hurricane Dorian, one of the most powerful Atlantic hurricanes in history, unleashed an onslaught of 185 mph winds and storm-surge flooding. Not that long ago, officials in Florida might have seen such a catastrophic storm due east of them and ordered a costly evacuation of coastal residents.

But this time, computer models accurately showed that the storm would make a turn northward, missing the towering glass condominiums of Miami and opulent golden ballroom of Mar-a-Lago in Palm Beach.

Emergency managers had confidence in the National Hurricane Center’s forecast, in part because we’ve gotten used to the idea that weather forecasts are getting more accurate over time, thanks to investments in computing power, observation systems and more.

But that might not be the case for much longer, scientists and officials warn. A botched rollout of 5G technology, intended to revolutionize the way we communicate and usher in a new era of innovation, could paradoxically roll back some of these forecasting gains.

In a letter Monday to the chairman of the Federal Communications Commission, the chairwoman of the House Science, Space and Technology Committee, Rep. Eddie Bernice Johnson (D-Tex.), expresses concern that we’re headed for such a scenario because of the potential interference of planned urban 5G networks with existing weather satellite sensors. The sensors, mounted aboard polar-orbiting satellites, are used to discern the presence and properties of water vapor in Earth’s atmosphere.

The letter, addressed to FCC Chairman Ajit Pai, calls for the FCC to provide the scientific evidence it is using to inform the commission’s negotiating position ahead of a key international telecommunications meeting. Johnson is seeking the information by Oct. 7 for the committee to review before the start of that meeting Oct. 28.

“It is imperative that U.S. federal agencies resolve this disagreement about out-of-band emission limits before we begin negotiations with international partners,” the letter states, referring to the limits that describe the amount of noise that 5G devices could be permitted to emit beyond 24 gigahertz.

The letter also, for the first time, releases two reports produced in the past year: one by NASA on behalf of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, which operates satellites and contains the National Weather Service, and another by NOAA itself.

These highly technical analyses concluded that if deployed widely and without adequate

restrictions, telecommunications equipment operating in the 24 GHz frequency band would bleed into the frequencies that NOAA and NASA satellite sensors also use, significantly interfering with the collection and transmission of critical weather data.

The NOAA report, for example, warns of a potential loss of 77.4 percent of data coming from microwave sounders mounted on the agency's polar-orbiting satellites.

This issue has been percolating in scientific and communications policy circles for months but will come to a head in late October, when nations gather for the World Radiocommunications Conference in Egypt. That is when countries will agree to guidelines governing the use of the 24 GHz band of spectrum, which the FCC auctioned off for about \$2 billion beginning this past March.

That auction went forward despite the warnings of NOAA and NASA leadership and the objection of the Commerce Department, NOAA's parent agency, as well as the concerns of some on Capitol Hill.

Instead, after a breakdown in interagency negotiations, political leaders at the White House sided with the FCC and telecommunications industry in allowing the wireless spectrum auction to proceed, according to multiple people familiar with the process, dismissing the possible implications for weather forecasts.

The Trump administration is pushing for the United States to be a leader in 5G technologies, which has put pressure on science agencies to avoid getting in the way of a major administration priority.

Introducing forecast blind spots

The most important data that goes into computer models used for weather forecasting comes from microwave sounders. Any degradation of this data could harm forecast accuracy. The data is especially useful for making extended forecasts on the order of five to seven days in advance and allows measurements to be taken across regions that have no surface-weather stations, such as the oceans or remote land regions.

The key concerns about 5G interference focus on what are known as baseline interference limits, often referred to as out-of-band emission limits.

NOAA's microwave sounders operate at a frequency of 23.6 to 24 GHz, which is close to the frequency that the FCC auctioned off. NOAA favors a strict interference limit, meaning that 5G devices would not be allowed to transmit at frequencies that overlap significantly with the sounders. The FCC and wireless industry favor a looser limit. The meeting in Egypt will determine what the interference limit will be, with the State Department taking the lead in negotiations.

On May 16, acting NOAA administrator Neil Jacobs testified before Congress that if the interference levels favored by the FCC were to go forward, weather forecast skill would degrade to 1980 levels, when accuracy was 30 percent of what it is today.

The European Center for Medium Range Weather Forecasts, which operates the world's

top weather model, has also warned of a deterioration in its forecasts if the interference limits don't adequately protect the satellite frequencies. Such a deterioration could mean billions in economic damages from unanticipated storms and an uptick in weather-related fatalities. It could also harm U.S. national security by reducing the Defense Department's forecast capabilities.

The FCC and telecommunications industry, for their part, have maintained that the studies from NOAA and NASA — and these agencies' warnings of a potential forecast apocalypse — are blown out of proportion and based on incorrect assumptions of how the 5G networks would be deployed.

Although the FCC has advocated for a less restrictive interference limit, it has not produced technical research of its own to justify it. The Science Committee's letter sent Monday requests that the FCC turn over such research to back up its preferred limit.

Some lawmakers, such as Sen. Maria Cantwell (D-Wash.), have tried to bring attention to the looming spectrum challenge and fundamental disagreements between scientists at NOAA and NASA and the position of other agencies.

Under questioning from Cantwell at a July 17 hearing of the Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee, NASA Administrator James Bridenstine expressed concern about data loss caused by 5G interference. "I can tell you that depending on the decibel level in that 23.6 gigahertz, we could lose significant data," Bridenstine said. "If that were to happen, it would affect our ability to predict weather, without question."

This answer stands in contrast to what Pai told the same committee a month earlier. When Sen. Ron Johnson (R-Wis.) asked Pai whether there is "any validity or legitimacy" to the concerns raised in the science agencies' reports, Pai said definitively, "No, absolutely not."

Although the baseline interference limit will be decided upon in Egypt, there are growing indications the meeting won't be the end of the story.

Contingency planning

New legislative language in a proposed Senate appropriations bill, for example, would direct NOAA to conduct a new study on the radio interference issue, including a focus on the financial implications of 5G-related interference. Unlike with the previous reports, which were circulated only to a select few in the executive branch and Capitol Hill, the bill would require NOAA to publicly release its new data.

The deployment of the 24 GHz 5G technology is several years away, so rather than be caught flat-footed, forecast agencies are planning for various outcomes. They're betting that telecom companies might be amenable to working with NOAA, NASA and other agencies to make sure that as they activate their networks, they don't degrade forecasts.

The industry's sprawling, high-tech infrastructure is hugely vulnerable to severe weather, so if forecasting suffers, these companies will, too. For example, the first thing that people seek to have restored after a storm, in addition to electricity, are phone and Internet networks, and such repairs are costly.

"They would be completely out of their minds with deploying this stuff and screwing up the forecast because so much of their industry is weather sensitive," said a senior government official who spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss a sensitive issue that the person wasn't authorized to discuss publicly.

However, this official noted, as of now, there is nothing that would require communications companies to take steps to mitigate the risk to satellite sensors. That could come in the form of an FCC regulation or congressional legislation, which science agencies such as NOAA and NASA will work toward after the meeting in Egypt, the official said.

In case forecasts are degraded, NOAA is considering plans to avoid the worst-case scenario, which involves the loss of at least 30 percent of overall forecast skill. For example, it could use water-vapor-sensing channels only over oceans and exclude land, which would be the likely source of interference. The loss of only land data would lead to a potential 3 percent degradation in forecast skill, according to experts familiar with the matter.

This may sound small, but its significance becomes clear when one considers that the United States spends about \$3.2 billion for every 1 percent increase in forecast skill. This means that the auctioning off of about \$2 billion worth of 5G radio spectrum may ultimately set back weather forecasting by about \$9 billion, strictly in terms of the investment put into forecasting.

Another option would be to develop artificial intelligence approaches to recover lost or corrupted data from the microwave sounders, much as NOAA did when there was a satellite sensor that malfunctioned in 2018.

All of this effort would be aimed at ensuring that the next time a Category 5 storm like Dorian moves to within striking distance of the U.S. coastline, officials and the public can still trust the forecast, while enjoying the potential benefits of 5G.

FBI investigating alleged hacking attempt into mobile voting app during 2018 midterms (CNN)

CNN [10/1/2019 8:01 PM, Kevin Collier, 6094K]

The FBI is investigating after someone allegedly tried to hack into West Virginia's mobile voting app during the 2018 midterm elections.

One or more people allegedly attempted to hack into Voatz, an experimental app that lets voters who are active military or registered to vote abroad cast their votes from their phones, Mike Stuart, the US attorney for the Southern District of West Virginia, announced Tuesday.

Stuart said in a statement that "there was no intrusion and the integrity of votes and the election system was not compromised," but that an investigation had begun, was "ongoing and no legal conclusions whatsoever have been made regarding the conduct of the activity or whether any federal laws were violated."

West Virginia is the only state that currently allows for the system, though it's been used

and is being considered in several cities and counties across the country.

"We just noticed a certain group of people from a certain part of the country tried to access the system. We stopped them, caught them and reported them to the authorities," Voatz co-founder and CEO Nimit Sawhney told CNN.

"Somebody downloaded, registered and then tried to tamper with it, do something. We caught unauthorized activity, and they immediately got stopped," Sawhney said. He said he did not think the culprit was a sophisticated nation-state hacker looking to disrupt the election. Because Sawhney caught the activity last October, and elections are considered critical infrastructure, he felt he needed to report the incident to the FBI.

Mobile voting -- in Voatz's case, it uses blockchain technology to verify users' choice -- is extremely controversial among election security experts. Many point out that standard voting machines are required to be disconnected from the internet, and that even if an app passes a security audit, it is significantly more vulnerable to hacking than an isolated voting machine. And if a smartphone is hacked with a sophisticated exploit, a hacker might have free rein over any app on it.

West Virginia Secretary of State Mac Warner has defended his office's use of the technology as a way to get around the significant difficulties military and overseas voters have in casting ballots from abroad.

"This announcement today is to warn people that any attempt to hack an election will be fully investigated by the FBI and turned over to prosecutors when appropriate," Warner said at a news conference announcing the investigation. "I want to assure everyone in West Virginia that absolutely no penetration occurred, no votes were changed and the integrity of the elections in West Virginia was absolutely secure. Our security systems worked completely as designed."

[Turkey] Erdogan says Turkey has no choice but go its own way on Syria safe zone (Reuters)

Reuters [10/1/2019 9:42 AM, Nevzat Devranoglu, 5436K]

Turkey has no choice but to act alone given too little progress has been made with the United States forming a "safe zone" in northeastern Syria, President Tayyip Erdogan said on Tuesday in his most direct indication of a cross-border offensive.

After eight years of war in neighboring Syria, Ankara and NATO ally Washington have agreed to establish a zone along 480 km (300 miles) of the border that Turkey wants to be 30 km deep.

Under the Turkish plan, up to 2 million Syrian refugees would be settled in the area that would be cleared of the Syrian Kurdish YPG militia, which Ankara deems a terrorist organization.

Since agreeing to set up the zone in northern Syria, Turkey has repeatedly warned of unilateral military action if efforts do not meet its expectations, saying it would not tolerate any attempts by Washington to stall the process.

It set an end-September deadline for action.

"We have not achieved any of the results we desired in the east of the Euphrates. Turkey cannot lose even a single day on this issue. There is no other choice but to act on our own," Erdogan said at the parliament's opening ceremony in Ankara.

"We plan to settle two million people in the safe zones we will establish. We calculated the costs and we will carry out efforts to improve. We will start taking steps as soon as the region is saved from the invasion of terror," he said.

While diplomats, analysts and Turkey's main opposition say Ankara would be unwilling to anger Washington with a military incursion as the allies try to repair strained ties, Erdogan's comments on Tuesday marked the clearest indication of an offensive in the region.

He added that Turkey aimed to host an "international donors meeting" to get funding for its plans in the area, which he said would stretch from the Euphrates River in Syria east to the Iraqi border.

Erdogan has repeatedly called on Turkey's allies to provide financial support for the plans, including in his speech at the United Nations last month. But Ankara is unlikely to receive a response for any plan that settles people hundreds of kilometers from their homes and alters the demographics of northeast Syria.

[Iran] Iran sentences man to death for spying for the CIA (Washington Post)

Washington Post [10/1/2019 7:00 AM, Sarah Dadouch, 9425K]

Iran has sentenced one person to death and three others to 10 years in prison on accusations of spying for the United States and Britain, the state-run judicial news agency reported on Monday.

The person sentenced to death was not named but he was described as someone spying for the CIA "whose range of espionage activities has been vast." The sentence was automatically appealed to the Supreme Court, Mizan news agency reported.

Two other men, Ali Nafariyeh and Mohammed Ali Babapour, are also charged with spying for the CIA, and received 10 years in prison and a fine of \$55,000, which the judicial spokesman said was the amount paid to them by the American intelligence agency.

Mohammed Amin Nasab, charged with spying for the British government, was also given a 10 year sentence.

The spokesman said the individuals were all arrested last year, the semiofficial Tasnim news agency said.

At the same conference, it was announced that President Hassan Rouhani's brother, Hossein Fereydoun, had been sentenced to five years in prison, and may face additional charges in another case, the official IRNA news agency reported. The initial sentence was seven years, and was reduced by two years after it went through the appeals court.

Fereydoun was convicted in May for corruption charges. The recent charges were “money-laundering related,” IRNA reported, but gave no further explanation.

In July, Iran said that its intelligence forces identified and arrested 17 Iranians suspected of spying for the CIA and that some of them were sentenced to death. President Trump denied Iran’s claim that it had dismantled an elaborate U.S. spy ring.

It is unclear if the four whose sentences were announced on Tuesday are among the 17 or not.

Tensions have been high recently between the Washington and Tehran. Iran released a British-flagged oil tanker in the Strait of Hormuz last week after holding it for two months amid a standoff over security in the Persian Gulf region.

The United States also blamed Iran for attacks on commercial tankers in the area, as well as a complex attack on Saudi oil facilities last month, which Saudi Arabia’s state-run oil giant Aramco said caused a suspension of 5.7 million barrels of crude. Iran has denied both charges.

[Iran] US commander discussed Iranian threats with Saudi counterpart (The Hill)

The Hill [10/1/2019 8:57 AM, Zack Budryk, 2806K]

U.S. Naval Forces Central Command said its commander, Vice Admiral Jim Malloy, visited Riyadh to discuss Iran with his Saudi counterpart, Vice Admiral Fahad bin Abdullah Al-Ghofaily, over the weekend.

The U.S. has blamed Iran for a Sept. 14 drone attack on two Saudi oil facilities, with Tehran denying responsibility. Iran-backed Houthi rebels based in Yemen have taken credit for the bombing, which initially knocked out about 5 percent of the global oil supply.

Saudi Arabia is one of several U.S. allies to take the U.S. up on a call to form a naval coalition to protect oil tankers in the Strait of Hormuz from what the U.S. calls Iranian aggression.

In a statement, the command said Malloy and Ghofaily discussed the Royal Saudi Naval Forces’ (RSNF) part in defending against “Iranian aggression” in the region.

“Engaging and operating closely with regional counterparts is essential to maintain deterrence,” Malloy said in a statement.

“Saudi Arabia has been a key ally in promoting regional security, and Vice Admiral Gofaily’s leadership and partnership is key as we coordinate defense of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia as well as all regional partners and those nations across the globe who rely on maritime commerce in and out of the Middle East,” Malloy added.

“This visit was an opportunity to discuss our mutual efforts going forward to coordinate defense against provocation and attack.”

Iran and Saudi Arabia's rivalry has also played out in the ongoing Yemen conflict, where the Saudis have led a bombing campaign against the Iran-backed rebels.

[Ukraine] State Department greenlights new missile sale for Ukraine (Politico)

Politico [10/1/2019 6:54 PM, Jacqueline Feldscher and Connor O'Brien, 2512K]

The State Department has approved a new sale of Javelin anti-tank missiles to Ukraine for \$39 million to help deter Russia, just days after the request played a role in initiating the impeachment inquiry of President Donald Trump.

The approval, which has not yet been made public but was confirmed by a Senate Foreign Relations Committee aide, comes amid concerns that Trump withheld separate military aid to Kiev this summer to compel Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky to investigate former Vice President Joe Biden and his son Hunter.

Zelensky asked Trump for the Javelins during a July 25 phone call, to which the president responded by asking for a "favor" and reiterating his request for Ukraine to investigate his political rival.

The conversation took place a week after Trump ordered the Pentagon and State Department to halt all military aid to Ukraine, over the objections of both departments and his national security team.

The new arms deal, which includes 150 of the portable tank-busting weapons made by a joint venture between Raytheon and Lockheed Martin, has been in the works since before that. The U.S. Embassy in Ukraine announced that Ukraine requested the weapons on July 7.

The transaction, which was first reported by Bloomberg, follows the sale of 210 missiles and 37 launchers in March 2018 for \$47 million.

A State Department spokesperson said that the department won't "comment on or confirm potential defense sales and transfers until they have been formally notified to Congress." Congress has 30 days to object once it receives official notification.

The Javelins have played a central role in the steady U.S. effort to provide military support and training to the Ukrainians since the Russian invasion of the Crimean Peninsula in 2014.

In addition to the weapons sales, the United States has provided \$1.5 billion in military assistance to Ukraine between 2014 and June 2019, according to an updated analysis from the nonpartisan Congressional Research Service.

[Ukraine] Trump admin approves new sale of anti-tank weapons to Ukraine (ABC News)

ABC News [10/1/2019 6:27 PM, Luis Martinez, Conor Finegan, and Elizabeth McLaughlin, 2702K]

The Trump administration has approved the \$39 million sale of defensive lethal weapons to Ukraine, according to two U.S. officials and another source familiar with the plan.

U.S. arms sales to Ukraine have become embroiled in a controversy over President Donald Trump's dealings with Ukraine, after the White House ordered nearly \$400 million in military assistance to Ukraine to be withheld and Ukraine's new president raised arms sales with Trump on a controversial July 25 call.

The new package will include Javelin anti-tank weapons, with one U.S. official saying it includes 150 missiles and two launchers, which was first reported by Bloomberg News.

The State Department declined to comment on potential arms sales, but it will formally notify Capitol Hill of the sale soon, according to all three sources. The sale is expected to receive approval from Congress, which stipulated that they also receive a briefing on arms sales to Ukraine, according to one official and the source familiar with the plan. That briefing could happen as soon as this week.

The sale of Javelins is not part of the nearly \$400 million of military assistance that the White House had ordered the State Department and Pentagon to withhold a week before Trump's call with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy. That aid, which has since been released, included assistance for maritime security, special operations units, secure communications and light weapons like sniper rifles and rocket-propelled grenade launchers.

But Javelins were discussed on Trump and Zelenskyy's call on July 25, which has prompted an impeachment inquiry.

"We are ready to continue to cooperate for the next steps, specifically we are almost ready to buy more Javelins from the United States for defense purposes," Zelenskyy told Trump, according to a memo of the call released by the White House on Sept. 25.

"I would like you to do us a favor though," Trump responded, asking Zelenskyy to work with his personal lawyer Rudy Giuliani to investigate CrowdStrike -- an apparent reference to what has repeatedly been described as a debunked conspiracy around the 2016 presidential election that posits that the Democratic National Convention's server, which was hacked by Russian intelligence, is missing and in Ukraine.

The Trump administration first approved the sale of Javelins to Ukraine in December 2017 - a step that former President Barack Obama never took and that Trump allies have pointed to as a sign of Trump's toughness on Russia. Ukraine has been fighting Russian-armed and led separatists in its eastern provinces since 2014, shortly after Russia illegally occupied and annexed Crimea, in a war that has claimed approximately 13,000 lives and displaced 1.5 million people, according to the Ukrainian government.

That first sale, which was completed in March 2018, included 210 Javelin missiles and 37 launch units and was intended to "help Ukraine build its long-term defense capacity to defend its sovereignty and territorial integrity in order to meet its national defense requirements," according to the Defense Security Cooperation Agency.

U.S. officials, including special envoy for Ukraine Kurt Volker who resigned last week for his role in the Giuliani effort, have said since that sale that they are in discussions with Ukraine about selling it more Javelins.

On July 7, William Taylor, the top diplomat at the U.S. embassy in Kyiv, announced that Ukraine had requested to purchase military equipment. One month later, charge d'affaires Taylor told Radio Free Liberty/Radio Europe that Ukraine specifically had asked for more Javelins.

[China] Missiles, drones and tanks: China shows off military prowess (Breitbart)

Breitbart [9/30/2019 10:18 PM, AFP, 2034K]

China put its growing military might on full display Tuesday with a parade of new ballistic missiles, supersonic drones and next-generation battlefield tanks that highlighted Beijing's accelerating race to match the firepower of its US rival.

The tightly choreographed procession across Tiananmen Square underscored a level of material and technological innovation that is increasingly viewed by many as a threat to US dominance in the Asia-Pacific region and beyond.

President Xi Jinping, who reviewed the troops before the parade marking 70 years of Communist Party rule, has pushed for the People's Liberation Army to become a "world-class" military by mid-century.

China's rapid military modernisation comes as it faces rising diplomatic tensions with the United States, with Washington worried about Beijing's territorial claims in the South China Sea and its ambitions to reunify self-governed Taiwan with the mainland.

Some 15,000 PLA soldiers marched, while 580 pieces of military hardware rolled across the square and 160 aircraft buzzed overhead as Xi and other party leaders looked on.

One of the standout new additions on display was the intercontinental ballistic missile DF-41, which can possibly carry up to 10 nuclear warheads and reach any point in the United States.

According to state news agency Xinhua, the Dongfeng-41 missiles are "the mainstay of China's strategic nuclear strength".

Another star at the parade was the ballistic missile JL-2, which can be fired from a submarine and is equipped with a nuclear charge.

Its supposed range of 8,000 kilometres (5,000 miles) would allow it to reach Alaska and parts of the western United States, according to military information company Jane's.

A new cruise missile, the DF-100, is reputed to travel beyond the speed of sound and be able to neutralise aircraft carriers.

The short-to-medium-range DF-17 missile made its public debut. It is believed to be capable of releasing a "hypersonic glider" from the edge of space, with a tough-to-predict trajectory.

For the first time, Beijing showed off its WZ-8 drone, a supersonic reconnaissance unmanned aerial vehicle that could potentially be deployed by aircraft.

Anti-terrorist assault vehicles and armoured anti-riot vehicles from the Falcon Commando Unit also rolled through the square, which Xinhua said was “mainly used to crack down on terrorism and violence” and used for “dealing with emergencies and fighting riots”.

The parade also featured new-generation main battlefield 99A tanks.

Xinhua said 40 percent of the weaponry displayed at the parade was new and all the armaments were made domestically.

Adam Ni, an expert on China’s military modernisation at Macquarie University in Sydney, told AFP the parade showed a “substantial progress of China’s nuclear forces”.

“Its nuclear arms are increasingly more mobile, resilient, reliable, precise, and technologically advanced,” he said.

“They are also more diversified: China is transitioning its nuclear force from a reliance on land-based to one that is also sea-based and air-based, using submarines and stealth bombers.”

Xi said in a speech to kick off the parade that China only seeks “peaceful development” and that the two-million-strong PLA will “firmly uphold world peace”.

“This display of nuclear weapons doesn’t signal a change in China’s nuclear strategy,” said Cui Yiliang, editor-in-chief of industry magazine “Modern warships”.

“It will continue to have a small but effective nuclear arsenal. The goal is to have a nuclear deterrent and be able to conduct a second strike in retaliation in case of an attack by a third country,” Cui said.

In July Beijing outlined a national defence plan to build a modern, high-tech army.

China’s defence spending is second only to the United States — though it still lags far behind — and it said earlier this year it planned to raise it by 7.5 percent in 2019, though the increase in expenditure has slowed as the economy has cooled in recent years.

In March Beijing said it would spend 1.19 trillion yuan (\$177.6 billion) on defence in 2019, after it increased its outlay by 8.1 percent to 1.11 trillion yuan in 2018, according to a government report presented at the start of the annual meeting of the National People’s Congress (NPC).

A report in April by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute found China’s military spending has risen 83 percent since 2009, bringing it up to second place, ahead of Saudi Arabia, India and France.

According to the report, the US figure alone of \$649 billion in 2018 was as much as the next eight highest military budgets.

James Char, a military expert at Singapore’s Nanyang Technological University, warned

there is still some way before China is as big a military technological power as the US.

“Actual martial prowess is not as easily showcased as displaying military hardware,” he said.

“So showing off these weapons — some of them probably still prototypes — at the parade has to be the easiest method for the Chinese Communist Party regime to showcase the country’s military might to the world,” Char said.

[China] In a Forever Trade War, U.S. Companies Take Cover as Best They Can (Bloomberg)

Bloomberg [10/1/2019 6:00 AM, Michael Sasso, 5350K]

Happy Gorilla Game Studio was staring at ruin this summer even before its first board game was unloaded off the boat from China.

Chip Boyd and Neil Gilstrap, co-founders of the crowd-funded startup in the niche world of Dungeons and Dragons-style pastimes, had promised backers early copies of War for Indagar, a demon-laden fantasy.

They hadn’t anticipated tariffs on Chinese imports. As they waited for their boards, special dice and figurines of the Bright Lord and Grinning Tyrant to arrive, they feared they would have to ask backers for more money, eat the \$4,300 in tariffs themselves or roll the costs into their next project and potentially doom it.

“There was very little chance of digging out of that hole,” said Boyd, who is based in Virginia.

Businesses across America are straining to cope with import taxes and protectionism under the Trump administration, which next week hosts senior Chinese officials for the highest level talks since July — and just days before another threatened tariff increase.

For Happy Gorilla, a company built on fun, the levies meant a joyless summer. Elsewhere, an Italian manufacturer of factory machinery bought a Colorado subsidiary to ensure a toehold in the market. A crib manufacturer dumped parts of its product line that no longer made financial sense. And a decor-maker in California hunted for elusive upside.

Some U.S. businesses are warning they may close if they don’t get a yearlong reprieve, or “exclusion,” from tariffs that by year-end may touch some \$500 billion in Chinese imports, said Paula Connelly, a Boston trade lawyer.

“It’s going to be hard to say no to someone who says, ‘Unless I get this exclusion, I’m gong to have to shut down,’” Connelly said.

Bloomberg spoke with companies across the country to see how they’re coping with uncertainty.

Colossal video games like Fortnite grab attention, but lower-tech gamers are up all night playing things like War for Indagar. Hobbyists have backed them to the tune of \$700 million

since 2009, Kickstarter reports, and games are the crowdfunding platform's biggest category by dollars pledged.

Ultimately, Happy Gorilla escaped its fate when President Donald Trump delayed tariffs on some consumer products until Dec. 15, and the company has been sending copies to supporters at the promised price. Still, the industry fears that a 15% tariff set to hit toys and other consumer goods in December, may later rise to 30%. "It changes week to week, kind of on a whim," said Scott Gaeta of San Diego, California-based Renegade Game Studios.

A 30% tariff could cripple games, which typically sell for \$40 or \$50, Gaeta said. Renegade is ordering extra copies of its best-selling titles for storage ahead of the December tariffs, such as the medieval village-building game Architects of the West Kingdom. Others are considering delaying or nixing new games with lots of miniature plastic pieces, which carry higher price points and thus more risk.

Renegade is a midsize studio and will ride out the tariffs, but smaller shops "might not be working on the best margins to begin with. Tack on these tariffs, and you'll have a lot of them underwater," Gaeta said.

Last year, executives at SCM Group S.p.A., an Italian manufacturer of furniture-making machines, heard the tough talk with alarm: Trump was threatening retaliation against the European Union over what he saw as unfair trade. Meanwhile, domestic cabinet makers were pressing the International Trade Commission to punish Chinese cabinet makers for what they said was dumping in the U.S.

SCM makes many of its computerized cutting devices in Rimini, a picturesque town on the Adriatic Sea. Spooked, SCM last October purchased a Colorado company that also makes routers, Diversified Machine Systems, for an undisclosed sum. The move lets the Italian firm target new industries, offer cheaper machines — SCM's average order price is around \$150,000 — and reduce foreign-exchange risks. But it also gave it a hedge against the unknown.

Its new American unit can be a base for future expansion, "and it makes us more independent from the risk of an increase in export duties," Chief Executive Officer Andrea Aureli said by email.

Other foreign companies are considering similar moves, said John Ling, a consultant from Greenville, South Carolina, who helps Chinese companies invest in U.S. factories. Ling is fielding many more calls lately from companies considering a presence. Holding them back: worry over the Trump administration's moves to curb immigration and foreign visas.

Some 90% of safety-related baby gear comes from Asia, mostly from China, according to the Juvenile Products Manufacturers Association. The U.S. Trade Representative left car seats off the tariff list after makers argued parents would use outdated models. But companies like Vancouver-based Storkcraft Manufacturing Inc. are stumped by the decision to keep cribs — a key safety concern among parents.

"It doesn't make sense to me," said Adam Segal, the chief executive officer.

With sales north of \$100 million, Storkcraft sells furniture and cribs under its own brand online and in big-box retailers, and produces Graco-branded products. It has tried to find suppliers outside China, “but it is difficult, if not impossible, to replicate the infrastructure, safety and capacity,” Segal said.

For now, it has bumped up the price of a popular \$199 crib by \$40 apiece and seen sales of some models decline. It has discontinued products that weren’t selling at the new, higher price points, he said. Some manufacturers are petitioning for a one-year reprieve, said Lisa Trofe, managing director of the Juvenile Products Manufacturers Association.

Jonathan Bass got an eight-year head start on shifting production out of China, but while everyone else races to Vietnam and Malaysia, he moved closer to home. His company, PTM Images, designs mirrors, frames and wall art for retailers such as TJ Maxx and Bloomingdale’s from its studio in West Hollywood, California. Bass had sourced goods from China until 2011, when he grew dismayed at his supplier’s willingness to skirt California’s environmental regulations. That year, he opened his own factory in a Mexican border town south of Arizona.

The move yielded shorter shipping times, but his worker costs have been higher than they would’ve been in China, even with the latter country’s run-up in wages. Bass pays his workers around \$4.50 an hour, where comparable workers in China might expect \$3.60, according to market researcher Euromonitor. Bass also wasn’t expecting energy costs in Mexico to be as high as they are, and so he schedules shifts during off-peak power usage times.

“You can’t play low-cost in Mexico in comparison to low-cost in China or low-cost in Vietnam,” Bass said.

Bass has tried to improve his margins by adding production of high-end furniture, under the Badgley Mischka brand, at his Mexican wall decor factory. Meantime, he sees the 25% duties on Chinese furniture and wall decor as putting his factory on a even footing, even if China’s moves to devalue its currency offset some tariffs.

“It makes everyone more competitive, but the issue is, are they staying?” Bass said. “Will there be a flip-flop? No one is secure in the direction of where we’re going.”

[China] White House links Huawei and ZTE to Chinese Muslim ‘concentration camps’ (Washington Examiner)

Washington Examiner [10/1/2019 4:03 PM, Rob Crilly, 855K]

The White House has accused telecom giants Huawei and ZTE of complicity with “concentration camps” in China, where it claims more than three million Muslims are imprisoned.

The Trump administration is a strident critic of Beijing’s mass detention of Muslim Uighur minority and other Muslim groups, frequently describing the detention facilities in terms normally associated with Nazi Germany.

The latest condemnation, made during a call in which senior administration officials briefed

reporters, coincided with China's celebrations marking 70 years of communist rule.

Sauli Niinistö, president of Finland, is due to meet President Trump at the White House Wednesday. A senior administration official said the two "Arctic nations" would discuss China's growing ambitions in the region and ways to improve 5G alternatives to those offered by companies such as Huawei.

"Finland is home to Nokia, which has quickly developed 5G technology that is at least on par with that of Huawei and ZTE, and presents one of the viable alternatives for those countries that cherish privacy of their citizens' data, of the integrity of their networks, the security of their critical infrastructure, and knowing that they're not doing business with companies such as Huawei and ZTE that are involved in the modern-day concentration camps of over 3 million Muslims," said one of the officials

Washington is spearheading a campaign to persuade international allies to exclude Huawei from next-generation 5G networks. Senior intelligence officials have long warned that the company, which has close ties to the Chinese Communist Party, represents a security risk. ZTE is a Chinese telecommunications equipment company.

Human rights groups accuse Beijing of detaining more than a million members of the Uighur minority in "reeducation" camps, mostly in Xinjiang province. Authorities claim the detentions are essential for halting the spread of religious extremism and terrorism, but critics say the detainees' only crime is being Muslim.

Mike Pompeo, secretary of state, recently described the crackdown as the "stain of the century."

[China] California Resident Caught in FBI Sting, Charged with Spying for China (Breitbart)

Breitbart [10/1/2019 6:35 PM, John Hayward, 2034K]

The Justice Department on Monday announced espionage charges against Xuehua Peng, also known as Edward Peng, a 56-year-old resident of Hayward, California, charged with giving classified U.S. national security information to agents of the People's Republic of China (PRC).

Assistant Attorney General of National Security John C. Demers said on Monday that Peng's arrest "exposes and disrupts an operation" by Chinese intelligence officers to harvest classified material without setting foot on U.S. soil.

"Coming on top of our many recent Chinese espionage cases – involving both national defense and intellectual property information – this case illustrates the seriousness of Chinese espionage efforts and the determination of the United States to thwart them," said Demers.

According to the unsealed charges, Peng used "dead drops" to obtain secure digital cards stuffed with classified information and personally delivered the cards to Chinese intelligence agents in Beijing. He obtained the classified data from an unnamed "confidential human source" who was paid for his or her efforts by Peng.

Peng allegedly tested his espionage system with a dry run in June 2015, picking up an empty package left by his source at the front desk of a hotel, before making at least five live dead drops using the hotel strategy. In each case, Peng booked a hotel room, passed a room key along to the source, and left an envelope with \$10,000 or \$20,000 in the room as payment. The source took the money and left an SD card full of stolen data tucked inside a book or taped to the inside of a drawer, which Peng collected and delivered to Beijing.

The indictment stated that Peng was under the control of Chinese Ministry of State Security (MSS) agents during these activities, which ran from October 2015 to June 2018. According to the indictment, Peng's source for classified info was in fact a "double agent," his dead drops were captured with hidden cameras, and his communications with the MSS were intercepted.

CBS News reported on Monday that Peng came to the U.S. on a business visa in 2001, got married and became a legal permanent resident in 2006, and was naturalized in 2012. He ostensibly worked as a tour guide for Chinese visitors who wanted to see San Francisco. The Justice Department described him as a trained Chinese intelligence agent. If he is convicted, the charges against him could carry up to 10 years in prison plus \$250,000 in fines.

"The Chinese are the number one intelligence threat to the United States right now. No question. The Russians are up there for sure, but the Chinese are number one," Demers told NBC News in an interview on Monday.

Demers told NBC the FBI allowed Peng to keep making his dead drops for years so they could study Chinese spycraft and track the progress of the "carefully curated" data the source passed along to the Chinese Ministry of State Security.

He said the Justice Department wanted Peng's arrest to "send a message to anyone else who may be acting in this capacity on behalf of the Chinese government" that "you could get caught" and Chinese intelligence is putting their lives at risk.

[North Korea] North Korea tests missile soon after announcing resumption of nuclear talks with U.S. (Washington Post)

Washington Post [10/1/2019 10:34 PM, Simon Denyer and Min Joo Kim, 9425K]

North Korea and the United States will resume negotiations Saturday, marking the first official talks between the two sides since President Trump met Kim Jong Un in June, the North Korean government announced Tuesday.

But North Korea followed up that announcement by launching at least one ballistic missile from the sea off its eastern coast on Wednesday morning.

South Korea's presidential Blue House said it "placed weight on the possibility" the missile was launched from a submarine. Japan's government said it had detected two ballistic missiles and said one may have landed in the waters of its Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ).

Earlier, State Department spokeswoman Morgan Ortagus told reporters that officials from

the two countries plan to meet “within the next week.”

North Korean Vice Foreign Minister Choe Son Hui said the two countries “agreed to hold a working-level discussion on October 5th, following a preliminary contact on the 4th,” according to a statement carried by the state-run Korean Central News Agency.

“I expect the working-level talks to accelerate positive developments in DPRK-U.S. relations,” Choe said, using the initials of her country’s official name, the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea. “Our representatives are ready to attend the working-level talks with the United States.”

But on Wednesday morning, North Korea continued with what has been a series of missile tests. South Korea’s Joint Chiefs of Staff said North Korea had fired a ballistic missile from the sea northeast of the city of Wonsan, saying it had flown a distance of 280 miles, to an altitude of about 570 miles.

Japan’s government said the launch appeared to involve two ballistic missiles, and that one may have fallen inside its EEZ. Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe told reporters the launch violated U.N. Security Council resolutions, adding “we strongly condemn and protest the act.”

The missile test was a reminder of North Korea’s military capabilities, and an indication that it intends to drive a hard bargain in the talks, experts said. It can also be seen as an implicit threat – that if it doesn’t get what it wants in the negotiations, it could ratchet tensions up higher.

South Korea said it presumed the missile was a Pukkuksong type. Ankit Panda, a nuclear expert at the Federation of American Scientists, said it was likely to be the Pukkuksong-3, a new submarine-launched ballistic missile that has been under development for a while. Earlier this year, Kim Jong Un was also seen inspecting a new submarine thought to be capable of firing ballistic missiles.

“It shows Kim Jong Un is making progress on developing the sea leg of his nuclear forces,” said Panda. “It’s clear the sea leg isn’t just a vanity project or a prestige project, but they see it as something worth spending resources on, to improve their deterrence in a crisis.”

Panda said the timing of the launch was probably an attempt to increase North Korea’s bargaining power in the talks with the United States, as well as a protest against South Korea’s display this week of new F-35 stealth fighters obtained from the United States, and Japan’s plans to deploy the Aegis Ashore missile defense system.

North Korea’s statement did not say where the talks would take place.

Negotiations between the two countries’ diplomats have been frozen since the breakdown of a summit between Trump and Kim in Hanoi in February. Another meeting between the two leaders at the demilitarized zone between the two Koreas in June was supposed to lead to a resumption of negotiations, but the stalemate persisted until now.

Meanwhile, North Korea has conducted short-range ballistic missile tests, while complaining

bitterly about joint military exercises carried out by the United States and South Korea. On Monday, North Korea blamed the stalling of the dialogue on Washington and Seoul, accusing them of failing to keep their promises.

North Korean Ambassador Kim Song told the U.N. General Assembly that it was up to the United States whether negotiations “will become a window of opportunity or an occasion that will hasten the crisis.”

“The situation on the Korean Peninsula has not come out of the vicious cycle of increased tension, which is entirely attributable to the political and military provocations perpetrated by the U.S.,” the ambassador said.

North Korea has also insisted that talks will succeed only if the United States takes a different approach than its tack in Hanoi, but it has been careful not to criticize Trump directly.

Indeed, the North Korean Foreign Ministry also said last week that Trump is “different from his predecessors in political sense and decision” and that it hoped he would make a wise, bold decision.

Experts said Pyongyang saw a potential opening for progress before next year’s U.S. election campaign.

“As this year draws to an end, Kim Jong Un is trying to speed up the nuclear talks,” said Yang Moo-jin, a professor at the University of North Korean Studies in Seoul. “Next year, the United States will have its presidential election, and South Korea will have a legislative election. Kim’s strategy could be to have his third meeting with President Trump before next year to get the best result ahead of the elections race.”

Leif-Eric Easley, a professor at Ewha University in Seoul, said the removal of John Bolton as White House national security adviser last month might have encouraged North Korea to think it could win sanctions relief by making a deal with Trump. Bolton had consistently held a hard line on North Korea.

In return, Easley said, Pyongyang might offer concessions, such as an unverifiable freeze on nuclear weapons production, that Trump could present as a symbolic victory.

“With Bolton out of the administration and the U.S. Congress talking impeachment, Pyongyang sees an opportunity,” Easley said.

On Monday, in his first public remarks since being fired, Bolton called North Korea’s nuclear weapons a “grave and growing threat” and said he did not believe Kim would give them up voluntarily.

[North Korea] North Korea launches missile into waters near Japan days before nuclear talks set to resume with U.S. (Los Angeles Times)

Los Angeles Times [10/1/2019 11:09 PM, Victoria Kim, 3575K]

North Korea fired a ballistic missile Wednesday that landed in the Sea of Japan, also known

as the East Sea, less than 200 miles from the Japanese coast, according to the South Korean military and the Japanese coast guard.

The launch came a day after North Korea said it would resume nuclear talks with the U.S. this weekend. The last time a North Korean missile landed in Japan's exclusive economic zone was November 2017.

The missile, which flew 280 miles and reached a height of 565 miles, originated in the waters northeast of Wonsan, North Korea, and may have been launched from a submarine, according to the South Korean Joint Chiefs of Staff.

In July, North Korean state media published photographs of leader Kim Jong Un at a shipyard inspecting a newly built submarine that it said would boost the country's military capabilities.

A senior U.S. official told CNN the White House was aware of reports of the launch and was monitoring the situation and consulting with allies.

North Korea has conducted more than 10 test launches of missiles or projectiles since talks with the U.S. fell apart during President Trump's February summit with Kim in Vietnam.

Trump has said repeatedly that those tests were "standard" and not a threat or a breach of trust between himself and Kim.

But Trump's recently ousted national security adviser, John Bolton, said in a speech Monday that each test was a violation of United Nations Security Council sanctions imposed on North Korea.

"When the United States ... says we really don't care, other countries can draw the conclusion that they don't really care about the sanctions," he said at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington.

Bolton, a longtime hawk on North Korea who has advocated for military intervention, said Kim had not made a decision to give up nuclear weapons.

In announcing the resumption of working-level talks, Choe Son Hui, North Korea's vice minister of foreign affairs, said in a statement Tuesday that she expected they would "accelerate the positive development" between the two countries.

A U.S. State Department spokeswoman confirmed the same day that there were plans for high-level delegations from the United States and North Korea to meet "within the next week."

The announcement followed a recent statement from Kim Kye Gwan, a North Korea Foreign Ministry advisor, blaming the U.S. for the stalled talks while appearing to single out Trump.

"I came to know that President Trump is different from his predecessors in political sense and decision while watching his approach to the DPRK," he said, using his country's official name, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. "So I would like to place my hope on

President Trump's wise option and bold decision."

The negotiations would be aimed at bridging the gaping difference between the two sides that became clear at the Vietnam summit. North Korea was only willing to offer up the dismantling of its main nuclear complex, Yongbyon, while Trump said the U.S. wanted to discuss other secret facilities.

North Korea demanded immediate relief from the most severe economic sanctions imposed as punishment for its nuclear and ballistic missile testing. The U.S. has insisted denuclearization must come first.

Bolton had said North Korea should hand over its nuclear weapons and fissile material to the United States the way Libya did in early 2004 in exchange for normalized relations and relief from sanctions. North Korea has bristled at the suggestion, pointing to Libya's eventual regime collapse and leader Moammar Kadafi's demise.

[North Korea] North Korea Tests Trump's Limits With Submarine Missile Launch (Bloomberg)

Bloomberg [10/2/2019 4:32 AM, Jihye Lee and Emi Nobuhiro, 5350K]

North Korea fired what appeared to be a ballistic missile designed for submarines, testing President Donald Trump's tolerance for weapons tests just hours after agreeing to restart stalled nuclear talks with the U.S.

The South Korean military said the missile was fired near North Korea's eastern Wonsan area just after 7 a.m. Wednesday and flew 910 kilometers (570 miles) into space before falling in the sea. Japanese Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga said the missile may have separated during flight, with at least one piece falling in the country's exclusive economic zone near the southwestern prefecture of Shimane.

"The launch of this type of ballistic missile is a violation of United Nations resolutions," Prime Minister Shinzo Abe told reporters in an emergency news briefing. "Japan strongly protests and condemns the action."

The South Korean defense ministry said it couldn't confirm whether the missile was launched at sea or from a land-based site.

The missile was the longest-range weapon that Kim Jong Un's regime has tested since his last intercontinental ballistic missile test in November 2017, a move that may be designed to increase its bargaining leverage. The U.S. president has so far shrugged off a recent flurry of shorter-range missiles launches, with the State Department saying Tuesday that the two sides had agreed to resume working-level talks this week.

"North Korea is always trying to push the boundaries of what the international community will accept as far as they can go," said Mintaro Oba, a former U.S. diplomat who worked on Korean Peninsula issues. "Timing launches at moments when the United States is less likely to object certainly meets that goal."

The State Department on Wednesday called on North Korea "to refrain from provocations,"

abide by UN Security Council resolutions, engage in negotiations and work toward the denuclearization on the Korean Peninsula.

The test comes after former National Security Advisor John Bolton, a target of Pyongyang's ire during his time in Trump's White House, said Monday in Washington the U.S. can't "simply pretend" North Korea is making progress toward denuclearizing, adding Kim will never give up his nuclear stockpile without more pressure.

The talks were the first sign of movement since Kim and Trump met on the North Korean border on June 30. The two sides have made little progress since agreeing last year to "work toward complete denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula," as Kim seeks more sanctions relief than the U.S. is prepared to offer.

Pyongyang has repeatedly criticized Seoul for accepting high-tech American weapons such as F-35 stealth fighters. The advanced "fifth-generation" fighter jet made its public debut in the country Tuesday.

Kim has fired off at least 20 missiles in 11 different military tests since breaking a testing-freeze in May. The launches have included blasts from multiple rocket launchers and a new short-range ballistic missile known as the KN-23, which analysts said is nuclear-warhead capable, can strike all of South Korea and is designed to evade U.S. missile shields.

A launch of a submarine-based missile could demonstrate Kim's progress toward a two-pronged nuclear deterrent capable of quick strikes on the U.S. and its allies from mobile launchers on land and hard-to-track submarines. If confirmed, Wednesday's launch will have been the first time the regime has fired a missile specifically designed for deployment at sea since 2016.

South Korea said the missile tested Wednesday may have been from the Pukguksong group of submarine-launched weapons, which have ranges in excess of 1,000 kilometers. David Wright, co-director of the Union of Concerned Scientists, said based on details released about its flight, the missile could have a maximum range of about 1,900 kilometers.

The few pieces of information available suggest it could be a new solid-fuel missile known as the Pukguksong-3, according to Ankit Panda, an adjunct senior fellow at the Defense Posture Project for the Federation of American Scientists.

The test comes about two months after Kim inspected a new submarine that he said would soon be deployed to waters between his country and Japan, although weapons experts said the vessel appeared not yet ready for use.

"North Korea had been rolling out images of a new submarine over the past few weeks, and is of course interested in creating as survivable a nuclear deterrent as possible," said Scott Harold, a senior political scientist for RAND Corp. "Nothing here suggests that they are in any way interested in complying with the sanctions regime or preparing to negotiate away their strategic capabilities."

[North Korea] North Korea launches missiles ahead of nuclear talks (Breitbart)

Breitbart [10/1/2019 1:57 PM, AFP, 2034K]

North Korea fired two missiles into the sea on Wednesday, a day after Washington and Pyongyang announced they would resume stalled nuclear talks later this week.

One of the projectiles fell into waters within Japan's exclusive economic zone, Tokyo said, and although the type of weapon was not clear, previous tests have been identified as short-range ballistic missiles.

The South's Joint Chiefs of Staff said the projectiles were fired from Wonsan into the East Sea (Sea of Japan).

"Our military is monitoring the situation for additional launches and maintaining a readiness posture," they said in a statement, without providing further details.

Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe said Tokyo would hold a meeting of the National Security Council to decide how to respond to the firing.

"The launching of ballistic missiles violates UN Security Council resolutions and we strongly protest and strongly condemn it," Abe told reporters.

The launch came a day after the North's Vice Foreign Minister Choe Son Hui said Pyongyang had agreed to hold working-level talks with Washington later this week.

The two sides will have "preliminary contact" on Friday and hold negotiations the following day, Choe said in a statement carried by the official Korean Central News Agency.

US State Department spokeswoman Morgan Ortagus later confirmed the talks, which she said would happen "within the next week".

"It seems North Korea wants to make its negotiating position quite clear before talks even begin," Harry Kazianis of the Center for the National Interest in Washington said after Wednesday's launch.

"Pyongyang seems set to push Washington to back off from past demands of full denuclearization for what are only promises of sanctions relief," he added.

It is not the first time the North has followed up an offer of talks with a weapons test.

Pyongyang tested what it called a "super-large" rocket launcher last month just hours after Choe released a statement saying that the North was willing to resume working-level talks with Washington.

Negotiations between the two have been deadlocked since a second summit between the North's leader Kim Jong Un and US President Donald Trump in February ended without a deal.

The two agreed to restart dialogue during an impromptu meeting at the Demilitarized Zone dividing the two Koreas in June, but the North's anger at a US refusal to cancel joint military

deals with South Korea put the process on hold.

Pyongyang also carried out several weapons tests since the meeting that have been downplayed by Trump, who dismissed them as “small” and insisted his personal ties with Kim remained good.

Relations thawed last month after Trump fired his hawkish national security advisor John Bolton, who Pyongyang had repeatedly denounced as a warmonger.

North Korea’s chief negotiator responded positively to Trump’s suggestion that the two sides try a “new method” of approaching their discussions.

Trump had criticised Bolton’s suggestion of the “Libyan model” for North Korea, a reference to a denuclearization deal with the African nation’s former dictator Moamer Kadhafi — who was killed after being deposed in 2011.

[North Korea] North Korea launches ballistic missile a day after agreeing to US talks (CNN)

CNN [10/2/2019 3:50 AM, Helen Regan, Ryan Browne, Jake Kwon and Yoko Wakatsuki, 6094K]

North Korea fired a ballistic missile Wednesday from an underwater launch platform, a United States official told CNN, a day after Pyongyang and Washington agreed to resume nuclear talks.

The US assessed that the missile was not fired from a submarine although the tested missile is designed to function as a submarine-launched ballistic missile (SLBM), the US official, who was familiar with the situation, said.

The missile was launched toward the East Sea, also known as the Sea of Japan, Wednesday morning, South Korea’s military said. While North Korea has launched from an underwater platform before, it is the first time it has done so since talks with US President Donald Trump.

"Currently, our forces are maintaining readiness posture while watching related movements in preparation against additional launches," South Korea's Joint Chief of Staff said in a statement Wednesday.

South Korea said it was analyzing the incident "with the emphasis on the possibility that today's launch by North Korea is a test of a SLBM," a statement from the Blue House, South Korea's presidential office, said.

The missile was launched from near Wonsan, a city in Kangwon Province on North Korea's east coast and flew for a distance of 450 kilometers (280 miles) before landing in waters off Japan. It reached an altitude of 910 kilometers (565 miles) and is presumed to be a Pukkuksong missile, the JCS statement said.

Japan said Wednesday that North Korea launched one ballistic missiles that split into two pieces after launch. One of the pieces reached its Economic Exclusive Zone off Shimane

prefecture at 7:26 a.m. local time, according to Japan's Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga. No damage has been reported so far.

Japan's Prime Minister Shinzo Abe told the press from his residences that the launch of a ballistic missile was in violation of the United Nations resolution and that Japan would "lodge stern protests against it and condemn such actions."

Commercial satellite images obtained by CNN in September appeared to show that North Korea may be close to launching a submarine capable of firing missiles and is making efforts to conceal its preparations.

The images from the Middlebury Institute and Planet Labs, appear to show North Korea making progress readying the vessel at the Sinpo South Naval Shipyard along the central coast of the country off the Sea of Japan.

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un visited the base in July to inspect progress on the submarine, which may already be operational, according to analysts.

At an NSC senior committee emergency meeting Wednesday, officials "expressed their strong concerns that North Korea has tested this missile ahead of resumption of negotiation with the US on Oct 5," the statement continued. The NSC said it was working closely with the US to investigate the nature of the launch.

The launch happened a day after the US state department said that Washington and Pyongyang plan to resume working-level talks next week.

Negotiations on denuclearization have stalled since February, when Trump cut short his meeting with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un in Hanoi. Trump left the meeting with no joint agreement after Kim insisted all US sanctions be lifted on his country.

The last time the two leaders met was in June in the Korean Demilitarized Zone where they agreed to revive staff-level talks.

Earlier this week, former US national security adviser John Bolton said he didn't believe Pyongyang would willingly surrender its nuclear weapons.

In his first public remarks since leaving his former role in the Trump administration three weeks ago, Bolton said Kim will "do whatever he can" to keep a nuclear weapons capability.

A US official with knowledge of the initial reports of a North Korean launch told CNN that the test was not a surprise. The US was expecting a likely North Korean test launch because there was evidence of preparations underway at launch sites. The source said this launch appears to be similar to recent launches by North Korea.

After more than a year of refraining from missile tests, Kim's regime has conducted 11 launches since May including Wednesday's. Most of those are believed to be short-range missiles, and experts say they have shown impressive technological advancements.

Trump has played down Pyongyang's series of short-range ballistic missile tests, saying

that the US never restricted short-range missiles, though the launches violate UN Security Council resolutions.

[North Korea] North Korea fires ballistic missile, possibly from submarine, days before talks (Reuters)

Reuters [10/2/2019 4:23 AM, Joyce Lee, Chang-Ran Kim, 5436K]

North Korea fired a missile off its east coast on Wednesday that South Korea said may have been launched from a submarine, a day after it announced the resumption of talks with the United States aimed at ending its nuclear program.

The launch was likely a reminder by the North of its weapons capability ahead of the talks with Washington, analysts said. North Korea rejects United Nations resolutions that ban Pyongyang from using ballistic missile technology, saying they are an infringement of its right to self-defense.

Talks aimed at dismantling North Korea's nuclear and missile program have been stalled since a second summit between U.S. President Donald Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un in Vietnam in February ended without a deal.

South Korea's military said it had detected the launch of one missile that flew 450 km (280 miles) and reached an altitude of 910 km (565 miles). It was likely a Pukguksong-class weapon, as the North's earlier submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBMs) were known, that is under development.

South Korean Defense Minister Jeong Kyeong-doo told a parliamentary committee on Wednesday that the Pukguksong has a range of about 1,300 km (910 miles) and that the apogee of the missile fired on Wednesday may have been raised to reduce the distance it traveled.

South Korea's military said the missile was launched eastward from the sea northeast of Wonsan, the site of one of North Korea's military bases on the east coast.

Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe condemned the launch, saying it was a violation of U.N. Security Council resolutions.

The National Security Council in Seoul expressed "strong concern" over the launch of what it said may have been an SLBM that came just a day after the announcement of working-level nuclear talks, according to a statement issued by the presidential Blue House.

Japan's chief Cabinet secretary Yoshihide Suga said it appeared that one missile was launched and had split in two and then fallen into the sea. The Japanese government had said earlier it appeared North Korea had launched two missiles, one of which fell inside Japan's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ).

South Korea's Jeong, asked about Japan's earlier assessment of two missiles, said the missile might have had at least two stages that separated in flight.

North Korea had been developing SLBM technology before it suspended long-range missile

and nuclear tests and began talks with the United States that led to the first summit between Kim and Trump in Singapore in June 2018.

State news agency KCNA released photos and a story of leader Kim Jong Un in July inspecting a large, newly built submarine, seen as a potential signal that Pyongyang was continuing with its development of an SLBM program.

A senior U.S. administration official, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said: “We are aware of reports of a possible North Korean missile launch. We are continuing to monitor the situation and consulting closely with our allies in the region.”

The latest launch was the ninth since Trump and Kim met at the Demilitarized Zone border between the two Koreas in June and pledged to reopen working-level talks within weeks.

Hours before Wednesday’s launch, North Korean Vice Foreign Minister Choe Son Hui said in a statement the talks would be held on Saturday in a development that could potentially break what had been months of stalemate.

North Korea’s previous missile launch was on Sept. 10, also hours after Choe had expressed Pyongyang’s willingness for talks with the United States.

Leif-Eric Easley, a professor at Ewha University in Seoul, said: “While pursuing diplomacy, it is necessary to remain clear-eyed about North Korea’s continued provocations and lack of denuclearization.”

“North Korea tends to raise the stakes before negotiations in an effort to win unearned concessions,” he said.

Trump has played down North Korea’s recent series of short-range launches, saying in September the United States and North Korea “didn’t have an agreement on short-range missiles” and that many countries test such weapons.

North Korea continued its rhetoric against South Korea in a commentary in its official newspaper on Wednesday, criticizing its joint military drills with the United States as “unchangingly aggressive”.

“The root cause of the stalemate in the North-South relations lies, in short, in the South Korean authorities’ treacherous behavior,” the Rodong Sinmun commentary said.

North Korea’s latest missile launch showed the need for close cooperation between Japan and South Korea, said Narushige Michishita, a vice president of the National Graduate Institute for Policy Studies in Tokyo and a former Japanese defense official.

Seoul’s decision not to renew an intelligence-sharing pact with Japan was “really unfortunate”, Michishita said. South Korea decided in August to terminate the pact after Japan tightened curbs on exports of high-tech materials vital to South Korea’s chip and display industries as part of a long-running dispute over forced wartime labor.

“Primarily, South Korea is under the greatest threat. The U.S.-Japan alliance is there to

defend Japan but a lot is about the defense of South Korea, and South Korea is undermining the defense mechanism designed to defend them,” Michishita said.

[Editorial note: consult video at source link]

[North Korea] North Korea says to hold nuclear talks with US on Saturday (Breitbart)
Breitbart [10/1/2019 1:37 AM, AFP, 2034K]

North Korea and the United States will hold working-level nuclear talks on Saturday, Pyongyang said, signalling the resumption of dialogue that has been effectively stalled since the collapse of a summit in February.

The two sides agreed to have “preliminary contact” on October 4 and hold negotiations the following day, the North’s vice foreign minister Choe Son Hui said in a statement carried by the official Korean Central News Agency.

“It is my expectation that the working-level negotiations would accelerate the positive development of the DPRK-US relations,” she added without disclosing a venue.

US State Department spokeswoman Morgan Ortagus later confirmed the talks, which she said would happen “within the next week”.

Negotiations between Pyongyang and Washington have been gridlocked since a second summit between North Korea’s Kim Jong Un and President Donald Trump in February ended without a deal.

The two agreed to restart dialogue during an impromptu meeting at the Demilitarized Zone dividing the two Koreas in June, but the North’s anger at a US refusal to cancel joint military deals with South Korea put the process on hold.

Relations thawed last month after Trump fired his hawkish national security advisor John Bolton, who Pyongyang had repeatedly denounced as a warmonger.

North Korea’s chief negotiator also responded positively to Trump’s suggestion that the two sides try a “new method” of approaching their discussions.

Trump had criticised Bolton’s suggestion of the “Libyan model” for North Korea, a reference to a denuclearisation deal with the African nation’s former dictator Moamer Kadhafi — who was killed after being deposed in 2011.

Pyongyang had bristled at that comment, which Trump said “set us back very badly”.

Consensus reached?

Despite the gridlock, Pyongyang has continued to praise Trump, calling him “bold” and “wise”.

Analysts say Bolton’s dismissal from the White House could have helped Pyongyang’s decision to return to the table.

South Korea's presidential Blue House welcomed Tuesday's announcement.

"We hope to see the realisation of practical steps towards permanent peace regime and complete denuclearisation of the Korean peninsula through the upcoming talks," said spokeswoman Ko Min-jung.

The announcement on the new talks could be an "indication" that the two sides have narrowed their differences behind the scenes, said Koh Yu-hwan, professor of North Korean studies at Dongguk University in Seoul.

"The North has demanded security guarantees in return for denuclearisation measures and called on the US to come up with 'new calculation', he said.

"Consensus between the two might have been reached regarding the matter in the lead-up to the Tuesday announcement," he added.

[North Korea] US, North Korea to hold working-level talks this week after months of diplomatic standstill (ABC News)

ABC News [10/1/2019 9:20 AM, Conor Finnegan, 2702K] Video: [HERE](#)

The U.S. and North Korea will convene working-level nuclear talks for the first time since before President Donald Trump and North Korea's Kim Jong Un met in Hanoi, Vietnam, for their second summit in February.

It could be the first step towards a third meeting between the two leaders or a breakthrough amid months of stalemate.

But Trump's former National Security Adviser John Bolton said Monday these "staff-level negotiations are" are meaningless because they would only "achieve a commitment from North Korea it will never honor." In his first public remarks since departing the White House, Bolton argued Kim would never give up his nuclear weapons program "voluntarily" and argued piece by piece against Trump's personal diplomacy with Kim, without naming his former boss.

In a state media statement Tuesday, North Korea's first vice minister for foreign affairs Choe Son Hui announced negotiations would take place on October 5, after an initial meeting on October 4.

"It is my expectation that the working-level negotiations would accelerate the positive development of the DPRK-U.S. relations," she said, according to state-run Korean Central News Agency.

State Department spokesperson Morgan Ortagus confirmed to ABC News that talks would occur "within the next week," but said she did not have other details to provide, such as a date or location.

During their meeting at the Demilitarized Zone between North and South Korea in June, Trump and Kim agreed to working-level talks, which Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said

afterward would happen in mid-July. But weeks turned to months without any arrangements being made.

During that time, North Korea instead test-fired six rounds of ballistic missiles -- a total of eight since the Hanoi summit ended without an agreement. Analysts -- and Bolton, Trump's longest-serving National Security Advisor -- have warned that those tests allow North Korea to enhance its missile capability and undermine United Nations Security Council resolutions, which prohibit the launches.

Trump and Pompeo, however, have dismissed or downplayed them, saying they do not violate a personal agreement between Trump and Kim that Pyongyang will not test nuclear devices or the longer-range intercontinental ballistic missiles -- a promise Kim reportedly made in person, but that has never been codified in a deal.

Trump and Kim's first meeting in Singapore in June 2018 yielded a vague joint declaration that committed their countries to the "complete denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula" and a change in their relations. But the two sides still don't have a shared definition of that term, and the second meeting in Vietnam ended when North Korea offered only to dismantle its nuclear facilities at Yongbyon, but not its existing nuclear weapons stockpile or its secret other sites, in exchange for economic sanctions being lifted.

The sequencing has stopped any forward movement. The U.S. has instead said sanctions won't be lifted until North Korea begins to dismantle its entire nuclear weapons program, which Bolton argued Monday Kim has not decided he will do.

With both sides spending the last eight months demanding the other change its negotiating position, working-level talks are seen as critical to possibly finding a path forward. U.S. Special Representative for North Korea Stephen Biegun is expected to lead the American team. He attended Trump's DMZ meeting in June and led U.S. negotiators in the talks leading up to the Hanoi summit, but beyond those meetings, he's largely been ignored by North Korea, which instead seeks direct engagement with Trump.

It's unclear what prompted working-level talks to happen now. State Department officials have consistently said since June that the U.S. is ready to meet whenever North Korea is, but beyond the exchange of some letters with Trump, there has been little interaction.

In early September, after months of diplomatic standstill, North Korea announced it was ready to meet with the U.S., but warned the country must abandon its "worn-out scenario" and come with a new approach. With Bolton fired and Trump saying he's open to a "new method" to talks, it seems North Korea now believes Trump may do just that.

[North Korea] North Korea, US officials agreed to meet to resume nuclear talks: report (FOX News)

FOX News [10/1/2019 7:31 AM, Danielle Wallace, 10258K]

The United States and North Korea have agreed to hold working-level talks this coming weekend, according to a report by North Korea's state news agency KCNA published Tuesday.

The meeting would break an almost an eight-month stalemate on a nuclear agreement between the two countries.

Talks between U.S. and North Korean officials stalled in February, when President Trump and Kim Jong Un walked away from their second summit in Vietnam without a deal. Kim wanted sanctions relief in exchange for partial disarmament. In the months since, North Korea has run several short-range missile tests. Trump has largely downplayed the tests, saying they haven't violated any agreements.

Citing a statement issued by North Korea's Vice Foreign Minister Choe Son Hui, KCNA reported the two countries will make preliminary contact on Friday before sitting down for working-level talks Saturday.

"The delegates of the DPRK side are ready to enter into the DPRK-U.S. working-level negotiations," Choe said in the statement, according to Reuters. The foreign minister used North Korea's official name, which is the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK).

"It is my expectation that the working-level negotiations would accelerate the positive development of the DPRK-U.S. relations," Choe said.

Last month, North Korea's chief nuclear negotiator, Kim Myong Gil, warned that Washington ought to offer the "right calculation method at the upcoming talks," Reuters reported. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said in September that the U.S. was prepared to meet with North Korea to re-open discussions on a nuclear deal.

On Monday, former national security adviser John Bolton warned in a speech in Washington D.C. that Kim Jong Un "will never give up the nuclear weapons voluntarily."

[North Korea] North Korea, U.S. to hold working-level talks at weekend: KCNA (Reuters)

Reuters [10/1/2019 5:35 AM, Joyce Lee, 5436K]

North Korea and the United States have agreed to hold working-level talks on Oct. 5, North Korea's state news agency KCNA said on Tuesday, a development that would break months of stalemate since a failed summit in February.

Talks aimed at dismantling North Korea's nuclear and missile programs have been stalled in a holding pattern since the second summit between U.S. President Donald Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un in Vietnam ended without a deal.

The two leaders had agreed to restart working-level talks at a surprise meeting at the heavily-guarded border between the two Koreas in June, but the outcome remained uncertain as North Korea repeatedly launched short-range ballistic missiles and often criticized the United States for continuing joint military drills with South Korea.

U.S. State Department spokeswoman Morgan Ortagus confirmed on Tuesday that U.S. and North Korean officials "plan to meet within the next week." She did not elaborate.

The two countries agreed to have preliminary contact on Oct. 4, followed by the working

level talks, KCNA said, citing a statement issued under the name of Vice Foreign Minister Choe Son Hui. It did not mention where the talks would be held, or give any more details.

"The delegates of the DPRK side are ready to enter into the DPRK-U.S. working-level negotiations," Choe said in the statement, using North Korea's official name, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK).

"It is my expectation that the working-level negotiations would accelerate the positive development of the DPRK-U.S. relations."

Although North Korea has lately expressed willingness for working-level talks, messages carried by its state media attached a caveat that Washington should show more flexibility. North Korea's chief nuclear negotiator Kim Myong Gil said in a statement last month that the United States should present the "right calculation method at the upcoming talks".

U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said in September that Washington was ready to meet North Korean counterparts and believed it was important to do so, although ousted former U.S. National Security Adviser John Bolton warned on Monday that North Korea had no intention of giving up its nuclear weapons.

"We welcome the agreement between North Korea and the United States to proceed with working-level negotiations on Oct. 5." South Korea's presidential Blue House said in a statement.

"Through this working-level negotiation, we hope that substantial progress will be made at an early date to achieve complete denuclearization and permanent peace on the Korean Peninsula."

[Editorial note: consult video at source link]

[North Korea] U.S., North Korea weigh strategy as talks resume (Washington Times)
Washington Times [10/1/2019 10:14 PM, Guy Taylor, 452K]

U.S. negotiators will push their North Korean counterparts for concrete steps toward denuclearization in exchange for limited counter steps by Washington when the two sides meet this weekend for their first working-level talks since February's failed Hanoi summit between President Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong-un.

North Korean officials revealed Tuesday morning in a brief notice in the state official press that the lower-level discussions will resume after a seven-month break, a meeting confirmed shortly afterward by a State Department spokeswoman.

With the Hanoi talks having collapsed over Mr. Kim's demand that U.S. deliver sweeping sanctions relief in exchange for only a partial dismantling of his nuclear arsenal, analysts say the U.S. side is likely to embrace a "step-by-step" approach to negotiations and see what the North Korean side brings to the table.

"The question now is, Will both sides be able to offer the right mix of concessions that the other side finds appealing to strike a bargain?" said Harry Kazianis, the head of Korean

studies at the Center for the National Interest.

The optimism sparked by the announcement was tempered by reports early Wednesday from South Korea that the North Korean military had fired at least one projectile off its eastern coast, in what appeared to be a demonstration of its expanding military capabilities ahead the coming talks.

Despite a string of sharp statements and weapons tests by the North this year, Mr. Trump dispatched special North Korean envoy Stephen Biegun to the region in late August to seek new talks with the North Koreans by extending an invitation to them during a visit to South Korea.

While there was no public response from Pyongyang, speculation swirled about back-channel discussions between the two sides at last week's U.N. General Assembly gathering in New York.

North Korean First Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs Choe Son Hui said Tuesday that she and other North Korean officials will have preliminary contacts with Mr. Biegun's team this Friday, before holding working-level talks on Saturday. No site for the talks was identified.

The government of South Korean President Moon Jae-in, long a proponent of detente with the North, praised the resumption of direct negotiations between Washington and Pyongyang.

"We hope the sides will make practical progress at the upcoming working-level negotiations for complete denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula and the establishment of lasting peace," a government spokeswoman told reporters in Seoul.

The North Koreans praised a speech by President Trump two weeks ago suggesting that his administration may be ready to take a softer posture toward negotiations. The talks will also be the first to take place since the ouster of hawkish National Security Adviser John R. Bolton, a longtime skeptic of the negotiations who this week again publicly questioned whether Mr. Kim will ever give up his nuclear arsenal.

In a Sept. 17 speech, the president said Mr. Bolton's rhetoric while in office had "set us back very badly," and that "maybe a new method would be very good" in future negotiations with North Korea.

Mr. Trump's domestic political difficulties and the looming 2020 presidential race may have factored in the decision to resume talks, said Patrick Cronin the Asia-Pacific security chair at the Hudson Institute in Washington. Mr. Kim "has got to be thinking that Trump is moving toward a moment of peak need in terms of needing a win on foreign policy," Mr. Cronin said. "Kim may be wanting to cash in on that."

"But we'll see," Mr. Cronin said in an interview Tuesday. "I think there's a possibility Kim will be willing to accept less from the U.S. than he asked for in Hanoi, but that's not saying much. So we're going to have to see if these upcoming talks yield anything."

Mr. Kazianis said the calendar raises the stakes for both sides to make progress beyond the

leaders' photo ops.

"America and North Korea have perhaps one last chance through these new working-level talks to find a compromise that works for both," he said in comments remarks circulated to reporters.

Presidential Tweets

Donald J. Trump @realDonaldTrump

[Tweet1](#) [10/1/2019 6:21 AM] The Corrupt Media refuses to cover this! [Editorial note: consult retweet at source link]

Donald J. Trump @realDonaldTrump

[Tweet2](#) [10/1/2019 6:33 AM] You cannot judge my Stock Market performance since the Inauguration, which was very good, but only from the day after the big Election Win, which was spectacular due to the euphoria of getting Obama/Biden OUT, & getting Trump/Pence IN. Wentl up BIG between Nov. 9 & Inauguration!

Donald J. Trump @realDonaldTrump

[Tweet3](#) [10/1/2019 6:45 AM] Great job, just in time! [Editorial note: consult retweet at source link]

Donald J. Trump @realDonaldTrump

[Tweet4](#) [10/1/2019 6:54 AM] Congratulations to President Xi and the Chinese people on the 70th Anniversary of the People's Republic of China!

Donald J. Trump @realDonaldTrump

[Tweet5](#) [10/1/2019 7:09 AM] "The congratulatory phone call with the Ukrainian President was PERFECT, unless you heard Liddle' Adam Schiff's fraudulently made up version of the call. This is just another Fake News Media, together with their partner, the Democrat Party, HOAX!

Donald J. Trump @realDonaldTrump

[Tweet6](#) [10/1/2019 9:19 AM] So if the so-called "Whistleblower" has all second hand information, and almost everything he has said about my "perfect" call with the Ukrainian President is wrong (much to the embarrassment of Pelosi & Schiff), why aren't we entitled to interview & learn everything about.....the Whistleblower, and also the person who gave all of the false information to him. This is simply about a phone conversation that could not have been nicer, warmer, or better. No pressure at all (as confirmed by Ukrainian Pres.). It is just another Democrat Hoax!

Donald J. Trump @realDonaldTrump

[Tweet7](#) [10/1/2019 10:34 AM] As I predicted, Jay Powell and the Federal Reserve have allowed the Dollar to get so strong, especially relative to ALL other currencies, that our manufacturers are being negatively affected. Fed Rate too high. They are their own worst enemies, they don't have a clue. Pathetic!

Donald J. Trump @realDonaldTrump

Tweet8 [10/1/2019 11:00 AM] Why isn't Congressman Adam Schiff being brought up on charges for fraudulently making up a statement and reading it to Congress as if this statement, which was very dishonest and bad for me, was directly made by the President of the United States? This should never be allowed!

Donald J. Trump @realDonaldTrump

Tweet9 [10/1/2019 6:15 PM] REPUBLICANS of Louisiana, it is really important for you to go out and vote on October 12th for either Eddie Rispone or Ralph Abraham (both Great), which will lead to a runoff against.....a Nancy Pelosi/Chuck Schumer Democrat (John Bel Edwards), who does nothing but stymie all of the things we are doing to Make America Great Again. Don't be fooled, John Bel Edwards will NEVER be for us. Early voting has already started! @LAGOP

Donald J. Trump @realDonaldTrump

Tweet10 [10/1/2019 7:41 PM] As I learn more and more each day, I am coming to the conclusion that what is taking place is not an impeachment, it is a COUP, intended to take away the Power of the.....People, their VOTE, their Freedoms, their Second Amendment, Religion, Military, Border Wall, and their God-given rights as a Citizen of The United States of America!

Donald J. Trump @realDonaldTrump

Tweet11 [10/1/2019 8:20 PM] The Greatest Witch Hunt in the history of our Country!
[Editorial note: consult video at source link]

{End of Report} RETURN TO TOP