

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

March 22, 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
Fourteenth Release

Dear Mr. Hart:

This letter is the fourteenth 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 343 pages were duplicative and 157 pages will be released in full. These responsive records are attached and have been marked 2021-ICLI-00064 2812 to 2021-ICLI-00064 2968.

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

Digitally signed by
MERONICA D STONEY
Date: 2023.03.22 15:00:30
-04'00'

Meronica D. Stoney
(A) Deputy FOIA Officer

www.icc.gov

Page 2 of 2

Enclosure(s): 157 pages

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

From: DHS Daily
Sent: Fri, 16 Aug 2019 05:44:38 -0400
To: noreply@techmis.com
Subject: DHS Morning Briefing (8-16-19)
Attachments: DHS Morning Briefing (8-16-19).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: Friday, August 16, 2019 6:00 AM ET

Top News

[States sue Trump administration over "public charge" rule \(CBS News\)](#)

[13 states sue over legal immigration 'public charge' rule \(CNN\)](#)

[The Technology 202: Googlers demand company renounce working with Trump immigration agencies \(Washington Post\)](#)

[Google employees rally against cloud-computing contract for US border agency \(The Hill\)](#)

[More Than 600 Google Employees Won't Be 'Complicit' In Working With CBP \(Daily Caller\)](#)

[Google employees call for pledge not to work with ICE \(Washington Times\)](#)

[Google employees accuse Border Patrol of 'torturing' immigrants, refuse to work with agencies \(Washington Examiner\)](#)

Trump promotes views of a criminologist who says there's no evidence of a mass-shooting 'epidemic' (Washington Post)

Trump says the U.S. should build more psychiatric institutions in response to rising gun violence (Washington Post)

'We have to start building institutions again': Trump again links guns and mental health (Politico)

Ex-FBI official names right-wing extremism one of the biggest security challenges for 2020 (The Hill)

Walmart CEO Calls for Debate in Congress on Assault-Weapons Ban (Bloomberg)

Walmart CEO: It's time to debate renewing U.S. assault weapons ban (CBS News)

[ME] Maryland recalls 8,000 Real ID driver's licenses (Washington Post)

[CT] Concerns raised about immigration cases moving out of state (San Francisco Chronicle)

[NY] New York Moves to Classify Killings Fueled by White Supremacy as Domestic Terrorism (New York Times)

[NY] New York's Cuomo Seeks Law Labeling Mass Shootings as Terrorism (Bloomberg)

[NY] Cuomo proposes new state law to define domestic terrorism (The Hill)

[NY] Cuomo proposes NY law to treat mass-casualty hate crimes as domestic terrorism (FOX News)

[DC] Mayor Opposes D.C. Facility for Unaccompanied Alien Children: Won't Be 'Complicit' (Breitbart)

[MN] Low-income immigrants in MN shying away from benefits, even with Trump rules still weeks away (Minnesota Public Radio)

[AZ] Arizona Court Rejects Death Penalty for Illegal Alien Accused of Murdering Grant Ronnebeck (Breitbart)

[Mexico] Advocates say "Remain in Mexico" policy turns migrants into a "marketable commodity" (CBS News)

[Guatemala] 'Safe third party' migration agreement with Guatemala violates law, attorneys general claim (San Diego Union Tribune)

Immigration and Customs Enforcement

[ME] Sanctuary County: Two Illegal Aliens Accused of Raping 11-Year-Old Girl (Breitbart)

[RI] A truck hit ICE protesters outside a private prison. They say a guard was driving. (Washington Post)

[RI] Car Speeds Into Crowd Of ICE Protesters Outside Detention Facility (NPR)

[RI] Several injured as officers pepper-spray protesters outside ICE facility in Rhode Island (ABC News)

[RI] A truck drove into a line of ICE protesters outside a detention facility in Rhode Island (CNN)

[RI] Group protesting ICE outside prison says guard drove truck into protesters, injuring 2 (USA Today)

[RI] Corrections officer put on leave after truck drives into protesters (Breitbart)

[RI] Corrections Officer On Leave After Truck Drives Toward Protesters At R.I. Detention Facility (New England Public Radio)

[SC] Illegal Alien Accused of Shooting, Killing 19-Year-Old in South Carolina (Breitbart)

[MS] Investigators believe five poultry companies violated immigration law, search warrants say (Washington Post)

[MS] Mississippi Plants Knowingly Hired Undocumented Workers, ICE Says (New York Times)

[MS] Companies raided by ICE knowingly hired undocumented workers, warrant suggests (CBS News)

[FL] Active shooter' shot inside Florida grocery (USA Today)

[TX] Secretary McAleenan reacts to attacks on ICE facilities, says border security strategy is making progress (FOX News)

[TX] National Border Patrol Council official disgusted by attack on ICE facility (FOX News)

[TX] ICE blames 'disturbing public discourse' after shots fired at San Antonio office (Washington Times)

[TX] Cruz calls El Paso rampage 'racist domestic terrorism' (Washington Times)

[TX] Attorney: Officials force-feeding immigrant on hunger strike (San Francisco Chronicle)

[WA] Washington ICE detention center attack seen in video, ex-acting director says 'thousands' could have died (FOX News)

Citizenship and Immigration Services

Trump administration underestimating impact of new immigration rule, advocates say (ABC News)

The Trump administration keeps making it harder to claim asylum. Here's how — and why. (Washington Post)

Trump Rule Targeting Poor Immigrants Could Harm Children, Health: Advocates (US News & World Report)

[ME] Maryland recalls 8,000 Real ID driver's licenses (Washington Post)

[NJ] Students Ensnared in Visa Sting at Fake N.J. University May Sue U.S., Court Rules (US News & World Report)

[IL] Illinois sues over new rule that could deny green cards to those on public aid: 'It's another attempt ... to intimidate immigrants' (Chicago Tribune)

[Iran] US threatens visa ban on crew of Iran tanker (Breitbart)

Customs and Border Protection

Migrant Children Are Entitled to Toothbrushes and Soap, Federal Court Rules (New York Times)

Court upholds ruling that children held at border must have adequate food, bedding, sanitation (Los Angeles Times)

Trump Team Loses in Defense of Migrant Shelters That Lacked Soap (Bloomberg)

Judges rule migrant children must get soap and bedding, reject govt appeal (Breitbart)

Panel rules soap, sleep essential to migrant kids' safety (ABC News)

Court says detained migrant children can't be sleep-deprived, must get soap (CBS News)

Appeals court says soap, toothbrushes can be required for detained children (CNN)

Ninth Circuit rejects Trump's bid to limit accommodations to children detained at border (FOX News)

Trump team loses in defense of migrant shelters that lacked soap (San Francisco Chronicle)

US official: 'Much better' conditions at border for migrants (ABC News)

Border apprehensions drop for 2nd straight month: CBP says it's 'absolute proof' deal with Mexico is working (FOX News)

[VT] 26 arrested for blocking road at Vermont immigration protest (San Francisco Chronicle)

[TX] Feds bust stash house where smugglers 'terrorize' illegal immigrants (Washington Times)

Federal Emergency Management Agency

[LA] Gov. Edwards Requests Federal Assistance for Louisiana Communities Impacted by Hurricane Barry (KEDM 90.3 Public Radio)

[CA] California county OKs plane to monitor, predict wildfires (San Francisco Chronicle)

[CA] Jimmy Kimmel Live!' hit with hefty fine for using emergency alert tones (FOX News)

[CA] Jimmy Kimmel Skit With Fake Emergency Alert Ends in F.C.C. Fine for ABC (Reuters)

Secret Service

[KY] Troopers Catch Couple From Michigan Caught In Laurel County In Suspected Stolen Car (WWEL103.9 FM)

[TN] Reports of debit/credit card 'skimmers' on the rise locally (Courier News)

[MO] Police say new kind of credit card skimmer is completely out-of-sight (KSDK News Channel 5)

[LA] Be aware of skimming across Louisiana (Minden Press-Herald Online)

[LA] High-speed pursuit ends with arrests (American Press)

[IA] False money discovered in Clermont (KWWL)

[IA] Hy-Vee investigating if customer payment data was exposed at fuel pumps, other locations (USA Today)

[IA] Hy-Vee warns of security problem with credit card readers (San Francisco Chronicle)

[WI] Green Bay police warn stores about fake money (Green Bay Press-Gazette)

[TX] More 'funny money' showing up in Jasper (Kjas)

[SD] Counterfeit money at the Brown County Fair (KSFY)

[OK] Deputies warn about counterfeit money in Mayes County (KTUL-TV ABC 8 TULSA)

[OK] Police warn against card skimmers found on ATMs in Oklahoma City metro (Top Stories)

[NV] Man accused of hacking ATMs for \$125,000 (Las Vegas Sun)

Coast Guard

Coast Guard cutter's crew makes massive 4,600-pound cocaine bust, 2nd in 5 days (FOX News)

[CA] 1,300 pounds of marijuana found floating off California: Coast Guard (FOX News)

[CA] Coast Guard finds 43 bales of pot worth \$1M floating off California (USA Today)

[CA] Coast Guard finds 43 bales of pot floating off California (San Francisco Chronicle)

CISA/Cybersecurity

Ex-CIA chief worries campaigns falling short on cybersecurity (The Hill)

Over 1 million fingerprints leaked at one of world's biggest biometric firms, researchers say (FOX News)

States Struggle to Update Election Systems Ahead of 2020 (Bloomberg)

Election officials want security money, flexible standards (Roll Call)

State officials beg Congress for more election security funding (The Hill)

[KY] Kentucky official says counties can't upgrade cybersecurity because they're 'severely under resourced' (CNN)

[GA] Georgia Must Use Paper Ballots if New Voting System Not Up by 2020: U.S. Judge (New York Times)

[GA] Judge rules Georgia must phase out paperless voting machines by 2020 (The Hill)

[GA] Judge Says Georgia Must Scrap Outdated Electronic Voting Machines After 2019 (NPR)

Terrorism Investigations

FBI Puts Alleged Al-Qaeda Operative in Brazil on 'Most Wanted' List (Breitbart)

[OH] Coroner: Cocaine, Anti-Depressants, Booze in Dayton Gunman's System (Breitbart)

[OH] Dayton gunman had cocaine and other drugs in his system, coroner says (The Hill)

[OH] Suspected Dayton shooter had cocaine, alcohol and anti-anxiety drugs in system, coroner says (ABC News)

[OH] Dayton shooter had cocaine in his system, coroner says (CNN)

[OH] Dayton, Ohio, gunman had cocaine, alcohol and antidepressants in system: coroner (FOX News)

[OH] 2 victims in Dayton hit by police bullets; shooter had drugs in system (USA Today)

National Security News

Trump Administration Asks Congress to Reauthorize N.S.A.'s Deactivated Call Records Program (New York Times)

Trump administration urges Congress to reauthorize NSA surveillance program (The Hill)

Trump administration mulls \$4.3B in foreign aid cuts (Politico)

[Gibraltar] US asks Gibraltar to hold Iranian tanker in detention: govt lawyer (Breitbart)

[Gibraltar] U.S. Moves to Prolong Iranian Tanker Detention in Gibraltar (US News & World Report)

[Gibraltar] U.S. bid to seize Iranian tanker halts its release from Gibraltar (Reuters)

[Gibraltar] Gibraltar to release Iranian tanker despite U.S. intervention (Politico)

[Gibraltar] Seized Iranian tanker released despite US efforts to halt the move (CNN)

[Uganda] Uganda's cash-strapped cops spend \$126 million on CCTV from Huawei (Reuters)

[Iran] The U.S. Has Joined Secret Talks With Israel and the U.A.E. The topic? Iran. (New York Times)

[Iran] U.S. Threatens Sanctions Over Iranian Tanker After Court Release (Bloomberg)

[Afghanistan] Trump meeting security officials as concerns mount over US withdrawal from Afghanistan (CNN)

[Afghanistan] Shared Afghanistan Interests Create Opening for U.S.-Iran Back Channel-Sources (Reuters)

[China] China Says U.S. Block on Nuclear Firms a 'Misuse' of Export Controls (US News & World Report)

[North Korea] North Korea Testing Missiles Faster Than Days of 'Fire and Fury' (Bloomberg)

[North Korea] S. Korea says N. Korea has fired more projectiles into sea (Breitbart)

[North Korea] North Korea fires more projectiles into the sea, South Korea says (CBS News)

[North Korea] North Korea fires projectiles, rejects South Korea's dialogue pledge (Reuters)

[North Korea] North Korea fires missiles, derides South Korea's Moon as 'impudent' (Reuters)

[North Korea] North Korea Calls Off Further Talks With South, Launches More Projectiles (Public Radio East)

[South Korea] S. Korea holds emergency meeting amid new launches (USA Today)

[Taiwan] Trump administration plans \$8 billion fighter jet sale to Taiwan, angering China (Washington Post)

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

States sue Trump administration over "public charge" rule (CBS News)

CBS News [8/15/2019 11:06 AM, Staff, 3332K]

Attorneys general in 13 states have filed a lawsuit challenging a Trump administration rule that will allow immigration officials to deny green cards to migrants who use public assistance, including food stamps or housing vouchers.

The federal lawsuit filed Wednesday in Richland, Washington, follows a similar one Tuesday by two California counties. Two populous counties in California have also filed a suit.

Under new rules unveiled this week, Citizenship and Immigration Services will consider whether applicants have received public assistance among other factors such as education to determine whether to grant legal status.

The attorneys general argue the expansion will cause "irreparable harm" and deter non-citizens from seeking "essential" public assistance.

The lawsuit names the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. A spokesman didn't return a message Wednesday.

The states involved are: Colorado, Delaware, Illinois, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Nevada, New Jersey, New Mexico, Rhode Island, Virginia and Washington.

[Editorial note: consult source link for video]

13 states sue over legal immigration 'public charge' rule (CNN)

CNN [8/15/2019 1:11 PM, Geneva Sands, 6094K]

Thirteen states filed a lawsuit in federal court Wednesday challenging the Trump administration's new rule that seeks to limit access to green cards for immigrants that receive certain government benefits.

This is the latest legal challenge against the so-called "public charge" rule, which was released Monday. Immigrants who use benefits such as Medicaid, food stamps, and housing vouchers could have their request for legal permanent status in the US rejected because they would be deemed more likely to need government assistance in the future.

The new lawsuit, led by Washington state, contends that the rule violates federal immigration statutes and unlawfully expands the definition of "public charge."

"The Trump administration's message is clear: if you're wealthy you're welcome, if you're poor, you're not," Washington State Attorney General Bob Ferguson said.

Earlier this week, San Francisco and the county of Santa Clara, California, filed a joint lawsuit against the rule, alleging that counties will incur additional costs due, in part, to residents moving toward services paid for and administered by counties.

The acting director of US Citizenship and Immigration Services, Ken Cuccinelli, whose agency is responsible for adjudicating immigration applications, defended the rule earlier this week, telling CNN's Erin Burnett Tuesday evening that the "rule is well within the law." "This rule is well within the boundaries of the law and the legal tradition," he said. "Self-sufficiency is a central part of America's proud heritage and we proudly stand behind that tradition."

The rule faced swift condemnation and pushback from advocates who argue the rule seeks to further limit legal immigration and unfairly gives an advantage to wealthy immigrants.

The National Immigration Law Center has also said it was preparing to file a lawsuit alongside other groups.

This regulation will have the "deepest, widest and most long term impact" of all of the immigration policies implemented by the Trump administration, said Marielena Hincapié, executive director of the National Immigration Law Center, on Monday.

[Editorial note: consult source link for video]

The Technology 202: Googlers demand company renounce working with Trump immigration agencies (Washington Post)

Washington Post [8/15/2019 9:26 AM, Cat Zakrzewski, 9425K]

Google's challenges are mounting from within as employees call on the company to promise it won't do business with the Trump administration's immigration apparatus.

More than 600 Googlers signed a Medium petition challenging Google executives to pledge not to do business with U.S. Customs and Border Protection, Immigration and Customs

Enforcement or the Office of Refugee Resettlement. Employees launched the effort as concerns are growing that Google could be in the running for a new cloud contract that CBP is seeking.

The petition slams CBP for engaging in “human rights abuses at the U.S. Southern border,” and insisted that the company “would be trading its integrity for a bit of profit” if it worked with these agencies.

“We refuse to be complicit. It is unconscionable that Google, or any other tech company, would support agencies engaged in caging and torturing vulnerable people,” the employees wrote.

The petition creates another dilemma for Google, which has been forced to respond in recent years to a groundswell of employee activism that is shaping the company’s business decisions on everything from Pentagon contracts to its business plans in China.

The Trump era has sparked a Catch-22 for the company as criticism surges across the political spectrum. The search giant is trying to appease liberal employees who are increasingly taking their beef with the company’s positions public, while simultaneously weathering accusations from Republicans — including the president — who say the company is politically biased against conservatives. (Google did not respond to a request for comment on the petition, but the company has repeatedly denied it is biased against conservatives.)

Mark Egerman, a Google Maps product manager who was one of the co-authors of the petition, tells me that he doesn’t believe there is any possible situation where Google will be able to appease Republican critics such as President Trump or Republican Sens. Josh Hawley (Mo.) and Ted Cruz (Tex.).

Egerman calling on Google’s leadership to prioritize morality above politics. “I am empathetic toward the leadership, I would not want the president tweeting at me,” he said. “But he’s going to do it anyways, so let’s do the right thing.”

Yet taking a strong stance against working with the Trump administration’s immigration agencies could strain an already tense relationship between Google and the Trump administration. The president has escalated his attacks on the search giant in recent months on Twitter. Earlier this month, he unleashed a series of tweets accusing the company of favoring negative news stories about him in the 2016 election, adding his administration is watching the company “very closely.”

Google employees are concerned that the administration will turn to the search giant for cloud products because it is one of the top three providers of such services. Amazon and Microsoft also have significant cloud computing businesses and contracts with the government, and employees at those companies have voiced similar concerns about doing business with immigration authorities. Microsoft employees last year called on the company to cancel work with ICE, and Amazon employees wrote a letter stating they were “deeply concerned” that Amazon is providing infrastructure and services that enable ICE as well as the Department of Homeland Security. (Amazon founder and CEO Jeff Bezos owns The Washington Post.)

The employee activism on immigration has surged beyond the tech giants. Employees at Boston-based Wayfair recently staged a walkout to protest executives' refusal to withdrawal from a contract that provided bedroom furniture to a federal detention center for migrants. The Google employees "stand with" the activists within other companies, Egerman said. Employees from Wayfair, Amazon and Microsoft also signed Google's petition.

The petition is just the latest sign that employee activism at Google is only picking up as employees realize their power to influence company decision-making in a competitive market for tech talent. Last year, Google employees staged a global walkout to protest the company's policy of requiring employees to settle disputes with the company through forced arbitration, which critics said silenced employees who experienced sexual harassment at the company. Google employees also protested the company's controversial plans to build a censored version of its search engine for China, known as Project Dragonfly. A Google executive recently testified that project has been "terminated." Googlers also protested a contract that the company had with the Pentagon, known as Project Maven, due to concerns Google's technology could be used to build artificial intelligence for warfare. The company decided not to renew the contract under the pressure.

Wired's Nitasha Tiku recently documented the roller-coaster of employee activism confronting Google in this month's magazine cover story. She writes the wave of employee activism stems from the company's corporate culture: "To invent products like Gmail, Earth, and Translate, you need coddled geniuses free to let their minds run wild," she writes. "But to lock down lucrative government contracts or expand into coveted foreign markets, as Google increasingly needed to do, you need to be able to issue orders and give clients what they want."

Egerman said yesterday evening he had not heard a response from Google executives. He hopes they will back employees, as they did in the early days of the Trump administration, when thousands of employees rallied against Trump's travel ban from seven Muslim-majority countries. Google executives including chief executive Sundar Pichai and Google co-founder Sergey Brin joined the employees in voicing concerns over the order.

"We have seen in the past two years Google employees very engaged in fighting for what they believe is right," Egerman said. "Without clarity from leadership, this is not going away."

Google employees rally against cloud-computing contract for US border agency (The Hill)

The Hill [8/15/2019 10:10 AM, Emily Birnbaum, 2806K]

Hundreds of Google employees have signed a petition calling for the company to pledge it will not launch a bid for U.S. Customs and Border Protection's (CBP) enormous cloud computing contract.

As of Thursday morning, more than 650 Google workers had signed the petition vowing they would "refuse to be complicit" in the creation of cloud computing infrastructure for CBP, which they claimed would help facilitate "human rights abuses" at the border.

The petition is continuing to circulate internally at Google.

CBP in a filing last month said it is looking for companies to provide the agency with cloud services as part of the government's efforts to improve its technology infrastructure.

The Google workers are asking the company to disavow any future ties to CBP, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) or the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR).

"We demand that Google publicly commit not to support CBP, ICE, or ORR with any infrastructure, funding, or engineering resources, directly or indirectly, until they stop engaging in human rights abuses," the workers wrote.

Google has a growing cloud computing business, though it lags behind Amazon Web Services and Microsoft's Azure.

Google's workforce has been rocked by internal protests over the past several years, including several specifically targeting Google's work with the government.

The company opted not to renew an artificial intelligence contract with the Department of Defense last year after a wave of employee dissent.

And it pulled out of the running to win a massive \$10 billion cloud computing contract with the Pentagon several months later, saying "we couldn't be assured that it would align with our AI Principles."

Google's artificial intelligence principles, released for the first time last June amid a wave of scrutiny over who the company is willing to do business with, state Google will not use AI to create "weapons or other technologies whose principal purpose or implementation is to cause or directly facilitate injury to people."

The Google employees are arguing any contract with the agencies in charge of rolling out the Trump administration's punitive immigration policies would be a violation of those principles.

"History is clear: the time to say NO is now," the workers wrote. "It is unconscionable that Google, or any other tech company, would support agencies engaged in caging and torturing vulnerable people."

"And we are not alone — the world is watching," they concluded.

More Than 600 Google Employees Won't Be 'Complicit' In Working With CBP (Daily Caller)

Daily Caller [8/15/2019 11:03 AM, Audrey Conklin, 785K]

More than 600 Google employees said they "refuse" to be "complicit" in potential cloud computing work for Customs and Border Protection (CBP), according to a petition.

The employees signed a petition titled "Google must stand against human rights abuses" posted to Medium on Wednesday that says they will not work with CBP or Immigration and

Customs Enforcement (ICE) by association on a potential cloud computing contract.

Cloud computing allows entities like CBP to share resources, software and information through the internet rather than on a hard drive.

“It’s time to stand together again and state clearly that we will not work on any such contract. We demand that Google publicly commit not to support CBP, ICE or ORR [Office of Refugee Resettlement] with any infrastructure, funding or engineering resources, directly or indirectly, until they stop engaging in human rights abuses,” the petition states.

“We have only to look to IBM’s role working with the Nazis during the Holocaust to understand the role that technology can play in automating mass atrocity,” it adds.

Google already provides cloud computing services to CBP, along with AWS, Microsoft Azure, IBM Cloud and Oracle Cloud for its “Enterprise Infrastructure.” The Google contract aims to limit the number of cloud providers for CBP, according to a Business Insider report.

“The government is pursuing a cloud strategy to increase access to cloud innovation and reduce the disadvantages associated with multiple cloud service providers/resellers,” an official notice for the potential contract reads.

In a similar June 2018 petition, Microsoft employees similarly called for the tech company to end its \$9.4 million Azure Government cloud services contract with ICE in following reports that families were being separating from their children.

Google employees call for pledge not to work with ICE (Washington Times)

Washington Times [8/15/2019 8:23 PM, Rachel Lerman, AP, 452K]

Hundreds of Google employees are calling on the company to pledge it won’t work with U.S. Customs and Border Protection or Immigration and Customs Enforcement. It’s the latest in a year full of political and social pushback from the tech giant’s workforce.

A group of employees called Googlers for Human Rights posted a public petition urging the company not to bid on a cloud computing contract for CBP, the federal agency that oversees law enforcement for the country’s borders. Bids for the contract were due Aug. 1. It is not clear if Google expressed interest. The company did not return a request for comment.

More than 700 Google employees had signed the petition by Tuesday afternoon. Citing a “system of abuse” and “malign neglect” by the agencies, the petition demands Google not provide any technical services to CBP, ICE or the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR), which provides services for refugees, until the agencies “stop engaging in human rights abuses.”

“In working with CBP, ICE, or ORR, Google would be trading its integrity for a bit of profit, and joining a shameful lineage,” the organizers wrote. They cited federal actions that have separated migrant children from parents and set up detention centers with poor conditions .

Google employees have led a growing trend in which some tech-company employees have

taken public stances against their employers' policies. Thousands of Google employees walked out last fall to protest the company's handling of sexual misconduct claims. Employees also protested a Pentagon contract last year over work that used artificial intelligence technology to analyze drone footage.

The protests have chalked up some success. After the walkout, Google announced new sexual misconduct guidelines, although some employees say they don't go far enough. And the company did not renew the Pentagon contract after significant pushback.

Responding to some employee pressures has added fuel to claims from Republican pundits and lawmakers that the company is building its products to be biased against conservatives - an unfounded claim that has spawned multiple congressional hearings, although none that have produced evidence of bias.

Google was hit with criticism by President Donald Trump last week when the president tweeted he was "watching Google very closely" after a former employee claimed on Fox News - without evidence - that the company would try to influence the 2020 election against Trump.

Google has denied claims of political bias in its popular search service and other products.

Google employees accuse Border Patrol of 'torturing' immigrants, refuse to work with agencies (Washington Examiner)

Washington Examiner [8/15/2019 3:57 PM, Tim Pearce, 855K]

Google employees are circulating a petition urging the tech giant to forgo any opportunities to work with several federal agencies "engaged in caging and torturing vulnerable people."

Google employees began circulating a petition online Wednesday. The petition accuses the U.S. Customs and Border Protection, Immigration and Customs Enforcement, and the Office of Refugee Resettlement of abusing illegal immigrants, and it demands that Google not work with any of the agencies.

The agencies "are caging and harming asylum seekers, separating children from parents, illegally detaining refugees and US citizens, and perpetrating a system of abuse and malign neglect that has led to the deaths of at least 7 children in detention camps," the petition states. "These abuses are illegal under international human rights law, and immoral by any standard."

Google employees launched the petition after CBP announced it was accepting bids from private companies to provide cloud services for the agency. Over 700 Google employees have signed the petition, along with over 50 former employees and others.

The petition compared Google working with the immigration agencies to IBM working with the Nazis. The petition cites Google's principles for developing artificial intelligence and staying within "ethical guardrails."

"History is clear: the time to say NO is now. We refuse to be complicit," the petition says. "It is unconscionable that Google, or any other tech company, would support agencies

engaged in caging and torturing vulnerable people."

Guatemalan officials burned down an environmental activist's home, he decided to leave his village behind and flee to the United States, hoping he'd be granted asylum and his little boy, whose heart was failing, would receive lifesaving medical care.

But after crossing the border into Arizona in May of last year, Border Patrol agents tore the man's 7-year-old son from his arms and sent the father nearly 2,000 miles (3,220 kilometers) away to a detention center in Georgia. The boy, now 8, went into a U.S.-funded foster home for migrant children in New York.

The foster care programs are meant to provide migrant children with care while authorities work to connect them with parents, relatives or other sponsors. But instead the boy told a counselor he was repeatedly sexually molested by other boys in the foster home.

A review of 38 legal claims obtained by The Associated Press — some of which have never been made public — shows taxpayers could be on the hook for more than \$200 million in damages from parents who said their children were harmed while in government custody.

The father and son are among dozens of families — separated at the border as part of the Trump administration's zero tolerance policy — who are now preparing to sue the federal government, including several who say their young children were sexually, physically or emotionally abused in federally funded foster care.

With more than 3,000 migrant children taken from their parents at the border in recent years, many lawsuits are expected, potentially totaling in the billions. Families who spoke to the AP and FRONTLINE did so on the condition of anonymity over fears about their families' safety.

"How is it possible that my son was suffering these things?" the father said. "My son is little and couldn't defend himself."

The families — some in the U.S., others already deported to Central America — are represented by grassroots immigration clinics and nonprofit groups, along with some of the country's most powerful law firms. They're making claims under the Federal Tort Claims Act as a precursor to filing lawsuits. The FTCA allows individuals who suffer harm as a direct result of federal employees to sue the government.

"It's the tip of the iceberg," said Erik Walsh, an attorney at Arnold & Porter, which has one of the world's leading pro bono programs.

The firm has so far filed 18 claims on behalf of nine families, totaling \$54 million, and Walsh says dozens more are likely coming.

The government has six months to settle FTCA claims from the time they're filed. After that, the claimants are free to file federal lawsuits.

The departments of Justice and Homeland Security — both named in claims — did not respond to requests for comment.

In a statement, Health and Human Services — the agency responsible for the care of migrant children — said it does not respond to pending litigation and that it serves children in a compassionate and organized manner through its Office of Refugee Resettlement.

“The important work happening in each of the facilities and programs in the ORR network around the country — work ORR has done successfully since 2003 — takes an experienced team of competent, hardworking men and women dedicated to the welfare of the children,” HHS spokesman Mark Weber said. “We treat the children in our care with dignity and respect.”

Last year, the Office of Refugee Resettlement cared for nearly 50,000 children who crossed the border by themselves, as well as children who were separated from their families under the zero tolerance policy. The agency housed them in foster programs, residential shelters and detention camps around the country, sometimes making daily placements of as many as 500 new arrivals, from babies to teens.

The allegations of abuse and assaults in foster care raise fresh questions about the government’s efforts to place younger children with families in lieu of larger shelters and packed detention facilities.

The legal claims, a recent federal court filing and Health and Human Services documents released by Congress earlier this year allege that children have suffered serious emotional trauma after being physically harmed or fondled by other children while in foster care.

Six of the claims for damages involve children who were in foster care. And one recent court filing refers to a migrant child being abused in foster care.

The records released by Congress show the Office of Refugee Resettlement referred at least seven foster care allegations of sexual abuse to the Justice Department in 2017 and 2018. Because some are anonymous to protect the children’s privacy, it’s unclear if some of the claims are duplicates.

Justice has not responded to repeated queries about those cases from members of Congress.

Three of the four incidents involving physical harm outlined in legal filings occurred at Cayuga Centers in New York, the largest foster care placement for migrant children, housing up to 900 babies and children at a time. The kids are supposed to be placed with Spanish-speaking families who are paid \$1,000 per month per child.

Cayuga Centers did not respond to requests for comment.

In one Cayuga home, a foster parent found a little girl being forced to touch another child’s private parts and kiss her on the lips, according to a memo submitted as part of a federal lawsuit related to family separation.

The girl was 3 when immigration officials took her from her father in March, after they’d crossed the border in Texas. As a result of her trauma, the little girl began to regress in

foster care, having difficulty eating, drinking and using the toilet, according to her attorney. The girl was sent back to Honduras on Wednesday, a month after her father was deported.

One Guatemalan mother whose 5-year-old daughter was placed in Cayuga last year says her little girl still wakes up crying from what she endured at the foster home.

“Now she’s scared each time we go out or when she sees a police car or someone in uniform,” said the mother, who has filed a \$6 million claim. “She says ‘Mami, don’t let them separate us again.’”

Another 5-year-old Guatemalan girl said a boy grabbed her chest and touched her inappropriately, both in her foster home and during daytime classes at a Safe Haven for Children New York foster program, according to a \$3 million injury claim. The girl was moved to a new foster home, but there she suffered verbal abuse from her foster parent’s mother, who called her names and locked her alone in rooms as punishment, according to the claim.

A spokesman for Lutheran Social Services of New York, which oversees the Safe Haven for Children New York foster program, declined to comment on the allegation.

Two claims blame the government for wrongful deaths: one, seeking \$20 million, was filed by the wife of a Honduran father who killed himself in a padded cell after officers pulled his 3-year-old son from his arms.

“Essentially what this policy does, is it makes examples out of families that get ripped apart to deter others,” said John Escamilla, who is representing the man’s wife and two children. He said he plans to file a federal lawsuit stemming from his FTCA claim as soon as Friday. “The people making these policies intended this level of suffering, and that’s what’s unconscionable.”

In another case not involving child separation, a Guatemalan toddler died after a three-week stay in a family detention center. Her mother’s \$60 million claim alleges the government failed to give the girl proper medical attention.

The government has not settled any family separation cases in the administrative claims stage. But one federal lawsuit is currently in litigation in Massachusetts, and in February, a federal judge in Connecticut approved a \$125,000 settlement in a separate case, for a Honduran mom and her son, then 6, who had been detained for four months and threatened with separation under the Obama administration.

Aseem Mehta, a law student at the Jerome N. Frank Legal Services Organization at Yale Law School who worked on the case, said the settlement — the first of its kind — sends a clear message that such claims have legal standing. Mehta added that Trump’s significantly harsher border policies, including family separation, could make for even stronger cases before courts.

“Our case is a benchmark,” Mehta said. “The most important takeaway is these claims are viable, and courts will entertain them, and the Department of Homeland Security views them as meritorious; they don’t settle cases unless they think there’s liability they’re exposed to.”

Janet Napolitano, who led Homeland Security from 2009 to 2013, said she recalled a number of tort claims were filed against the agency at the time, though she said family separations were rare. The delays in reunifying families and children under the Trump administration may have left the agency open to legal challenges, she added.

"There very well may be some vulnerability there," said Napolitano, now the president of the University of California.

Lawsuits stemming from family separation policies under the Trump administration are expected to be filed by mid-August.

Attorneys for migrant children have aimed several recent legal challenges at larger facilities that are not state-licensed and have held thousands of teens. Some say misconduct is less easily identified in foster care because it requires a child reporting or a foster parent happening to walk in on something occurring in the home.

"We may never know the extent to which children suffered particular abuses in foster homes," said Michelle Lapointe, a senior supervising attorney with the Southern Poverty Law Center.

The Guatemalan father, now living in Southern California, is still struggling to soothe his son's lasting nightmares. He says his third-grader, once talkative and outgoing, is now withdrawn and frequently says he wants to leave this world.

"This can't happen again because for those of us who live through this, it is terrifying," he said.

Trump promotes views of a criminologist who says there's no evidence of a mass-shooting 'epidemic' (Washington Post)

Washington Post [8/15/2019 10:38 AM, John Wagner, 9425K]

President Trump, who has vowed to push Congress to pass legislation in response to massacres this month in Texas and Ohio, on Thursday promoted the views of a criminologist who argued this week that there is no evidence that the United States is experiencing an "epidemic" of mass shootings.

On Twitter, Trump shared a message that linked to an interview with Northeastern University criminologist James Alan Fox, who shared his views in a podcast broadcast Wednesday by Reason, a libertarian publication.

In the interview, Fox said that although the number of mass shootings has risen in recent years, there are too few to draw a clear trend line. He accused the media of causing unnecessary panic.

"There is no evidence that we are in the midst of an epidemic of mass shootings," Fox told interviewer Nick Gillespie.

The tweet that Trump shared providing a link to the interview was written by Fox News

Channel host Laura Ingraham. It was among a spate of retweets by Trump on Thursday morning on varied subjects.

The White House did not immediately respond to a question about what message Trump was trying to convey by sharing the tweet.

In an email to The Washington Post on Thursday, Fox said he was not suggesting that nothing be done about gun violence.

“The big problem is the 11,000 victims killed annually by gunfire,” he said.

In the wake of the recent mass shootings in El Paso and Dayton, Ohio, that killed 31 people, Trump has vowed to push Republicans to embrace legislation that would strengthen background checks for gun buyers and persuade the National Rifle Association to drop its long-standing opposition to such measures.

Last week, Trump told reporters at the White House that conversations in recent days had yielded strong congressional support for “very meaningful background checks” and that his party, which has stymied gun-control efforts this year by Democrats, would take the lead in passing legislation after returning from an August recess.

“I think Republicans are going to be great and lead the charge, along with the Democrats,” Trump said.

He continued to express support for stronger background checks when speaking to reporters on Tuesday in New Jersey.

According to a Post analysis published this month, four or more people have been killed in a mass shooting every 47 days, on average, since June 17, 2015. That was the evening a young white supremacist killed nine people during a Bible study at a historic African American church in Charleston, S.C.

During the podcast, Fox said some in the media have contributed to an “obsession” with mass shootings by using a definition that overstates the carnage. In his research, Fox said, he defines a “mass killing” as episodes in which four or more people, excluding the shooter, are killed. Such instances are rarer than when four or more are shot, he said, given that only a fraction of those who are shot die.

Trump says the U.S. should build more psychiatric institutions in response to rising gun violence (Washington Post)

Washington Post [8/15/2019 7:10 PM, Felicia Sonmez, 9425K]

President Trump suggested Thursday that the United States can tackle its gun violence problem in part by building more psychiatric institutions and reopening facilities that were shuttered decades ago.

Trump offered the suggestion in an exchange with reporters in Morristown, N.J., shortly before taking off for a campaign rally in New Hampshire. He said it was a “terrible thing for our country” that people with mental illness were “just allowed to go onto the streets” after

some psychiatric hospitals were closed.

“We’re looking at the whole gun situation,” Trump said in response to a question about the gun control debate. “I do want people to remember the words ‘mental illness.’ These people are mentally ill. . . . I think we have to start building institutions again because, you know, if you look at the ‘60s and ‘70s, so many of these institutions were closed.”

“A lot of our conversation has to do with the fact that we have to open up institutions; we can’t let these people be on the streets,” he added.

Many psychiatric institutions were closed beginning in the 1950s amid reports of inhumane treatment, patient-abuse scandals, changing attitudes toward mental health care and the development of drugs to treat mental illness.

While Trump on Thursday revived the debate over whether to isolate the mentally ill in long-term care facilities, Democrats have argued in recent weeks that, by repeatedly blaming mental illness for gun violence, Trump is stigmatizing those with schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, severe depression or other serious conditions.

Many have noted that the El Paso shooting is being investigated as a case of domestic terrorism, as the gunman is believed to have posted an anti-immigrant declaration online just before the attack.

“White supremacy is not a mental illness, and guns are a tool that white supremacists use to fulfill their hate,” Sen. Cory Booker (D-N.J.), who is running for president, tweeted earlier this month.

In the wake of the El Paso and Dayton, Ohio, mass shootings, Trump has called for strengthening background checks for gun buyers and advocated for “red flag” laws that make it easier for authorities to confiscate weapons from those deemed to be a danger to themselves and others.

But his comments in recent days — including his focus on mental illness — have prompted some speculation that he may be walking back his support for tighter gun-control measures.

Earlier this year, Trump threatened to veto two bills passed by the Democratic-led House that aimed to strengthen background checks, saying they did not adequately protect the Second Amendment rights of gun owners.

On Thursday, Trump declined to say whether he supports universal background checks. He said Republicans agree “pretty much uniformly” that they “don’t want to have insane people, dangerous people, really bad people having guns.”

The president also appeared to preemptively blame Democrats for any failure to pass gun-control legislation when the Senate returns next month.

“Well, I’m afraid that if we came up with a good bill, I think the Democrats then might up it and then do things that can’t be done and that the public wouldn’t want done,” Trump said. “I hope that wouldn’t happen, but that’s happened in the past. You understand that.”

‘We have to start building institutions again’: Trump again links guns and mental health (Politico)

Politico [8/15/2019 6:30 PM, Matthew Choi, 2512K]

President Donald Trump on Thursday advocated the return of more mental health institutions to combat gun violence, while also throwing his support behind background checks for gun purchases.

Speaking with reporters in New Jersey before heading to a campaign rally in New Hampshire, Trump said that mental health was an under-considered factor in gun violence and that his administration would examine it “at a level that hasn’t been done before.”

“These people are mentally ill,” Trump said of mass shooters, “and nobody talks about that.”

Mental illness is a frequent talking point among Republican lawmakers when dealing with gun violence, to the consternation of their Democratic counterparts, who argue that the United States’ unique, widespread access to guns is to blame. Critics of the idea that mental illness leads to gun violence also argue that it stigmatizes mental illness and reinforces the unproven idea that mental health correlates with violence.

Trump argued that institutions for people with mental illness — whom “we can’t let ... be on the streets” — were necessary to curb gun violence.

“We have to start building institutions again because, you know, if you look at the ‘60s and ‘70s, so many of these institutions were closed, and the people were just allowed to go onto the streets,” Trump said on Thursday. “That was a terrible thing for our country.”

Several state mental health hospitals were closed in the second half of the 20th century in favor of smaller family- and community-centered care alternatives. The trend has been controversial, with critics saying it left many without access to adequate care.

Trump’s comments come less than two weeks after two separate shootings rocked the nation only hours apart in El Paso, Texas, and Dayton, Ohio. The suspect in El Paso had posted a manifesto shortly before the rampage citing racist ideas against immigrants and Latino Americans.

Another shooting in Philadelphia wounded six police officers on Wednesday after action on a narcotics warrant turned violent.

Trump called the shooter in Philadelphia “insane” and someone who should never have had access to guns, using him as justification for background checks.

“I support strong, meaningful background checks where people that should not have guns, people that are insane, people that are mentally ill, people that are bad, bad people, like this guy in Philadelphia who has been arrested numerous times — he’s a bad guy — where people like that would not have guns,” Trump said.

Ex-FBI official names right-wing extremism one of the biggest security challenges for 2020 (The Hill)

The Hill [8/15/2019 3:13 PM, Tess Bonn, 2806K]

A former FBI intelligence officer said Thursday that combating right-wing extremism and white nationalism poses a serious challenge for security officials going into 2020.

"If you want intelligence to be good on the current wave of domestic terrorism — what people call right-wing extremism, Neo-Nazi extremism — I don't think people realize how tough that target is," Philip Mudd, who is now a counterterrorism analyst, told Hill.TV in response to a question about how security officials should prepare for the future.

"It's dispersed, that's people in every state, but it's also a civil liberties issue," he added.

Mudd said the first step towards combating white nationalist-fueled violence is re-evaluating the nation's political rhetoric.

"Either side of the political spectrum, you cannot validate their anger," he said in reference to members who identify as part of the Neo-Nazi movement.

"You can't even get close to saying it's appropriate to look at a foreigner in this country or an immigrant or an asylum seeker and say that person is less than you," he added. "It's not a political statement, it's what I saw with Al-Qaeda."

Mudd also said lawmakers need to take congressional action against homegrown hate groups like the Ku Klux Klan.

"That means laws that say, 'hey, groups that committed acts of violence — how about the KKK, you want to go after them? They've committed acts of violence for political reasons — that's terrorism,'" he said. "The politicians have to provide cover."

The mass shooting in El Paso, Texas has renewed calls to address the rise of domestic terror attacks. Federal authorities believe the suspected shooter, who killed 22 people, was motivated by hatred of Hispanics and immigrants.

Republican Sen. Martha McSally (R-Ariz.) is now putting forward a bill that would effectively close a loophole to make domestic terrorism a separate federal crime.

McSally, an Air Force veteran, told Politico on Wednesday that her legislation is necessary due to a loophole that prevents federal prosecutors from specifically charging suspects with domestic terrorism.

"For too long we have allowed those who commit heinous acts of domestic terrorism to be charged with related crimes that don't portray the full scope of their hateful actions," she said.

Authorities are also treating an earlier mass shooting at California's Gilroy Garlic Festival, in which a gunman killed three people before taking his own life, as domestic terrorism.

Dayton, Ohio also suffered a mass shooting the same weekend as El Paso. That shooter's motive, meanwhile, remains unknown as authorities still investigate the attack. The rampage left nine people dead and dozens of others wounded.

Walmart CEO Calls for Debate in Congress on Assault-Weapons Ban (Bloomberg)

Bloomberg [8/15/2019 10:23 AM, Matthew Townsend, 5350K]

In the wake of a mass shooting at a Walmart Inc. store, Chief Executive Officer Doug McMillon called for an assault weapons ban to be debated by Congress and said he's encouraged by growing support for gun-control measures like background checks.

America's largest retailer has found itself increasingly wading into political debates, at times risking the ire of loyal customers. For the first time, Walmart disclosed that it accounts for about 2% of the U.S. firearms market, which would place it outside the top three sellers. In ammunition, the chain maintains a 20% share.

"We believe the reauthorization of the assault weapons ban should be debated to determine its effectiveness in keeping weapons made for war out of the hands of mass murderers," McMillon said as part of his written commentary on the company's earnings. "We must also do more to understand the root causes that lead to this type of violent behavior."

McMillon also expressed support for stronger background checks and policies that would take weapons away from people who pose immediate danger. Walmart runs background checks on all gun purchases and only sells to customers who have cleared them, the company said.

Walmart was thrust back into the debate over gun control after the Aug. 3 shootings in El Paso, Texas, that left 22 people dead. The retailer has been criticized by gun-control supporters for decades for its decision to keep selling at least some types of firearms. Advocates have won some victories, including Walmart's decision in 2015 to end sales of military-style rifles.

The company's response this time has so far centered on removing displays of violent video games, a move criticized by gun-control advocates as feckless. The chain said on Thursday that it was still considering changes. In an open letter posted online after the shootings, McMillon said that the Bentonville, Arkansas-based company will be "thoughtful and deliberate in our responses."

The shootings have also raised concerns about safety within Walmart's stores. Just days before, two employees were shot and killed at a location in Mississippi. And since El Paso, there have been numerous threats and incidents, including a man entering a store armed with a rifle. Security has been increased at the El Paso store and a few others, the company said.

Walmart CEO: It's time to debate renewing U.S. assault weapons ban (CBS News)

CBS News [8/15/2019 2:00 PM, Kate Gibson, 3332K]

Walmart CEO Doug McMillon on Thursday called for a national debate on whether an assault weapons ban that Congress let expire in 2004 would be effective "in keeping weapons made for war out of the hands of mass murderers."

The retailer also released for the first time some of the data for its own gun sales: Walmart estimates it has a 2% share of the U.S. firearms market and 20% of ammunition sales.

Walmart is declining calls for it to stop selling guns after recent shootings killed more than 20 people at two of its stores in Mississippi and Texas.

Under pressure to stop selling guns after recent deadly shootings at two Walmart stores in Mississippi and Texas, the retailer's CEO, Doug McMillon, on Thursday said the U.S. should revisit the idea of banning assault weapons.

In prepared remarks to stock analysts that came with Walmart's quarterly earnings report, McMillon gingerly stepped into the political storm surrounding guns and an epidemic of mass shootings in the U.S.

"In the national conversation around gun safety, we're encouraged that broad support is emerging to strengthen background checks and to remove weapons from those who have been determined to pose an imminent danger," he stated. "The reauthorization of the assault weapons ban should be debated to determine its effectiveness in keeping weapons made for war out of the hands of mass murderers."

Commonly called the assault weapons ban, the Public Safety and Recreational Firearms Use Protection Act was adopted in 1994 and expired a decade later. The now-lapsed law prohibited the manufacture or sale for civilian use of certain semi-automatic weapons that could be converted to fire automatically and magazines that could accommodate 10 rounds or more of ammunition.

McMillon's comments Thursday were deemed insufficient by some gun-control advocates, who repeated their requests for the Arkansas-based retailer, whose total global sales last year were about \$500 billion, to end its gun sales and to help lobby for gun-control legislation rather than encourage a "debate."

"There's no debate: Gun reforms save lives and the largest retailer in the world has a responsibility to do everything it can to help Americans build safer communities," Igor Volsky, founder and executive director of Guns Down America, said Thursday in a statement. "It's time for Walmart to use its enormous leverage to push our congressional leaders to act by announcing it's ending gun sales, stopping donations to NRA-backed lawmakers, and actively lobbying for gun reform, including a ban on military-style weapons."

Hundreds of millions in ammo sales alone

Walmart, which up until Thursday had long declined to break out its gun sales from its overall sales figures, now estimates it represents about 2% of the market for firearms. That puts Walmart outside at least the top three sellers in the industry, the company said, without identifying the bigger sellers. Walmart's share of the U.S. ammunition market comes to about 20%, McMillon said.

"The percentages reflect sales and were determined based on a wide range of industry data. We have not broken out the information further to disclose sales figures," Walmart spokesperson Randy Hargrove told CBS MoneyWatch.

Of the estimated \$6 billion in non-military firearms and ammunition sales in 2018, ammo sales made up about \$1.9 billion, according to Jurgen Brauer, chief economist at Small

Arms Analytics. Given Walmart's 20% estimate, that would translate into \$380 million in ammunition sales for Walmart last year.

Overall, Brauer's analytics company estimates 13.8 million firearms were sold in the U.S. in 2018. Leaving out handguns, which Walmart only sells in Alaska, and miscellaneous other firearms, Brauer's firm estimates 5.4 million long guns were sold in the U.S. last year, with Walmart's stated 2% portion hard to gauge from the company's limited disclosures. "I imagine Walmart mostly sells lower-priced firearms, so 2% of units and 2% of dollar value will give a different impression," commented Brauer.

The projections come after a shooting rampage earlier this month that killed at least 22 people at one of its stores in El Paso, Texas, and a separate incident days earlier in which an employee shot and killed two other workers at a Walmart in Southaven, Mississippi. After those shootings, an armed man wearing body armor triggered panic when he walked into a Walmart store in Springfield, Missouri.

Walmart stopped sales of assault rifles in 2015 following several mass shootings and hiked the minimum age for gun purchases to 21 last year after the Parkland, Florida, massacre. It continues to sell rifles and shotguns in roughly half of its 4,750 stores in the U.S. as well as online.

The retailer last week removed violent video games from displays in its stores, and about 1,000 third-party gun-related products from its website.

Still, the steps are insufficient in the eyes of some, including the American Federation of Teachers, the country's biggest teachers' union, which last week threatened a boycott of Walmart over its gun sales.

[ME] Maryland recalls 8,000 Real ID driver's licenses (Washington Post)

Washington Post [8/15/2019 7:00 AM, Luz Lazo, 9425K]

The Maryland Motor Vehicle Administration has recalled the driver's licenses of 8,000 residents because they failed to meet requirements to be in compliance with the Real ID Act — a federal law designed to tighten security for state-issued identification.

That means if any of those drivers are pulled over by police for any reason, the officer could confiscate their driver's license.

If you are one of the 8,000, the MVA says you can avoid having your license confiscated by presenting the required paperwork — proof of age and identity, your Social Security number and Maryland residency — to an MVA branch.

Those required to file documents received their licenses starting in 2016, when the MVA began issuing Real ID licenses and identification cards under a process that at the time was approved by the federal government. But in late 2017, the Department of Homeland Security notified the state that all drivers who had the new Real ID would also need to have scanned copies of the documents that prove their identity and U.S. residency on file at the MVA.

Another 780,000 Maryland drivers with the state-issued Real ID license — identified by a star in the upper-right corner — also don't have the necessary documentation on file, according to the MVA. That number is down from about 1 million earlier this year. To avoid a crush at MVA offices, the state divided drivers into groups and gave them staggered deadlines. The first group was due to file documents this summer.

The 8,000 whose licenses have been recalled are among the first group who were required to present additional documentation; they had a June deadline, which then was extended to July 3. The state said they failed to respond, despite having received multiple warnings since December.

"These customers received more than six notices, and if they had previously provided a phone number they also received a personal phone call as the compliance deadline approached," MVA spokeswoman Adrienne Diaczok said. She said the MVA is sending yet another electronic reminder to the group about their recall status, urging them to visit a branch office as soon as possible to present documents.

So far, three of those drivers have had their licenses confiscated by law enforcement, Diaczok said. All three have submitted their documents and have their licenses back, she said.

In June, the MVA started mailing notices to a second group of drivers — about 150,000 — who have until November to get their documents on file.

"We've made great strides in getting customers to our offices to satisfy the federal REAL ID requirements," Diaczok said, noting that they are seeing an increase in appointments at the MVA.

The new license was designed to comply with the Real ID Act, a law passed after the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks to tighten security for state-issued driver's licenses and identification. It aims to prevent identity fraud and sets minimum standards for state-issued driver's licenses and IDs. Applicants are required to provide proof of identity and legal U.S. residency to obtain the new ID.

Beginning in fall 2020, the only driver's licenses that will be accepted for purposes such as boarding commercial flights will be those that meet federal Real ID requirements. Enforcement at federal buildings and military bases began in 2014. Those without a Real ID license will be able to provide another acceptable form of identification such as a valid U.S. passport.

The MVA website has a lookup tool that people can use to check whether their file is missing documents. It also provides a checklist of documents needed and facilitates making an appointment at the MVA.

A U.S. birth certificate or valid U.S. passport can be used as proof of identity. You can provide your original Social Security card or a W-2 or SSA-1099 to prove a Social Security number; and proof of residency can be shown with documents such as a bank statement, insurance card, vehicle registration, utility bill or mail from a federal, state or local government agency.

According to the state, more than half of Marylanders are REAL ID compliant. MVA officials said more notices will go out this summer and fall as the state scrambles to get everyone holding a Real ID in compliance before the hard national deadline of Oct. 1, 2020.

The Department of Homeland Security last week recertified Maryland's REAL ID program, validating the state's procedures as in compliance with the federal law.

[CT] Concerns raised about immigration cases moving out of state (San Francisco Chronicle)

San Francisco Chronicle [8/15/2019 2:46 PM, Susan Haigh, AP, 2613K]

A plan to stop holding federal detention hearings in Connecticut's only immigration court is raising concerns among political leaders and immigrant rights advocates, who say the defendants, their families and lawyers will be unfairly forced to travel out of state to have their day in court.

U.S. Sen. Richard Blumenthal is questioning the reasoning behind the change, which he sees as a "significant roadblock" to achieving a fair and final resolution to immigration cases.

"Requiring people, especially detainees, to appear at an out-of-state court puts a significant burden on their ability to defend themselves," Blumenthal wrote in a letter sent to Department of Homeland Security Acting Secretary Kevin McAleenan and obtained by The Associated Press.

In the letter, Blumenthal asks McAleenan to explain the reasoning behind the change in processing cases at Hartford Immigration Court, the types of cases affected and where they will now be heard.

Blumenthal said his office has learned from attorneys, affected immigrants and others that Immigration and Customs Enforcement will no longer issue notices to appear in the Hartford Immigration Court and that there are plans to eventually stop hearing detained immigrants' cases. But he said his office still has not received any confirmation from federal authorities.

"Bad enough that they are arresting some of these people who have been in this country for 20 years or more, worked hard, raised families, given back to communities, but then to move them to Boston without any accountability for why there are no hearings here is absolutely unconscionable," he told the AP in an interview.

Spokesmen for both the Department of Justice and Immigration and Customs Enforcement declined to comment on the change, including whether it's even happening. The Justice Department's Executive Office for Immigration Review is responsible for conducting immigration court proceedings, while the Department of Homeland Security's ICE manages the detention system.

Blumenthal accused ICE of "throwing more hurdles in the way of fairness" for the affected immigrants, who are already at a disadvantage given language barriers, financial resources and access to lawyers.

Connecticut Attorney Erin O'Neil-Baker, who represents hundreds of immigration clients, said her office received confirmation last month that Hartford Immigration Court will no longer be hearing any more "detained" cases.

"So, every Connecticut resident, their case will be heard in Massachusetts, which is awful," she said. "What it is, is a huge deterrent. Because attorneys like me do not want to travel to Massachusetts."

Melvin Medina, public policy and advocacy director for the American Civil Liberties Union of Connecticut, said it's unclear why the federal government is making the change and what kind of impact it will ultimately have.

He noted that Connecticut's immigration court in Hartford has a reputation for holding people on high bonds, so moving cases to Boston could be beneficial for some defendants. A study by Syracuse University found the Hartford court was tied with the Tacoma, Washington Immigration Court for having the highest median bond amounts during the first eight months of fiscal year 2018.

But Medina agreed the policy change would create a hardship for many families. Boston is about 100 miles northeast of Hartford.

Statistics obtained by ACLU from the Executive Office for Immigration Review show the number of cases in Hartford hasn't been slowing. The court handled 6,949 hearings in fiscal year 2017 and 7,604 in fiscal year 2018. As of March 31 of 2019, just three months into the year, there have been 4,124 immigration hearings held at the court.

"We'll be watching this pretty closely in the coming weeks to see what these changes mean for people," Medina said.

[NY] New York Moves to Classify Killings Fueled by White Supremacy as Domestic Terrorism (New York Times)

New York Times [8/15/2019 11:13 PM, Vivian Wang, 22840K]

Expressing deep concern about violence tied to white supremacy and other forms of bigotry, Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo proposed on Thursday to make New York the first state to classify "hate-fueled" killings as domestic terrorism.

Mr. Cuomo, a Democrat, unveiled the proposal in a speech, almost two weeks after back-to-back massacres in El Paso, Tex., and Dayton, Ohio, prompted all-too-familiar cries for action from both political parties.

Describing the need to address the "new violent epidemic" of "hate-fueled, American-on-American terrorism," Mr. Cuomo called for raising the penalties for violence motivated by race, gender, sexual orientation or other protected classes by making them punishable by up to life in prison without parole.

"Today, our people are three times more likely to suffer a terrorist attack launched by an American than one launched by a foreigner," he said. "Now this is not just repulsive. This is

not just immoral. This is not just anti-American. It is illegal. And we must confront it by enacting a new law to fit the crime.”

While the governor’s office has not shared any bill language, it said mass casualties would be defined as any death of at least one person and the attempted murder of at least two more.

Lawmakers have wrestled with how to define — and prosecute — domestic terrorism for years.

There is no federal crime of domestic terrorism. While Congress passed a law after the Sept. 11 attacks defining domestic terrorism as violent acts intended to intimidate civilians or the government, that law did not create an accompanying federal offense, such as exists for international terrorism. Acts of domestic terrorism have instead been prosecuted under different charges, such as attempting to “destroy a building in interstate commerce.”

Dozens of states, including New York, have enacted state-level laws defining terrorism, and some, including Georgia and Vermont, explicitly mention domestic terrorism. But those laws, like the federal one, largely measure terrorism as an attempt to coerce or destabilize the public or the government.

New York’s new law, by contrast, would specify that domestic terrorism included acts of mass violence against people for their identities.

“White supremacists, anti-Semites, anti-L.G.B.T.Q., white nationalists — these are Americans committing mass hate crimes against other Americans,” Mr. Cuomo said. “And it should be recognized for what it is: domestic terrorism.”

The governor also called on Congress to enact a new federal domestic terrorism law. Senator Martha McSally, Republican of Arizona, introduced a bill on Wednesday to do that.

Representative Hakeem Jeffries of Brooklyn, a Democrat who also spoke at the event at the New York City Bar Association, joined the call for federal action. “Rome is burning right now, and yet Donald Trump and his co-conspirators in the Republican Party are fiddling around,” he said.

Mr. Cuomo’s proposal appears well positioned to win support in the State Legislature, which this year fell under Democratic control for the first time in nearly a decade. While leaders of both the State Senate and Assembly did not explicitly say that they would back the bill, in statements they said they shared Mr. Cuomo’s goal of ensuring safety and condemning hate.

The bill would likely not be brought to a vote until the Legislature returns for its next session in January.

But even as the idea takes hold nationally as well as in New York, civil liberties advocates have raised the specter of First Amendment incursions, warning that terrorism investigations have sometimes involved harassment, sting operations and violations of free-speech rights.

A spokesman for the Anti-Defamation League, a leading organization fighting anti-Semitism, said the group would review Mr. Cuomo's bill with those considerations in mind. "Addressing terrorism through the criminal justice system involves a complex balancing of security needs and civil liberties concerns," the spokesman, Todd Gutnick, said.

In addition, some counterterrorism experts said efforts to define domestic terrorism risked becoming purely symbolic.

Mary McCord, a former top national security official in the Justice Department, said states' existing domestic terrorism laws have not proven very effective, in part because they do little to address crime prevention.

"They kind of just sit there unused, because they don't necessarily have the same experience in investigating and prosecuting terrorism cases" as federal authorities, she said. "I think all states should have domestic terrorism statutes, it's a good thing for them to have, but it hasn't really moved the ball significantly."

Brian Michael Jenkins, a senior researcher at the RAND Corporation, said that murder, whatever the motivation, typically already carries the maximum penalties.

"A mass murderer with a manifesto is still a mass murderer," Mr. Jenkins said.

"Prosecutors, if they have something like a murder — that's a good case to go on, and they are not necessarily interested in complicating the case by getting into a discussion of political motivation," he added.

Indeed, it is unclear just how much effect the proposal would have. Current hate crime law covers only second-degree, not first-degree, murder, and those convicted can qualify for parole; the governor's proposal would close that loophole, according to Mr. Cuomo's office.

But Ms. McCord said New York law also already provides for murder in aid of terrorism, under the state's broader definition of terrorism as an attempt to intimidate civilians.

Supporters of Mr. Cuomo's proposal said that singling out political motivation was, in part, the point.

Malcolm Hoenlein, the executive vice chair of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, appeared at Thursday's speech alongside Mr. Cuomo. He urged the audience to remember that "words are important."

"If you don't name it," Mr. Hoenlein said, "you can't fight it."

[NY] New York's Cuomo Seeks Law Labeling Mass Shootings as Terrorism (Bloomberg)

Bloomberg [8/15/2019 2:56 PM, Henry Goldman, 5350K]

New York Governor Andrew Cuomo called for new laws that would prosecute hate-motivated acts of mass violence as terrorism.

His proposed Hate Crimes Domestic Terrorism Act would be the first in the U.S., covering any person who kills in a mass attack on the basis of race, religion, creed or sexual orientation. Penalties for such acts should be the same as for other terrorism crimes -- up to life in prison without parole.

"It is now a two-front War on Terrorism; it is fed by hate, but hate from abroad and hate right here at home," Cuomo told a gathering of lawyers at the New York City Bar Association in Manhattan in a speech frequently interrupted by applause. "These are Americans committing mass hate-crimes against other Americans and it should be recognized for what it is -- domestic terrorism."

The failure of President Donald Trump and the Republican-controlled U.S. Senate to act in the aftermath of the Aug. 3 shooting at an El Paso Walmart that targeted Latinos, killing 22 people and injuring 24 others, requires the state of New York to act, the governor said. Mass killings are three-times more likely to occur at the hands of a U.S. citizen than a terrorist attack launched by perpetrators from outside the country, he said.

"The president's partisan political interest has trumped his responsibility to protect the public," Cuomo said, explaining his rationale for a state law. The federal government's history of gun regulation goes back to 1934, and included a 10-year ban on assault weapons in 1994 during former President Bill Clinton's administration, Cuomo said.

New York banned assault weapons and high-capacity ammunition magazines and toughened background checks six years ago in the aftermath of the massacre at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut. Cuomo said the federal government should do the same.

The three-term governor, who has repeatedly said he's not a candidate for president in 2020, called upon Democratic presidential candidates and members of congress to unify in backing tough gun control measures to "end the carnage."

It's up to the Democrats, he said, to "expose this president and the Republican senators as the political cowards they are and the lackeys for the gun industry that they serve," Cuomo said. "This is no time for Democratic division or for legislative baby steps."

[NY] Cuomo proposes new state law to define domestic terrorism (The Hill)

The Hill [8/15/2019 4:27 PM, Rebecca Klar, 2806K]

New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo (D) on Thursday proposed a new law defining domestic terrorism as a crime punishable by up to life without parole, as a way to address the growing threat such attacks pose nationwide.

The Hate Crimes Domestic Terrorism Act, which appears to be the first of its kind in the U.S., would apply to anyone who kills others in mass attacks on the basis of race, religion or sexual orientation, Cuomo said.

"These are Americans committing mass hate crimes against other Americans and it should be recognized for what it is: domestic terrorism," Cuomo said.

“This is not just repulsive, it’s not just immoral, it’s not just anti-American. It is illegal and we must confront it by enacting a new law to fit the crime,” he added.

The penalty would be the “same as it is for other terrorism crimes,” up to life without parole, Cuomo said.

Cuomo’s announcement comes after mass shootings in El Paso, Texas, and Dayton, Ohio, that killed 31 people.

While no states appear to have laws on the books like the one Cuomo is proposing, 34 states and D.C. have their own anti-terrorism laws, according to The Intercept.

The suspect in the El Paso shooting allegedly wrote a manifesto ahead of the attack warning of a “Hispanic invasion.” Federal authorities are considering charging the suspect with hate crimes.

In response to the El Paso shooting, President Trump said “our nation must condemn bigotry, hatred and white supremacy.” He also pushed back on accusations that his immigration rhetoric inspired the attack.

Cuomo called domestic terrorism an “American cancer” that is infecting “sick and hate-filled hearts.”

“It spreads in the hidden corners of the internet and in the highest positions in the land,” Cuomo said, without mentioning Trump.

“So if the federal government won’t act, or if the federal government can’t act, New York State will,” Cuomo added.

He went on to say that hate is just part of the issue, with the other being lax gun control laws at the federal level.

“We are facing the lethal combination of hate and guns,” he said.

Cuomo has joined other Democrats in calling on Congress to pass gun reform legislation, such as universal background checks, an assault weapons ban and red flag laws.

New York passed a series of gun reform measures six years ago following the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting in neighboring Connecticut.

[NY] Cuomo proposes NY law to treat mass-casualty hate crimes as domestic terrorism (FOX News)

FOX News [8/15/2019 8:47 PM, Frank Miles, 10258K]

New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo proposed legislation Thursday that would treat mass-casualty hate crimes as domestic terrorism.

The proposal represents Cuomo’s response to the Aug. 3 mass shooting at a Walmart in El

Paso, Texas, in which a gunman who admitted to police that he was targeting Mexicans killed 22 people and wounded 24 others.

"We still treat terrorism as an act committed by foreigners," Cuomo, a Democrat, said in a statement. "It is, but only in part - it is now a two front [sic] war on terrorism. It's fed by hate: hate from abroad and hate right here at home."

"White supremacists, anti-Semites, anti-LGBTQ white nationalists - these are Americans committing mass hate crimes against other Americans and it should be recognized for what it is: domestic terrorism," he added. "American citizens who are radicalized not by a foreign ideology but rather radicalized by hate for other Americans are still terrorists."

Under the proposal, mass shootings against a group of people based on "their actual or perceived" race, color, national origin, ancestry, gender, gender identity or expression, religion, religious practice, age, disability or sexual orientation would be considered "terrorist crimes" and be punished by a sentence of up to life in prison without the possibility of parole.

The proposed legislation would define a mass-casualty incident as any incident that results in the death of one person and the attempted murder of at least two other people.

"Today, our people are three times more likely to suffer a terrorist attack launched by an American than one launched by a foreigner," Cuomo said. "It is not just repulsive, immoral, and anti-American - it is illegal and we must confront it by enacting a new law to fit the crime."

Under current New York law, terrorism charges are reserved for crimes meant to intimidate civilians or influence state government through murder, assassination or kidnapping.

In the El Paso shooting, state and federal officials have announced they will prosecute the accused gunman as a domestic terrorist. The accused shooter, 21-year-old Patrick Crusius, could face the death penalty.

Cuomo also called on federal lawmakers to enact universal background check legislation and ban "military-style assault weapons and high capacity magazines."

[DC] Mayor Opposes D.C. Facility for Unaccompanied Alien Children: Won't Be 'Complicit' (Breitbart)

Breitbart [8/14/2019 7:34 PM, Penny Starr, 2034K]

Bowser said in a statement on Tuesday that she had "no intention" of supporting the federal government's plan to build a temporary facility in the District.

"Washington, D.C. will not be complicit in the inhumane practice of detaining migrant children in warehouses," Bowser said. "We have no intention of accepting a new federal facility, least of all one that detains and dehumanizes migrant children."

The Washington Examiner reported that the feds have to have the cooperation of D.C. officials:

“Though the plans for the facility are planned by the federal government, the local D.C. Child and Family Services Agency must issue the license for a facility that plans to care for minors. They found the initial application from DSS to be “inadequate,” according to the Washington Post.

The structure will also need approval from the D.C. Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs, which issues certificates for buildings that will have occupants.”

The federal contractor Dynamic Service Solution is seeking to open the shelter and is seeking workers to care for “unaccompanied alien children,” according to the Associated Press.

According to an Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) fact sheet “as of August 5, 2019, there are approximately 8,700 UAC in HHS care.”

Customs and Border Protection (CBP) statistics show that in fiscal year 2018 (Oct. 1, 2017 to Sept. 30, 2018) 107,212 unaccompanied alien children were taken into custody.

Health and Human Services (HHS) — the agency in charge of UACs once they are transferred from federal law enforcement agencies — provides a range of services:

Consistent with federal law, ORR places children while in our care in the least restrictive setting that is in the best interest of the child, taking into account potential flight risk and danger to self and others. Presently, all ORR-funded facility services includes:

Classroom education

Mental and medical health services

Case management

Recreation

The ORR fact sheet details the dramatic increase of UACs entering the United States:

“ORR has provided care for and found suitable sponsors for almost 390,000 UAC. For the first nine years of the UAC Program at ORR, fewer than 8,000 children were served annually in this program. Since Fiscal Year 2012 (October 1, 2011 – September 30, 2012), this number has jumped dramatically, with a total of 13,625 children referred to ORR by the end of FY 2012. The program received 24,668 UAC referrals from DHS in FY 2013, 57,496 referrals in FY 2014, 33,726 referrals in FY 2015, 59,170 in FY 2016, and 40,810 in FY 2017. In FY 2018 49,100 UAC were referred.”

The fact sheet also states that there are “approximately 170 facilities and programs in 23 states funded by ORR.”

[MN] Low-income immigrants in MN shying away from benefits, even with Trump rules still weeks away (Minnesota Public Radio)

Minnesota Public Radio [8/15/2019 12:50 PM, Ibrahim Hirsi, 15K]

The Trump administration announced this week new rules that would penalize legal immigrants who rely on public benefits, but many low-income immigrants and refugees in Minnesota already started withdrawing from social welfare programs months ago, according to several nonprofits serving refugee and immigrant clients.

Micaela Schuneman, refugee services director at the St. Paul-based International Institute of Minnesota, said her organization has seen a 10-percent drop in the number of eligible clients enrolling for public benefits as soon as the administration proposed the rule last October.

Also, half of the institute's clients have expressed concerns about repercussions from being labeled as a "public charge," even though refugees and asylum seekers wouldn't be affected under the new provision, Schuneman said.

"For example, they're not enrolling in health insurance even though they're eligible for health insurance, and this will not impact them," she said.

The provision, which is slated to go into effect this fall, allows federal officials to deny permanent residency status to legal immigrants if they receive government benefits — including food stamps, health care and public housing — or are likely to do so in the future.

In other words, the rule will make it harder for these immigrants to obtain a green card, a vital step in the process of obtaining U.S. citizenship, and could exclude them from petitioning for their family to come to America.

To avoid any obstacle that might risk their dream of becoming permanent residents, many low-income immigrants are not enrolling in public assistance programs, said Colleen Moriarty, the executive director at Hunger Solutions Minnesota. Her organization has also noticed many people opting out of assistance programs since the changes were proposed.

"There has been a reluctance for families to sign their kids up for reduced lunch," said Moriarty. "These are people who deserve and need benefits."

Delivering on campaign promises

This week, Ken Cuccinelli, the acting director of U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, said the new rules would promote "self-sufficiency."

"All immigrants who can stand on their own two feet, self-sufficient, pull themselves up by their bootstraps," would be welcome, Cuccinelli told NPR.

The public charge provision marks the latest in President Trump's series of anti-immigration policies, many of which he promised during the presidential campaign.

After taking office in 2017, for instance, Trump signed an executive order that barred refugees from predominantly Muslim countries from entering the U.S.

In 2018, his administration reduced the number of annual refugee admissions to 30,000 — the lowest annual cap the U.S. has accepted since the creation of the Refugee Act in 1980.

Meanwhile, Immigration and Customs Enforcement has intensified its effort to expel unauthorized immigrants, including people who have lived in the United States for decades and have no violent criminal records.

Then this week, the administration announced a revision to the public-charge provision, which has been practiced since the 17th-century, when British colonial rule brought it to the Americas.

At the time, it was called the “poor law,” and the colonial authorities used it to arrest street beggars and bar poor people from certain areas. After the U.S. gained its independence, some state and municipal governments adopted the practice, which later became known as public charge.

States like New York and Massachusetts used the provision to deport or deny entry of undesirable immigrants — or those who could not provide for themselves and would end up in publicly funded shelters.

In 1882, the federal government inherited the provision when Congress passed the first comprehensive immigration law, which excluded “any convict, lunatic, idiot, or any person unable to take care of himself or herself without becoming a public charge.” After that, each administration has tweaked the public-charge rule.

Since 1999, previous administrations defined a public charge as someone whose main source of income was cash assistance or someone who depended on the government for long-term care, according to the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services.

The revised version, however, considerably expands the provision to any immigrant who has received certain public assistance including food stamps, Medicaid or Section 8 housing vouchers for more than a year.

It’s common for immigration advocates as well as local and state government to file lawsuits against the administration when it announces controversial immigration policy. Two California counties — Santa Clara and San Francisco — became the first to challenge the administration over the public charge rule.

The Minnesota Attorney General’s Office, which in the past joined immigration-related lawsuits, did not respond to an interview request seeking comment on whether it will file litigation against the administration.

Lenore Millibergity, interim executive director at the Immigrant Law Center of Minnesota, said her organization is “looking at several different options” and deciding what will most likely have the “best outcome to try to stop this rule.”

‘Our participants are quite frightened’

Nancy Brady, the president of Neighborhood House — a nonprofit that provides food support, housing, education and youth leadership programs to residents of St. Paul — has also observed a similar trend in the immigrant communities the organization has served.

“Many of our participants are quite frightened,” she said. “Many quite don’t understand why they’re being vilified.”

Neighborhood House was established more than 120 years ago to serve Jewish immigrants escaping the pogroms in Russia.

Since then, those seeking assistance at the organization have shifted from predominantly Jewish and Russian-speaking immigrants to Asian, Latino and African immigrants.

These aren’t individuals who live to receive handouts, Brady said. They’re people “seeking to build their social and economic well-being, and really move from surviving to thriving,” Brady added.

Brady, other nonprofit leaders and state officials said they’re concerned that the public-charge rule might lead to bigger problems for immigrant and refugee communities — and for the state.

If families continue to not access needed medical treatment and health care services, it might lead to “far more expensive care later in the emergency room,” said Pamela Wheelock, acting commissioner of the Minnesota Department of Human Services, in a statement to MPR News.

“If families forgo well-child visits or immunizations, the state could see preventable disease outbreaks emerge,” she added. “Without adequate food and health care, children could suffer lifelong consequences to their health, academic achievement, and productivity.”

[AZ] Arizona Court Rejects Death Penalty for Illegal Alien Accused of Murdering Grant Ronnebeck (Breitbart)

Breitbart [8/15/2019 9:39 PM, John Binder, 2034K]

Last month, Judge Michael Kemp ruled that 34-year-old illegal alien Apolinar Altamirano was not eligible for the death penalty because he had a fifth-grade education and was unable to obtain special education because he grew up in rural Mexico. Last year, Kemp ruled that prosecutors in the case would not be allowed to mention that Altamirano was an illegal alien who had been living in the U.S. for more than 20 years.

This week, the Arizona Court of Appeals reinforced Kemp’s decision, telling prosecutors that they would not be allowed to seek the death penalty against Altamirano.

On January 22, 2015, Altamirano entered a QuickTrip convenience store in Mesa, Arizona, where Ronnebeck worked as a store clerk, and allegedly shot the young man to death after demanding a pack of cigarettes, Breitbart News reported at the time.

After shooting and killing Ronnebeck, prosecutors say Altamirano stepped over the body of the young man to grab a couple more packs of cigarettes before fleeing the scene.

Following the alleged murder, the illegal alien sent police on a high-speed chase and was eventually arrested and taken into custody.

At the time of the alleged murder, Altamirano — an alleged self-proclaimed member of the Sinaloa Cartel — had been out of police custody on bond despite having orders to be deported from the U.S.

Prosecutors will continue seeking a first-degree murder conviction for Altamirano.

"Our children are worth ... it's blood on [the Democrats'] hands," Angel Dad Steve Ronnebeck said during a press conference for Angel Families in June. " ... I made a promise right after Grant died that I was going to keep fighting for Grant and keep fighting for the American people. What the American people don't understand is that it's going to happen to them or somebody they know ... with so many people coming across our border."

[Mexico] Advocates say "Remain in Mexico" policy turns migrants into a "marketable commodity" (CBS News)

CBS News [8/15/2019 6:42 AM, Camilo Montoya-Galvez, 3332K]

In the late winter and spring of this year, the migrant shelters in this Texas border city were overwhelmed. Local immigration authorities were releasing hundreds of asylum-seeking families, most of them from Central America.

"We were dealing with 800, 900, 1,000 people that were being released to us per day," Ruben Garcia, the executive director of the Annunciation House network of shelters, told CBS News.

For years, Garcia and his organization have been communicating with the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and Border Patrol units in this sector to ensure the families released by the agencies get temporary housing and assistance while they arrange for travel to reunify with family members living across the U.S.

Although he acknowledged that helping such large groups of migrants was a monumental task, Garcia stressed that his organization and local partners were able to do so, including by paying more than \$1 million in hotel room fees when there was no space at the shelters. Over the past 10 months, he said Annunciation House has housed more than 150,000 migrants, most of whom left El Paso within two days of their release from detention.

In recent months, however, the U.S government has been keeping most asylum seekers on the other side of the border, in Ciudad Juárez, Mexico — where advocates like Garcia say they can't help them. Under a controversial program known as "Remain in Mexico," the Trump administration has been requiring tens of thousands of migrants who seek asylum at certain sectors of the border, including El Paso, to wait in Mexico while their cases are processed in the U.S.

Along with amped up immigration enforcement by the Mexican government, the administration has directly pointed to this policy as one the main reasons apprehension numbers along the southern border have dwindled in the past two months from the height of

the recent surge in May. The Annunciation House is now receiving between 50 and 150 migrants per day — a sharp drop from the 1,000 peak — and has closed all but two shelters.

But Garcia said he "utterly" disagrees with the notion that the "Remain in Mexico" policy, formally called the Migrant Protection Protocols (MPP), should continue because it has contributed to lower numbers of families staying at his shelters.

"I don't accept that we should do MPP because we need to lighten the load, be it on us or Border Patrol," he said during an interview at the Casa del Refugiado, a former warehouse that now serves as the main shelter for most migrant families released by immigration authorities in the El Paso area. "My response to that is: when you have human need, you invite more people to help respond to that human need."

Garcia's main concerns about the policy are shared by attorneys, other advocates in the El Paso area and even some of the asylum officers interviewing migrants in the MPP program who express fear of returning to Mexico. They've all denounced the policy as one that forces desperate migrants — many of them vulnerable families with small children and single women — to wait months in Mexico, where they struggle to find housing and lawyers and sometimes face persecution.

"It's especially dangerous for refugees," Garcia said, referring to Ciudad Juárez, as locals refer to the city, one of the most dangerous in Mexico. "There are gangs that would kidnap a refugee and hold the refugee for ransom: 'I've got this woman and her child from Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador. Give me the number for relatives. Send me \$2,000, send \$4,000, send me \$5,000 or I'll kill them.'"

According to the State Department, violent crime and gang activity are "widespread" in Chihuahua, the state where Ciudad Juárez is located. The U.S. has also recently begun to place asylum seekers in the MPP program when they arrive near Brownsville and Laredo, returning them to Tamaulipas, one of five Mexican states the State Department warns travelers not to visit because of rampant crime and the risk of being kidnapped.

"They are a marketable commodity and our State Department knows that," Garcia added, referring to asylum seekers.

Byron, 32, a native of Guatemala, was walking alongside his daughter Alexandra, 10, in the streets of Ciudad Juárez when he said two men began following them.

"We ran, but I told her we were exercising so she wouldn't get scared," he told CBS News. "When we got home, I still didn't tell her."

Byron is sure the two strangers were kidnappers, whom he said are known to target the thousands of Central American, Cuban and Venezuelan migrants stranded in Ciudad Juárez. Last week, the advocacy group Human Rights First released a report that documented 110 "cases of rape, kidnapping, sexual exploitation, assault, and other violent crimes" against asylum seekers sent to Mexico by the U.S. government.

"This places us in danger, us Central Americans and people from other countries," Byron

said of the "Remain in Mexico" policy. "Here in Juárez, it is dangerous. You can't walk outside and feel safe."

The Guatemalan father and his daughter have their first hearing in El Paso's immigration court in mid-September, but he's contemplating returning to Guatemala. He said he can't work in Mexico because he has no one he trusts to take care of Alexandra. Like the vast majority of migrants in the program, he also has not been able to find a lawyer to take up his case.

Despite these barriers, Byron said he will remain in Juárez for as long as he can for one reason: His wife, Sandra, 32, and other two children, Yoshua, 13, and Angelina, 8, are in Alabama with his mother.

After leaving their home in Guatemala's Petén Department, the family arrived together in Ciudad Juárez in early July, but Sandra, Yoshua and Angelina were detained by Mexican immigration officials and deported to Guatemala. Byron and Alexandra waited for them to come back to Juárez, where they reunited in late July for a few hours. But they became separated once again.

Sandra, Yoshua and Angelina crossed the border in the El Paso sector without Byron and Alexandra — as instructed by the people they paid for the journey — and were briefly detained but later released by U.S. authorities.

Byron and Alexandra did the same a few hours afterwards, but after being detained, they were placed in the MPP program and returned to Mexico, where they have been waiting ever since. Sandra, Yoshua and Angelina, meanwhile, boarded a series of buses to get from El Paso to Florence, a city in northwestern Alabama where Byron's mother has been living for a few years.

Although the program has guidelines as to who can and can't be returned to Mexico, advocates and attorneys say the decision by U.S. border officials to place someone in MPP is completely discretionary, ensuring that some fortunate migrants, like Sandra and her two children, are allowed to stay in the U.S. as their cases are adjudicated, while others, like Byron and Alexandra, aren't.

"It appears to be completely random, like roughly a duck-duck-goose type of a thing," said Taylor Levy, an immigration attorney in El Paso. "There's no explanation or rhyme or reason for why they were not put into the program. It appears to be just luck."

Despite being sad about the family's separation and his current predicament in Ciudad Juárez, Byron said he's happy that his wife and two of his children are now in the U.S.

Sandra, however, said the family did not make a weeks-long, perilous trek to the U.S.-Mexico border to be separated. "Right now, we are all desperate," she told CBS News. "We've never been separated for such a long time. My little girl misses her dad."

This week, Sandra has been taking Yoshua and Angelina to a local clinic to get their vaccines. The two children will be starting school in Alabama next week. They do not want leave the U.S., but Sandra knows returning to Guatemala is a possibility if her husband's

stay in Ciudad Juárez is prolonged or if he and Alexandra are denied asylum.

"I don't know what we will do," she said, referring to the potential scenario in which Byron and Alexandra are not allowed to enter the U.S. "We might return to Guatemala."

Unlike most of the administration's unilateral efforts to deter migration — including two sweeping regulations to restrict asylum at the border — the courts have allowed the "Remain in Mexico" policy to continue. It was briefly blocked by a federal judge but the Ninth Circuit ruled in May that the administration could proceed with the policy as it considers the merits of the legal challenge mounted by several advocacy groups.

The Ninth Circuit is scheduled to hear oral arguments in early October, meaning the MPP program will most likely remain in place in the coming months.

Along with El Paso, the policy has been implemented at border sectors near San Diego, Calexico, Laredo and Brownsville — located in the Rio Grande Valley, the most heavily patrolled section of the frontier. Since it reached an agreement in June with the Mexican government to avert President Trump's threats to impose tariffs on Mexican goods, the Trump administration has pledged to expand the MPP program along the entire border.

When the policy made its debut in San Diego in December of last year, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) cited a "migration crisis" at U.S.-Mexico border stemming primarily from the months-long, unprecedented influx of Central American families and unaccompanied children. The agency said the program was designed, in part, to deter "false" asylum claims and devote "more attention on those who are actually fleeing persecution."

CBS News reached out DHS with a series of questions regarding where the policy would be implemented next and whether the program would continue indefinitely, even with significant declines in apprehension numbers. CBS News has not received a response.

Unless blocked by the courts, Garcia, Annunciation House's director, said the "Remain in Mexico" policy will continue to place asylum seekers in harm's way and prompt many of them to give up on their claims and return home. The Mexican government has already been operating a program to transport asylum seekers turned back by U.S. border officials back to their home countries in Central America.

"MPP has absolutely nothing to do with immigration policy, it has nothing to do with asylum, it has nothing to do with justice. It has everything to do with politics," Garcia said. "We are playing politics with the lives of human beings."

[Editorial note: consult video at source link]

[Guatemala] 'Safe third party' migration agreement with Guatemala violates law, attorneys general claim (San Diego Union Tribune)

San Diego Union Tribune [8/15/2019 3:13 PM, Gustavo Solis]

The Trump administration's "safe third party" agreement with Guatemala harms thousands of already vulnerable individuals and violates the U.S. Constitution, according to a letter

signed by 22 attorneys general urging the Department of Homeland Security to withdraw the rule.

The agreement, announced in July, states that the U.S. would deny protection to asylum seekers who did not apply for asylum in Guatemala or Mexico before reaching the U.S.-Mexico border. This restricts Central American asylum seekers from asking for help at the U.S.-Mexico border.

The letter, which was published Thursday, was co-written by California's Attorney General Xavier Becerra and co-signed by states that are home to 68 percent of those who have received asylum in the United States.

Those states include, Massachusetts, Connecticut, Delaware, Hawaii, Illinois, Iowa, Maine, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, Nevada, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont, Virginia, and Washington. The Attorney General of Washington D.C. also signed the letter.

"The Rule puts vulnerable populations at risk for further persecution in those countries and ignores those countries' lack of fair and functioning asylum systems," the letter states. "Ultimately, this will lead to more immigrants staying in the shadows, as well as bona fide asylum seekers being denied the United States' protection."

The letter references some of President Donald Trump's previous statements claiming asylum seekers at the southern border were "rapists," MS-13 gang members, and "unknown Middle Easterners," to argue that the policy was motivated by racial hostilities.

"President Trump's history of statements and actions indicating racial animus toward non-white immigrants and Latinos, Latino asylum seekers, and migrants from Central America evidences more than a plausible inference that racial animus was a motivating factor behind the Rule," the letter states.

The letter is addressed to DHS Secretary Kevin McAleenan and Attorney General William Barr. DHS did not immediately respond for comment.

Initially, Guatemala did not want to be part of the agreement. However, the country signed on after President Donald Trump threatened economic sanctions.

After the agreement was signed in July, DHS's website released a joint statement with the U.S. and Guatemala calling it, "important progress on a comprehensive regional approach to addressing irregular migration patterns."

The statement describes the agreement as one of a series of initiatives designed to reduce the flow of "irregular migration and ensure the safety and protection of vulnerable populations, especially children."

The attorneys general's letter claims the policy will have the opposite effect because it will place asylum seekers at greater risk of danger by forcing them to ask for asylum in the same countries they are fleeing from.

Additionally, the letter argues, Guatemala is ill-suited to offer asylum to the thousands of people at the U.S.-Mexico border.

“Guatemala has only 12 officials to work on asylum cases, and three staff members to interview asylum applicants,” the letter states. “In addition to the sheer infeasibility of determining asylum cases without sufficient staff, Guatemala would also fail to provide protection to those in need.”

The letter points out that Guatemala did not grant a single asylum application of the 259 it received in 2018.

The attorneys general argue that the “safe third party” agreement violated the U.S. Constitution because it discriminates against asylum seekers based on ethnicity and country of origin.

“The Rule, which applies only to asylum seekers arriving to the United States at the southern border, is unconstitutional because it discriminates against individuals based on their race, ethnicity and national origin in violation of the Fifth Amendment’s equal protection principles,” they wrote.

Immigration and Customs Enforcement

[ME] Sanctuary County: Two Illegal Aliens Accused of Raping 11-Year-Old Girl (Breitbart)

Breitbart [8/14/2019 7:39 PM, John Binder, 2034K]

According to WJLA 7, 29-year-old Mauricio Barrera-Navidad, an illegal alien from El Salvador, and 28-year-old illegal alien Carlos Palacios-Amaya were arrested this week by Montgomery County law enforcement officials after the victim told a social worker of the rapes.

The victim, a 12-year-old who was 11 years old at the time of the alleged rapes, told a social worker at her elementary school that in July 2018, she met Barrera-Navidad at a family birthday party. The girl said Barrera-Navidad, a father of four children, took her into a bedroom and raped her. After the alleged rape, the victim said Barrera-Navidad continued to contact her.

In September 2018, the victim said she was introduced to Palacios-Amaya, who then allegedly raped her on multiple occasions. On one instance, the victim said the illegal alien videoed the rape on his cellphone and would pressure her to skip school so she would be unsupervised at home.

Barrera-Navidad, according to the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agency, was ordered deported in December 2016 but has remained living in the sanctuary jurisdiction of Montgomery County, which shields criminal illegal aliens from deportation.

Palacios-Amaya, ICE officials said, has already been deported from the U.S. once before in 2014. Sometime after his deportation, the illegal alien returned to the country and settled in the sanctuary county.

Barrera-Navidad is being held on a \$100,000 bond and is facing one charge of rape. Palacios-Amaya is facing four counts of rape.

Last year, as Breitbart News reported, locals were outraged when police revealed that a 41-year-old illegal alien from Mexico had been charged for allegedly raping a non-verbal, special needs 13-year-old girl. The illegal alien had been working as a cook in the sanctuary jurisdiction of Montgomery County.

[RI] A truck hit ICE protesters outside a private prison. They say a guard was driving. (Washington Post)

Washington Post [8/15/2019 5:20 AM, Tim Elfrink, 9425K]

The protesters were sitting on the pavement to block staff from parking at a Rhode Island prison that works with Immigration and Customs Enforcement when a black pickup truck swerved toward them. The protesters shouted as the driver laid on the horn, and the truck briefly stopped.

And then, the driver hit the gas.

In a viral video captured by bystanders, the protesters screamed and jumped out of the way. Several were struck, according to organizers of the Wednesday night demonstration at the Wyatt Detention Facility in Central Falls, R.I. Some were treated at a hospital, though none were severely injured.

“It was terrifying because we didn’t know what exactly his intention was,” Amy Anthony, a spokesman for Never Again Action, a Jewish activist group that planned the protest, told The Washington Post. “It certainly appeared he was trying to hit us.”

The driver, protesters say, was a correctional officer employed by the privately run facility who was wearing a badge and a uniform — an assertion backed up by video of the incident. Local police officers working at the protest did not intervene, Anthony said, and the driver eventually walked into the prison after other guards pepper-sprayed the protesters.

“It’s obvious that there was an assault that took place,” Anthony said. “We’re not sure what we can do now.”

An employee reached by phone at the Wyatt Detention Facility declined to comment early on Thursday. Messages left for the Central Falls Police Department and ICE weren’t immediately returned.

The confrontation took place during a wave of protests around the country by Jewish groups against ICE, including a demonstration that shut down part of Manhattan’s West Side Highway on Saturday, leading police to arrest nearly 100 protesters.

Anthony’s group, which ties its activism to preventing future atrocities like the Holocaust, arrived at the prison around 7 p.m. on Wednesday. The Wyatt Detention Facility, which describes itself as a “quasi-public corporation,” the Providence Journal reported, has contracts with ICE to house immigration detainees. The facility is operated by the Central

Falls Detention Facility Corporation and is overseen by a board appointed by the mayor of Central Falls, located about seven miles north of Providence.

About 30 protesters first shut down the main entrance to the prison by linking arms and sitting on the ground, Anthony said. Around 9 p.m., they moved to block the driveways into the staff parking lot. About 45 minutes later, the black pickup showed up.

"The truck kind of swerved to sort of pick up speed," Anthony said. "It felt unreal to see this happening and to see that someone was actively driving into a group of people who, as I say, were peacefully sitting."

The group included children and one protester in a wheelchair, Anthony said.

Before the truck could get through to the parking lot, though, protesters gathered on the other side of the gate, shouting "Shame!" Moments later, other guards from the prison rushed across the street to surround the protesters and then fired pepper spray.

After the demonstrators fled the pepper spray, the driver parked in the lot and then walked into the prison, Anthony said.

Although Central Falls police were on the scene, they did not get involved, Anthony said, and officers later refused to take statements from protesters. Organizers are discussing what legal recourse they might have now.

Anthony said the incident hardened her group's resolve to continue protesting ICE and prisons that work with the federal agency.

"If this is the way this correctional officer is behaving in public when people are recording, it's not hard to imagine the behavior is much worse behind the walls in the facility where no one can see what is happening," she said.

[RI] Car Speeds Into Crowd Of ICE Protesters Outside Detention Facility (NPR)

NPR [8/15/2019 6:49 PM, Merrit Kennedy, 2K] Video: [HERE](#)

A man drove a car into a group of peaceful demonstrators on Wednesday evening protesting Immigration and Customs Enforcement policies outside a detention facility in Central Falls, R.I.

After a video of the incident went viral, the Donald W. Wyatt Detention Facility said that it has placed a correctional officer named Thomas Woodworth on administrative leave pending an independent investigation. A spokesperson for the facility would not confirm that Woodworth was the driver, saying that is "subject to the investigation."

The protest was organized by a group called Never Again Action, which says that several demonstrators sustained injuries there. The group is made up of Jewish community members "protesting the prison's contract with ICE and the inhumane treatment of these people by ICE," protest organizer Amy Anthony told NPR.

It started on Wednesday evening, with interfaith leaders giving speeches and demonstrators

singing songs.

Later in the evening, Anthony said the protesters moved to block the entrances to the facility's staff parking lot. Video of the incident shows a group of several dozen people chanting.

"The mood was very calm and there was no sort of warning or indication that anything violent was about to happen," she said.

Suddenly, a black pickup truck moves at high speeds toward the group. It honks as some of the protesters scream and scramble to get out of the way. Protesters yell, "Shame!" and "The whole world is watching!" The truck pauses.

"I saw that the truck was stopped, and then after some hesitation the driver stepped on the gas and revved up and started plowing forward, despite the fact that there were people standing right in front of the truck and people still sitting on the ground," she said.

Watch the video here – and we should note that it is disturbing.

A later video from the scene shows a group of guards rushing toward the confrontation. A few seconds later, a cloud of gas appears in the crowd and a woman is carried away. "I can't breathe, I'm going throw up," she says. "I got pepper sprayed."

Anthony said two people went to the hospital for injuries from being hit by the truck, and three people went to the hospital because of the pepper spray.

She described the officer's placement on administrative leave as a "pretty weak response," adding, "clearly he committed a crime, so why he was placed on administrative leave instead of being taken into custody on the spot?"

After the driver parked, "he got out of the truck and he joined his colleagues in the driveway to form a perimeter and he just stood there staring at us," Anthony said.

The Wyatt Detention Facility describes itself as a "quasi-public operation." It houses up to 730 adult male inmates and up to 40 women. ICE detainees are housed in the facility, which also has detainees from the Federal Bureau of Prisons, the U.S. Navy, and the Mashantucket Pequot Tribe.

Rhode Island's Attorney General said it has launched an investigation into the incident with Rhode Island State Police.

"Once we have a full understanding of the relevant facts, we will determine how to proceed," said a statement from the Attorney General. "Peaceful protest is a fundamental right of all Americans; it is unfortunate last night's situation unfolded as it did."

A statement from the detention facility also said its warden is "conducting a top to bottom review of the incident, Wyatt correctional officers' response, and the Wyatt's protocols regarding protest activities outside of the facility."

ICE said in a statement that its personnel "were not involved in the protest response that occurred on Wednesday night."

The group is vowing to continue protesting. "We're really concerned about people's safety, of course, but we are not deterred by this," Anthony said. "We were harmed by this, but we want to keep in mind that the people who are in ICE custody are being harmed every day."

[RI] Several injured as officers pepper-spray protesters outside ICE facility in Rhode Island (ABC News)

ABC News [8/15/2019 6:29 AM, Mark Osborne, 2702K] Video [HERE](#)

Chaos broke out at the protest of an Immigration and Customs Enforcement facility in Rhode Island late Wednesday when a truck tried to drive through protesters and corrections officers ended up pepper-spraying the crowd.

The protest outside the Wyatt Detention Center in Central Falls, Rhode Island, less than 10 miles north of Providence, was led by members of the "Never Again" movement, which likens undocumented immigrants being imprisoned to the treatment of Jews during the Holocaust. Protesters have been organizing outside the ICE facility since early July.

About a dozen people were treated for irritation due to the pepper spray Wednesday, while one person was taken to the hospital for a minor injury, Providence ABC affiliate WLNE reported.

Protesters surrounded the pick-up truck as it left the facility, with at least one person jumping on the back, before the group refused to move. They could be heard chanting, "The whole world is watching," as officers repeatedly asked them to move back. After about 45 seconds, at least one corrections officer is seen unleashing a large cloud of pepper spray -- sending the dozens of protesters scattering.

The person driving the truck was not an ICE employee, an official told ABC News.

"Every time we ask ourselves would I have done something during the Holocaust? Would I have done something?" protester Jack Silverman told WLNE. "I want to make sure that when I tell my grandkids, 'This is what was happening in the United States, and they say, 'Well what did you do?' I need to say that I did these things, and this is how it helped. Because I wouldn't be able to live with myself otherwise."

The group, Never Again, released a statement, saying, "Last night we experienced a small example of the violence that ICE uses against our immigrant neighbors every day. As Jews, our families taught us the lessons of the Holocaust, and we promised that we would speak out and act if we ever saw a group of people being targeted, dehumanized, and rounded up.

"We are answering the call of our ancestors to sound the alarm: #NeverAgainIsNow. Every person in the United States needs to join the fight to close the concentration camps, shut down ICE, and secure permanent protection for all undocumented people in the U.S."

The protest had been peaceful throughout the night until just before 10 p.m.

"Correctional officers came out and physically pushed us out of the way and then pepper-sprayed us, which is burning my face right now," protester Jared Goldstein told WLNE.

Eighteen people were arrested at a protest by the same group outside of Wyatt Detention Center on July 2, according to the Providence Journal.

[RI] A truck drove into a line of ICE protesters outside a detention facility in Rhode Island (CNN)

CNN [8/16/2019 1:46 AM, Dakin Andone and Melissa Gray, 6094K]

A captain at a Rhode Island detention facility has been placed on administrative leave after he drove a truck toward a line of protesters who were demanding the center cease its cooperation with US Immigration and Customs Enforcement, officials and witnesses said Thursday.

The incident Wednesday night was captured on video. Five demonstrators were hospitalized, according to the group that organized the protest, Never Again Action, which describes itself as a collection of Jewish people and their allies protesting ICE and the government's treatment of migrants.

Dozens of people had showed up to protest the contract between ICE and the Wyatt Detention Facility in Central Falls, the activists' news release said. As of Thursday morning there were 129 ICE detainees housed at the facility, ICE told CNN.

The detention facility said Capt. Thomas Woodworth has been placed on administrative leave pending the results of two investigations: an independent investigation being conducted by the Rhode Island State Police and an internal investigation being conducted by the facility.

ICE said its personnel were not involved in the incident.

Around 10 p.m., a dark pickup truck "intentionally swerved into a line of protesters, including at least three minors, who were seated across from the entrance" to the facility, the group said in its statement.

Never Again Action emailed a video of the incident, shot by one of its volunteers, Sam

Eilertsen. The video begins by showing protesters, some seated and others crouching, blocking the entrance to an employee parking lot across the street from the Wyatt facility. On the sidewalks, protesters are standing and waving signs.

A pickup truck suddenly enters the frame and honks, coming right up to the line of protesters.

Protesters spring up and scream, gathering around the truck, the video shows. Some shout, "Shame!"

The truck continues rolling forward slowly as protesters scramble to get out of its way, until it reaches the lowered arm of the parking lot gate a few feet ahead. The crowd chants, "The whole world is watching."

With protesters still surrounding the truck, the camera zooms in to show the driver, who speaks into his walkie-talkie. The crowd chants, "You support genocide -- Nazi, Nazi, you can't hide."

The group said two people were hospitalized after being hit by the truck, but the video does not show those injuries.

"Two people were treated for injuries from the truck, including 64-year-old Jerry Belair, who suffered a fractured leg and internal bleeding," organizer Amy Anthony told CNN in an email.

Less than two minutes after the driver uses the walkie-talkie, a group of at least nine people in uniforms jogs from the facility across the street to the truck, which is still surrounded by protesters.

Nobody disperses, and the crowd begins to chant again, "The whole world is watching."

The video is shot from the rear right side of the truck. On the other side of the vehicle, the arm of the parking lot gate goes up, and a moment later something is sprayed and people scream and move away.

Eilertsen and a photographer for CNN affiliate WPRI, who was there, said it was pepper spray. Members of the group rubbed their eyes. Never Again Action said three people were hospitalized for "severe pepper spray exposure."

WPRI said "law enforcement sources" confirmed that Woodworth was the truck driver.

CNN was unable to reach Woodworth for comment Thursday, despite multiple attempts to do so. It was unclear Thursday night whether he has legal representation.

Rhode Island Gov. Gina Raimondo said she was outraged by the incident depicted in the video.

"Our state and our nation were built on the idea that everyone has a right to express their opinion publicly and peacefully," Raimondo tweeted.

The governor said she is in communication with State Police Col. Jim Manni about the incident.

Sen. Jack Reed, a Democrat who represents Rhode Island, called the video "very disturbing" and said the state police "must swiftly investigate."

[Editorial note: consult video at source link]

[RI] Group protesting ICE outside prison says guard drove truck into protesters, injuring 2 (USA Today)

USA Today [8/15/2019 12:55 PM, Ryan W. Miller, 6620K]

A group that protested outside a prison in Rhode Island says two of their members were injured Wednesday night after a corrections officer drove his truck into the group.

Never Again Action, a Jewish activist group that was protesting federal immigration policies and U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, posted a video on social media that showed a black pick-up truck driving into protesters who were sitting in front of the prison's parking lot entrance.

The video shows the truck approaching the parking lot and turning right into the entrance before stopping in front of the line of people.

The crowd stood up in reaction as the car stopped. The driver then honked the horn before moving forward into the group of people.

Two protesters were taken to the hospital for injuries suffered from the vehicle, Never Again Action said on social media.

Video then shows other officers rush toward the crowd and use pepper spray to disperse the group. Three other protesters were hospitalized for "severe pepper spray exposure," the group said, adding that none of the injuries were life-threatening.

The incident occurred in Central Falls at the Donald W. Wyatt Detention Facility, which is used by federal immigration officials.

Aaron Regunberg, a former state representative and organizer with Never Again Action, said the corrections officer behind the wheel was in uniform when he drove into the line of people, which video from the protest shows. The officer was not arrested, Regunberg said.

"It was very clearly deliberate," Regunberg told USA TODAY.

Reached by phone Thursday by USA TODAY, a prison employee declined to comment. Calls to ICE and Central Falls police were not immediately returned, either.

Rhode Island's Attorney General Peter Neronha, a Democrat, said in a statement his office was investigating the incident.

"Peaceful protest is a fundamental right of all Americans; it is unfortunate last night's situation unfolded as it did," Neronha said.

Regunberg said the protest was "peaceful" before the incident, with demonstrators singing and praying outside.

Catarina Lorenzo, director of AMOR, a Rhode Island group that works with immigrants on legal, health and social issues, said the group was "shocked" as the vehicle drove into the group. Lorenzo's group helped organize the protest.

Lorenzo also said she was surprised at the police response to the protest outside the prison. "It was public. I can't imagine what they do when nobody is watching," she said.

Regunberg said the group was there to protest not only for the rights of detainees inside the prison but also against ICE.

The Wyatt Detention Facility is a privately-operated prison that describes itself as a "non-profit, quasi-public detention facility."

Never Again Action aims to ensure that atrocities like the Holocaust aren't repeated, Regunberg said.

"We've seen past atrocities ... We've seen past tests that bystanders have failed. We're not going to repeat those mistakes," he said. "It's not just this one guy. It is a system."

[RI] Corrections officer put on leave after truck drives into protesters (Breitbart)

Breitbart [8/15/2019 8:38 PM, UPI, 2034K]

Officials at a Rhode Island correctional facility where a pickup truck drove into protesters surrounding the facility have placed a correctional officer on administrative leave.

"Capt. Thomas Woodworth has been placed on administrative leave pending results of the independent investigation being conducted by the Rhode Island State Police, and the Wyatt's international investigation," according to a statement Thursday from the Donald W. Wyatt Detention Facility in Central Falls, some 7 miles from Providence.

At least two people were injured in the incident Wednesday night, including a 64-year-old man who suffered a broken leg and internal bleeding, according to Never Again Action, the Jewish protest group that organized the sit-in demonstration.

Never Again Action was protesting the facility, which is being used by the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement agency to house immigration detainees, by creating a human barrier around the facility in an effort to prevent it from conducting "business as usual," it said on Twitter.

In a video released by Never Again Action of the incident, a black pickup truck can be seen driving into protesters blocking the entrance to a parking lot of the facility.

BREAKING: Here is HD video of an ICE guard driving his truck into us as we sat peacefully blocking the Wyatt Detention Center.

We're putting our bodies on the line because we see the camps and the roundups. We've learned from our ancestors: NEVER AGAIN FOR ANYONE. pic.twitter.com/KnOu5xoOEb—
□ Never Again Action □ (@NeverAgainActn) August 15, 2019

The group said Rhode Island State Police then pepper-sprayed protesters to get them to disperse, resulting in three people needing medical attention.

"Tonight, we experienced a tiny sample of the violence ICE uses on our immigrant neighbors every day," Never Again Action said on Twitter. "An ICE guard drove his truck into our peaceful protest then other guards came out and pepper-sprayed the crowd."

"We'll be back," it said.

Rhode Island Attorney General Peter Neronha said Thursday that his office was investigating the incident.

"Once we have a full understanding of the relevant facts, we will determine how to proceed," he said in a statement. "Peaceful protest is a fundamental right of all Americans; it is unfortunate last night's situation unfolded as it did."

Central Falls Mayor James A. Diossa confirmed via Twitter that the Attorney General's Office, the Rhode Island Police Department and the Central Falls Police Department would be investigating.

Following the incident, Rhode Island Gov. Gina Raimondo condemned the Trump administration's immigration policies as "immoral" while supporting the protester's right to free speech.

"I share the outrage Rhode Islanders are feeling about the incident depicted in the video at the Wyatt detention center," she said via Twitter Thursday. "Our state and our nation were built on the idea that everyone has a right to express their opinion publicly and peacefully."

[RI] Corrections Officer On Leave After Truck Drives Toward Protesters At R.I. Detention Facility (New England Public Radio)

New England Public Radio [8/15/2019 5:23 PM, Laney Ruckstuhl, 2K]

A corrections officer at a Rhode Island prison is on leave after a truck drove at a group of people protesting outside the facility.

The warden at the Donald W. Wyatt Detention Facility in Central Falls says Capt. Thomas Woodworth is suspended as they do a "top-to-bottom review" of Wednesday night's incident.

Warden Daniel Martin didn't say specifically that Woodworth was the driver. Woodworth is on leave pending an investigation by the Rhode Island State Police, and an internal investigation by the Wyatt facility.

"The Wyatt supports the First Amendment right of citizens to peacefully protest on public property surrounding the facility, and the First Amendment right of journalists to report on the facility," Martin said in a statement.

Never Again Action, a Jewish youth organization, held a protest Wednesday night in front of the Wyatt, which is used by federal immigration officials. Just before 10 p.m., the group, which was recording its march to the facility and protest outside live on Facebook, captured video that shows a black pickup truck driving quickly toward the crowd of protesters, before stopping and then moving forward again.

In the live video post, the group also claimed the driver of the truck was a corrections officer at the detention center.

On Twitter Thursday morning, the group said two protesters were “hit by the truck” and hospitalized with injuries that were not life-threatening.

Warning: The video below contains explicit language and may be disturbing to some viewers.

The video shows uniformed police officers surround the truck while ordering protesters to “back up.” The protesters then begin chanting, “shame” and “the whole world is watching.” Someone in the crowd can be seen spraying a substance that appears to be pepper spray at the demonstrators. The group said that person was a police officer and that three other people were taken to the hospital due to “severe pepper spray exposure.” The group also later criticized police reaction to the truck incident, saying officers “stood by and watched, doing nothing.”

In addition to state police, the Rhode Island attorney general’s office is also investigating.

Gov. Gina Raimondo tweeted Thursday morning that she was in communication with state police regarding the incident. “I share the outrage Rhode Islanders are feeling,” she said.

Central Falls Mayor James Diossa in a tweet characterized the incident as “disturbing.”

The Rhode Island attorney general’s office said state police are assisting in its investigation of the incident. Central Falls police encouraged anyone with information to reach out to them or state police.

“Once we have a full understanding of the relevant facts, we will determine how to proceed,” the attorney general’s office said in a statement. “Peaceful protest is a fundamental right of all Americans; it is unfortunate last night’s situation unfolded as it did. We urge all to exercise restraint as our investigation proceeds.”

[SC] Illegal Alien Accused of Shooting, Killing 19-Year-Old in South Carolina (Breitbart)

Breitbart [8/14/2019 11:40 PM, John Binder, 2034K]

Juan Javier Reyes-Perez, a 40-year-old illegal alien, is accused of murdering a 19-year-old unidentified male on August 12, WCIV 4 reports, in North Charleston. According to first responders, the victim was found bleeding with a gunshot wound to his body and lying in the road.

The teenage victim was pronounced dead on the scene, and eyewitnesses identified Reyes-Perez as the shooter.

According to police, Reyes-Perez confessed to shooting the 19-year-old. The eyewitnesses said the victim was shot after an argument between him and his ex-girlfriend’s family.

Reyes-Perez has now been charged with murder and has been placed on a detainer by the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agency so that if he is released from local custody at any time, he will be turned over to ICE for deportation.

[MS] Investigators believe five poultry companies violated immigration law, search warrants say (Washington Post)

Washington Post [8/15/2019 10:59 AM, Hannah Denham, 9425K] Video: [HERE](#)

Federal immigration officials say they have probable cause that all five companies operating poultry plants raided by authorities in Mississippi last week violated immigration law by knowingly hiring undocumented immigrants, according to search warrant affidavits that cite videotaped statements of managers.

There were clear signs that the companies were hiring people who could not legally work in the country, the search warrants allege. Some workers wore ankle monitors as they awaited deportation hearings, gave Social Security numbers belonging to the deceased or were hired twice by the same manager even though the worker used different names on each occasion.

Since 2002, federal officials have reported more than 350 encounters or arrests of undocumented people who said they worked at two of the plants, Koch Foods and Peco Foods.

The companies for years have employed a stream of Guatemalan and Mexican immigrants who are not authorized to work in the United States, according to the search warrant affidavits, unsealed in federal court after Aug. 7 raids on seven plants operated by Koch Foods, Peco Foods, PH Food, A&B and Pearl River Foods. In the affidavits, Homeland Security Investigations agent Anthony Todd Williams Jr. said there is probable cause to believe that the chicken plants in Mississippi intentionally hired undocumented workers who presented fraudulent documents “for the purpose of commercial advantage or private financial gain.”

Williams wrote that individuals or companies shown to have “actual knowledge” of violating the employment law — meaning they knowingly hired at least 10 people not authorized to work for a year-long period — can be fined as much as \$3,000 per undocumented worker. Employers can be imprisoned for as long as six months.

Neither the companies nor any executives have been charged with violating immigration law, although the documents name numerous managers who apparently knew about the widespread practice, according to the affidavits recently unsealed in Mississippi federal court. Immigration and Customs Enforcement carried out the raids at seven chicken-processing plants operated by the companies, arresting 680 workers, about half of whom have been released to await further hearings.

ICE spokesman Bryan Cox said no charges have been filed against either workers or employers since the raids.

“No federal law enforcement agency is going to speculate as to if/when any federal criminal charges may be filed ... as that is the sole decision of the U.S. Attorney’s office,” he wrote in an email.

Mike Hurst, U.S. attorney for the Southern District of Mississippi, said in a statement that he could not comment on the case because the investigation is ongoing. “If you look at the history of this office, we have consistently prosecuted employers, companies and owners

when evidence has been presented to us to prove beyond a reasonable doubt that they have violated federal criminal laws.”

Cliff Johnson, director of the MacArthur Justice Center, told The Washington Post that in his experience as a former federal prosecutor and criminal defense lawyer, such cases are time-consuming.

“Federal agents no doubt seized servers, hundreds of personnel files and thousands of additional documents to be analyzed and considered by agents and federal prosecutors,” Johnson said. “The fact that no corporate officials were hauled out in handcuffs on the day of the raid is not the least bit surprising.”

The records detail how ICE linked undocumented immigrants to the companies. Investigators found some employees via GPS coordinates at plants operated by all five companies. The employees previously had been arrested by Border Patrol agents in California, Texas, New Mexico and Arizona and released on electronic-monitoring programs, including ankle bracelets, to await court dates. In each case cited, the individuals listed addresses in small towns in central Mississippi where they could be located.

An undocumented Mexican woman working in a Peco Foods plant in Bay Springs, Miss., told immigration officials that she had come to the state because people in Mexico had told her that jobs were available at the chicken plants there.

In cases cited in the affidavits, people on ICE’s electronic-monitoring programs were not authorized to work. But according to the affidavits, dozens of employees in such programs were found working at the seven chicken plants in 2018 and 2019. One successful job applicant was told by a supervisor during her interview that she would need to keep her ankle monitor charged while she worked.

Immigration officials in Jackson, Miss., say they investigated the plants by working with employees who were acting as confidential informants, coordinating with local police on traffic stops and culling records from jails and detention centers, among other forms of surveillance.

Since 2008, Mississippi has required companies to use E-Verify, a federal employment verification system that checks an applicant’s information against a variety of federal databases. However, the system only checks the names, Social Security numbers and other information supplied by the applicant, so it cannot always detect whether an employee’s application uses falsified documents.

Koch Foods, Peco Foods and PH Food issued public statements saying that they use the federal system, which compares an employee’s identity across databases. One of the search warrants lists the names of 25 PH Food employees whose names had not been run through E-Verify.

On Friday, Reps. Bennie Thompson (D-Miss.), Elijah E. Cummings (D-Md.) and Jamie B. Raskin (D-Md.) sent a letter to U.S. Attorney General William P. Barr and acting homeland security secretary Kevin McAleenan asking for documents detailing the cost of the raids, information on the detained workers and any past or current criminal charges against the

companies that employed them.

“It appears that these DOJ and ICE enforcement actions are targeting only immigrant workers and not their employers,” the letter reads.

Sen. Cindy Hyde-Smith (R-Miss.) is one of the top two recipients in Congress of campaign contributions from the egg and poultry industry, according to the nonprofit Center for Responsive Politics. The Jackson Free Press reported that Hyde-Smith’s campaign is a top recipient of donations from the National Chicken Council PAC, to which both Peco Foods and Koch Foods executives donate.

Hyde-Smith, a former Mississippi agriculture commissioner, did not respond to requests for comment from The Post.

[Editorial note: consult source link for extensive commentary]

[MS] Mississippi Plants Knowingly Hired Undocumented Workers, ICE Says (New York Times)

New York Times [8/16/2019 3:18 AM, Mihir Zaveri and Christine Hauser, 22840K]

Federal immigration officials believe that the companies targeted in raids at poultry plants across Mississippi last week knowingly hired undocumented immigrants, a violation of federal law, according to affidavits filed by federal agents supporting the raids.

About 680 immigrants believed to be working without legal documentation were taken away on buses by Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents during the coordinated sting on Aug. 7. The operation, which might be the largest work site enforcement action ever in a single state, focused on plants run by five companies: Peco Foods, Pearl River Foods, Koch Foods, A & B Inc. and P H Food Inc.

More than 600 ICE agents were involved.

The affidavits, made public the day after the raids, show that the agents believe that the companies were “willfully and unlawfully” employing undocumented immigrants.

In some cases, the affidavits say, the companies employed people who would show up to work wearing ankle monitors that are part of a federal program to make sure undocumented immigrants appear at court proceedings.

In other cases, the affidavits implicate managers. For example, at the Peco Foods plant, an employee told a confidential informant that one worker presented a different name on the two occasions she was hired.

It was not immediately clear whether the companies or managers would face charges or penalties. One possible violation could carry a \$3,000 fine and six months in prison for each undocumented immigrant hired, the affidavits say.

“There have been no indictments to date,” a spokesman for the Justice Department said on Thursday. “This is an ongoing investigation.”

The companies did not respond to requests for comment on Thursday.

Julie Myers Wood, a former assistant secretary of homeland security who ran ICE, said in an interview that the use of informants signified that ICE was trying to be more aggressive about targeting employers. She said that given the variety of companies involved, she expected a range of outcomes in the cases, possibly including indictments and nonprosecution agreements.

“They are being aggressive and trying to target rogue H.R. managers or others within the management chain,” said Ms. Wood, who is now the chief executive of Guidepost Solutions, a compliance firm.

She said it was difficult to prosecute companies for hiring undocumented workers, as significant evidence would be needed to prove complicity.

Prosecutions are not common, said Kimberley Best Robidoux, a business immigration lawyer in San Diego who specializes in compliance. According to data compiled by Syracuse University and released in May, only 11 people were prosecuted from April 2018 through March 2019 for employing immigrants who did not have proper documentation. No companies were prosecuted during that time, according to the data.

The raids on Aug. 7 were the largest to occur since President Trump, who has made illegal immigration a focal point of his presidency, took office.

According to the affidavits, the Peco Foods plants targeted in the raids are in Bay Springs, Canton and Walnut Grove; The Koch Foods plant is in Morton, as is the P H Food Inc. plant; The Pearl River Foods plant is in Carthage; and the A&B Inc. plant is in Pelahatchie.

The United States Attorney’s Office for the Southern District of Mississippi, which conducted the searches with ICE, said that some of the people who were rounded up were taken to an ICE detention center in Jena, La. Others have been released on “humanitarian” grounds, but they are required to appear before a federal immigration judge who will determine whether or not they will be deported.

The affidavits outline previous arrests of undocumented workers at the plants. For example, from September 2002 to April 2019, there were 144 arrests or encounters with undocumented immigrants who said they were employed at Koch Foods plants in Morton or Forest.

The P H Food Inc. and A & B Inc. plants are owned by the same person, according to the affidavits. A confidential informant said that a woman who prepares the payroll for both of the plants and another employee who works with payroll companies knew about the undocumented immigrants working there, the affidavits say.

One employee at the A & B Inc. plant who was in the country illegally said that the plant manager had never required him to provide any identification documents to work there and only asked for his name, an affidavit says.

The affidavits say some of the companies had access to E-Verify, but did not use it for dozens of undocumented employees. E-Verify is an electronic system that checks documents provided by newly hired workers against Social Security Administration and Department of Homeland Security records to identify fakes.

Ms. Wood said that while the raids all happened on the same day, the case involving each company might be "radically different."

"They really shouldn't all be lumped together," she said.

[MS] Companies raided by ICE knowingly hired undocumented workers, warrant suggests (CBS News)

CBS News [8/15/2019 7:02 PM, Manuel Bojorquez, 3332K]

Newly unsealed search warrants suggest the companies targeted in last week's Immigration and Customs Enforcement raids in Mississippi knowingly hired undocumented immigrants. The evidence against the five poultry companies includes instances of workers wearing "electronic monitoring ankle bracelets" like those federal authorities place on immigrants without work permits. Another worker who used an assumed name who was told to "quit and reapply."

During the raids, 680 workers were detained.

Employers can be fined up to nearly \$20,000 per undocumented worker. It's unclear if that has happened but CBS News has learned undocumented workers have started receiving fines, like one for nearly \$500.

CBS News contributor Maria Elena Salinas sat down with Mike Hurst, the U.S. attorney for the Southern District of Mississippi, and asked why the employers who hired undocumented immigrants haven't been prosecuted.

"Well, in these type of investigations, part of it is executing these criminal search warrants," Hurst said.

"So you can guarantee that in the future, whether it takes weeks or months, that the employers who hired these particular workers will be prosecuted and will be in jail," Salinas said.

"I can guarantee that we will investigate this case and if we get evidence beyond a reasonable doubt the employers and owners will be prosecuted," Hurst said

Companies in Mississippi are required to use the E-Verify federal database to screen hires. But according to the affidavits, investigators found dozens of instances where that did not happen.

[Editorial note: consult video at source link]

[FL] Active shooter' shot inside Florida grocery (USA Today)

USA Today [8/15/2019 10:05 PM, Colin Warren-Hicks and Kevin Robinson, 6620K]
Video HERE

A sheriff's deputy in Florida shot a man Thursday afternoon after the suspect allegedly opened fire inside a grocery store.

No one inside the Grocery Advantage store in Pensacola was injured, according to Escambia County Sheriff's Office spokesman Maj. Andrew Hobbs.

Authorities received their first call at 2:42 p.m. Thursday, telling dispatchers that a man inside the store was causing a disturbance, Hobbs said.

Deputies arrived on scene within four to five minutes of receiving the call, to find the man was shooting inside the store.

"He was an active shooter," Hobbs said.

Hobbs said the suspect was firing a handgun at people but did not hit anyone. When deputies approached the man, he confronted them with the gun.

A deputy shot the suspect, who was transported to a local hospital, according to Hobbs.

Officials didn't immediately release the name of the shooting suspect. His condition and injuries are unknown

Lee Gainey was at work across the street from Grocery Advantage when the shooting occurred. He said he had a clear view of the grocery store's front doors.

"People came out screaming and saying there was a shooter," Gainey said. "They were all running out."

Four cashiers and a handful of customers all ran out of the store's front doors nearly at once, Gainey said.

"It was fast," Gainey said. "It seemed like only 30 seconds after I saw the four cashiers running, the police were everywhere."

Gainey said it seemed like sheriff's office vehicles swarmed from every direction toward the store's entrance.

According to Escambia County officials, EMS was contacted at 3:05 p.m. and responded to the scene at 3:09 p.m. They transported an adult patient to a local hospital as a trauma alert for multiple gunshot wounds.

In a written statement posted on Facebook, Escambia County Sheriff David Morgan commended deputies for their response.

"As the Sheriff, I know I speak not only for the Sheriff's Office but all citizens of Escambia County, in thanking the fine men and women of the Escambia County Sheriff's Office for

their professionalism and courage which is displayed every day, but especially today in stopping this suspect,” the sheriff said.

[TX] Secretary McAleenan reacts to attacks on ICE facilities, says border security strategy is making progress (FOX News)

FOX News [8/14/2019 8:43 AM, Staff, 10258K]

Acting Homeland Security Secretary Kevin McAleenan speaks out on ‘Fox & Friends’ on the latest attack on a Texas ICE facility and offers an update on border security efforts.

[Editorial note: consult video at source link]

[TX] National Border Patrol Council official disgusted by attack on ICE facility (FOX News)

FOX News [8/15/2019 5:36 PM, Joshua Nelson, 10258K] Video: [HERE](#)

Vice President of the National Border Patrol Council Art Del Cueto said Thursday a video of an attack on an ICE facility was incited by “lies” and “rhetoric” about what officers do.

“Disgusting. It’s disgusting to see something like that and I think it’s been triggered by way too many individuals that have had a platform to speak against the men and women that are trying to defend our nation’s borders, the law enforcement communities. I mean that’s where it comes from,” Del Cueto told “America’s Newsroom.”

The video, exclusively obtained by Fox News, shows a man armed with guns and explosives attacking an Immigration and Customs Enforcement facility in Tacoma, Wash. last month.

“There was a recent article that attacked various reporters from Fox. Attacked Fox News and named me on there as well, saying that we were responsible for some of these attacks that happened in El Paso,” Del Cueto said.

“What was that based on? That was based on us talking about actual facts and the facts we spoke about is simple. When you have individuals in large quantities that enter another country by force or illegal, that is an invasion, I stand on these words.”

Del Cueto criticized some of the rhetoric about ICE, saying it was “lies” and the “infighting” needs to stop. Former ICE director Tom Homan said that the “hateful rhetoric” from Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, D-NY, is having a negative impact on ICE employees.

Del Cueto explained his position further about the “lies” about border patrol agents he says are just “following the law.”

“They’ve been lying about it, calling them concentration camps, comparing the individuals that are out there wearing the uniform to defend our nation’s borders are Nazis. that’s where it comes from,” Cueto said.

“If we’re going to be attacked for speaking the truth then we have to call it like it is and the individuals that are inciting these attacks need to be called out also and they’re doing it based on lies and that’s the problem,” he said.

[TX] ICE blames ‘disturbing public discourse’ after shots fired at San Antonio office (Washington Times)

Washington Times [8/14/2019 10:36 AM, Jessica Chasmar, 452K]

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement on Tuesday blamed the “disturbing public discourse” surrounding the Trump administration’s detention policies after shots were fired into an ICE office overnight Tuesday in San Antonio.

Investigators said multiple shots were fired into the office of ICE’s Immigration Enforcement and Removal division about 3 a.m. at the Jefferson Bank building on the city’s northeast side. Shots were fired into a second nearby building that also houses ICE-related offices, but that address was not disclosed.

No one was injured, but “had the bullets gone two inches in another direction, we could be here today talking about the murder of a federal official,” said Christopher Combs, the FBI’s special agent in charge in San Antonio, NBC News reported.

“All of the shots that we have found are on the floors where ICE had offices,” he said. “They knew what floors ICE was on, they knew what buildings they were in, and they hit those.”

No suspect has been arrested in connection with the shootings. At a press conference Tuesday, authorities said they were “concerned there could be additional attacks” on local federal offices.

“These shootings were cowardly, brazen, violent acts, absolutely without justification and a threat to our entire community,” Agent Combs said, a local CBS affiliate reported. “We cannot allow political discourse to lead us to the point of violence, where federal employees, innocent people doing their jobs, are put in harm’s way.”

Ken Cuccinelli, the acting director of Citizenship and Immigration Services, tweeted a photo of what he said was a bullet hole in a window at one of the offices.

“Political rhetoric and misinformation that various politicians, media outlets and activist groups recklessly disseminate to the American people regarding the ICE mission only serve to further encourage these violent acts,” ICE said in a statement released through the San Antonio office, NBC News reported.

“ICE officers put their lives on the line each and every day to keep our communities safe,” the statement said. “This disturbing public discourse shrouds our critical law enforcement function and unnecessarily puts our officers’ safety at risk.”

[TX] Cruz calls El Paso rampage ‘racist domestic terrorism’ (Washington Times)

Washington Times [8/15/2019 12:30 PM, Stephen Dinan, 452K]

Sen. Ted Cruz said Thursday that this month’s shooting rampage in El Paso was “racist domestic terrorism,” and said he would back legislation to try to prevent similar attacks in the future.

The Texas Republican said federal prosecutors should pursue the death penalty against the man arrested for the shooting.

In an op-ed for the Dallas Morning News, Mr. Cruz said he would be willing to work on legislation to stiffen the existing background check system by making sure those whose background should already deny them the ability to purchase a gun are actually flagged if they try to do so.

That stops short of the type of legislation proposed by Democrats, who want to see more records added to the system, but also want more purchases to be screened. Currently only sales involving a federally licensed dealer must be checked through the system, which exempts many private transactions.

In his op-ed Mr. Cruz recounted Texas's particularly high body count in recent mass shootings, but said the El Paso rampage was particularly startling with the "hateful anti-Hispanic bigotry" expressed in the accused shooter's manifesto.

"His intention to target the Hispanic community and wreak utter havoc is serious and should be treated as such. The sentiments he expressed are racist, ignorant, repulsive and profoundly anti-American," said Mr. Cruz, who pointed out he's the son of a Cuban immigrant.

[TX] Attorney: Officials force-feeding immigrant on hunger strike (San Francisco Chronicle)

[San Francisco Chronicle.com](https://www.sfgate.com/chronicle/article/Attorney-says-immigrant-forced-to-receive-fluid-through-nose-14681872.html) [8/15/2019 7:29 PM, Cedar Attanasio, Martha Mendoza, and Garance Burke, AP, 337K]

The text was alarming: "today medical start force feeding only with me. They put the pipe in my nose 3 time. My nose is bleeding and pain."

Attorney Linda Corchado had feared this might happen when she heard her clients on hunger strike inside an immigrant detention center had been forced to receive fluid through IV drips two weeks ago.

On Thursday she said one of the men, an asylum seeker from India, was brought out to her in a wheelchair with tubes threaded through his nose, and he told her he had been force-fed.

"He says it was terribly painful and it was an awful experience. Even as I was talking to him, he kept grimacing," Corchado said.

Immigration and Customs Enforcement declined to comment. The agency referred questions to the U.S. Attorney in West Texas, where a spokesman said he couldn't confirm or deny force-feeding was underway at the El Paso Processing Center. A court supervisor said that any cases involving nonconsensual feeding are under seal. In response to past force-feedings of other detainees who stopped eating to protest their confinement, ICE has said it is "committed to preserving the lives of those in its custody."

With growing numbers of people seeking asylum or to immigrate now locked in detention, this week's force-feeding — and numerous others over the past year — lays bare a complex process the U.S. government has established to handle immigrant detainees who

protest by refusing to eat.

Her client, a 35-year-old man from India, told The Associated Press he would rather starve to death in custody than be deported back to India, where he says he fears for his life because of his political activism. Her client's father was murdered for his political work, said Corchado, and his sister attacked with acid.

The man's force-feeding began Wednesday, and he had another dose Thursday morning. He described being strapped down on a bed and force-fed by a group of people while other detainees looked on, she said.

"This country is now torturing him, and as far as he is concerned, he is still paying the price because he still wants to live here," Corchado said.

Immigrants who go on hunger strike are often moved to ICE's El Paso facility to be fed against their will, in part because a medical team stands ready if a nearby federal court signs off on doctors initiating the painful procedure.

In January, nine men were force-fed at the El Paso Processing Center. Medical staff threaded tubes through their nostrils and down their throats before forcing a nutrient-rich liquid into their stomachs.

ICE stopped a few weeks later after a public outcry and a congressional inquiry. At the time, the United Nations human rights office said the U.S. could be violating the U.N. Convention Against Torture.

Three weeks ago, the U.S. Department of Justice filed orders with federal judges that relate to non-consensual hydration or feeding for four men, according to a court official. And soon thereafter, Corchado's clients, three Indian nationals seeking asylum in the U.S., were forced to receive IV drips at the El Paso Processing Center as they approached their third week of a hunger strike.

The men have been locked up for months — one for more than a year — and they are trying to appeal or reopen asylum claims that were denied, she said.

ICE confirmed that there were detainee hunger strikes at its facilities in El Paso and Otero, New Mexico, two weeks ago, but it would not comment on the claims of forced hydration or force-feeding.

Force-feeding raises ethics issues for medical professionals who work inside ICE facilities.

The American Medical Association has expressed its concerns about physicians participating in the force-feeding of hunger strikers on multiple occasions. Its own principles of medical ethics state "a patient who has decision-making capacity may accept or refuse any recommended medical intervention."

The association also endorses the World Medical Association Declaration of Tokyo, which states that when prisoners refuse food and physicians believe they are capable of "rational

judgment concerning the consequences of such a voluntary refusal of nourishment, he or she shall not be fed artificially."

[WA] Washington ICE detention center attack seen in video, ex-acting director says 'thousands' could have died (FOX News)

FOX News [8/15/2019 12:21 PM, Travis Fedschun, 10258K] Video: [HERE](#)

A burning vehicle sending flames shooting high above a perimeter fence can be seen in new surveillance video obtained by Fox News that shows an attack by an armed Antifa supporter last month at a local Immigration and Customs Enforcement detention center in Washington state. The assault was ultimately foiled, but a former acting director of the agency said it could have killed "hundreds."

"Thank God for the Tacoma P.D.," ICE former Acting Director Tom Homan said on "Fox & Friends" on Thursday. "Their professionalism and quick response prevented the loss of hundreds and hundreds of lives, so hats off to them and their quick response."

The attack took place around 4 a.m. July 13 in Tacoma, when self-described Antifa member Willem Van Spronsen, who was armed with a rifle and incendiary devices, took aim at the Northwest Detention Center.

Employees reported he was throwing "incendiary devices" and setting vehicles on fire, and the first officers on the scene described him wearing a sash and carrying flares, according to the Tacoma Police Department.

Van Spronsen, 69, was trying to ignite a propane tank when he was confronted by officers, who opened fire. The Pierce County Medical Examiner's office said he died of multiple gunshot wounds.

Homan said that Van Spronsen had a rifle and was shooting "numerous times" into the building before setting fire to a vehicle. In the video, obtained exclusively by Fox News, also provides dramatic sound of blasts and thunder erupting from the police officers as they engage Van Spronsen.

"What the video shows is the violence in these attacks on ICE," Homan told "Fox & Friends."

He added there were more than 1,300 illegal immigrants in the facility, in addition to about 100 employees.

"If he would have been successful in burning that building down, you're talking about over 1,400 lives," Homan said.

The day before the assault, Van Spronsen sent a manifesto to friends in which he wrote "I am Antifa," and after the attack he was lionized by members of the leftwing group as a "martyr." Several friends of Van Spronsen said they received a manifesto from him calling the facility "an abomination" and asking "those burdened with the wreckage from my actions" to "make the best use of that burden."

In a Facebook post that has since been deleted, the group Seattle Antifascist Action described the 69-year-old as a "good friend and comrade" who "took a stand against the fascist detention center in Tacoma" and "became a martyr who gave his life to the struggle against fascism."

In the manifesto, obtained by KIRO7, Van Spronsen said he wanted to make a statement at the facility.

"I regret that I will miss the rest of the revolution," he wrote. "Doing what I can to help defend my precious and wondrous people is an experience too rich to describe. I am Antifa."

Van Spronsen had been arrested last year for assaulting a police officer during a June 26 protest outside the same detention center. According to court records, he lunged at a cop and wrapped his arms around the officer's neck and shoulders while the officer was trying to detain a 17-year-old protester, The News Tribune reported. When police handcuffed Van Spronsen, they found he had a collapsible baton and a folding knife in his pocket, according to the court documents.

Van Spronsen pleaded guilty to a charge of obstructing police and was released from custody in October.

The Tacoma facility, privately operated by the GEO Group on behalf of ICE, holds illegal immigrants pending deportation proceedings. The detention center has also held immigration-seeking parents separated from their children under President Trump's "zero tolerance" policy, an effort meant to deter illegal immigration.

ICE employees and contracted workers have been coming under a number of escalating threats. Footage published earlier this week by Breitbart News showed protesters in Florida from groups such as Never Again Action and Black Lives Matter Alliance of Broward County threatening workers and former employees of the GEO Group.

Breitbart reported that the footage was taken a day before shots were fired early Tuesday at an ICE office and GEO Group office in San Antonio, Texas, in what the FBI has called a "targeted attack."

Citizenship and Immigration Services

Trump administration underestimating impact of new immigration rule, advocates say (ABC News)

ABC News [8/15/2019 4:12 PM, Quinn Owen, 2702K]

The Trump administration is expected to save less than a half percent on public aid spending with its latest immigration plan, according to the government's own analysis of a new rule which heavily factors a person's wealth when deciding whether they should get a green card.

The savings would come from the nearly quarter million people expected to disenroll from the expanded list of government programs that could disqualify a legal immigrant's

application for permanent residency through a green card.

Advocates say, however, the number could be higher as immigrant communities fear that any government assistance could complicate their legal status. They anticipate a rise in homelessness and other cost-of-living problems as an already vulnerable population slips into poverty.

Officials from U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services did not immediately respond to requests for comment on the number of people expected to disenroll as a result of the new rule.

Of key concern for advocates is the "chilling effect," a term used to describe the fear and confusion the new regulation will have on immigrant families who may decline to sign up for benefits.

"The rule is complicated and understanding precisely who will be subjected to this new public charge test is hard for families to discern," said Andrea Kovach, a senior attorney at the Shriver Center on Poverty Law. "But the message the rule sends is simple and clear. Immigrant families who receive benefits for which they are eligible could be putting their immigration status in jeopardy."

Twenty percent of low-income immigrant adults said last year they chose not to participate in a government benefit program fearing their green card would be denied, according to a survey from the Urban Institute, a nonprofit research group.

According to independent estimates, about 23 million people live in households with non-citizens or are non-citizens themselves.

Medicaid and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, formerly known as food stamps, are now part of the list of programs that could disqualify a green card applicant if officials find they may need to use the programs in the future.

The new rule indicates a pattern of Trump administration policies that disproportionately impact the health of immigrants and low-income citizens, according to researchers at the Georgetown Center on Poverty and Inequality.

The White House has already taken steps to narrow the pool of both citizens and non-citizens who qualify for nutrition assistance. The Georgetown researchers estimate that the U.S. economy expands by \$2 for every \$1 redeemed by a nutrition assistance recipient.

Legal challenges against the administration have already started. Officials in California filed lawsuits this week and more are expected from state and local officials across the country.

The Trump administration keeps making it harder to claim asylum. Here's how — and why. (Washington Post)

Washington Post [8/15/2019 7:00 AM, Mneesha Gellman, 9425K]

Last month, U.S. Attorney General William P. Barr made it harder for immigrants to claim asylum in the United States. He ruled that asylum will no longer be granted to people who

fear persecution because criminal gangs have threatened members of their family, partially reversing a federal Board of Immigration Appeals determination. Barr ruled that membership in a family no longer qualifies as belonging to a “particular social group,” a bureaucratic term meaning a persecuted group whose members can claim asylum.

Here’s what you need to know about Barr’s ruling.

1. Federal law has historically protected families targeted by political violence.

In 1980, Congress and the president enacted the Refugee Act, incorporating many elements of the United Nations’ 1951 Convention on Refugees and the 1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees. The U.S. law sets the criteria for allowing certain immigrants to claim asylum in the United States, which protects them from deportation to their home country and declares family reunification a priority.

Historically, this requires that asylum seekers demonstrate fear of persecution in their country of origin based on race, religion, nationality, political opinions or membership in a “particular social group.” In asylum cases since 1985, that has included membership in a family targeted for violence.

For example, if members of a Salvadoran family had been killed by gangs for refusing to continue extortion payments, surviving family members sometimes have been able to claim that as grounds for refugee status in U.S. asylum cases. That requires that they show that as members of this family, a gang is likely to kill them should they be deported to their home country. In places such as El Salvador, gangs remain in control by maintaining the perception that they have complete authority over life and death. That means that people comply with gang demands of financial extortion, sexual exploitation, narcotrafficking and gang recruitment — because refusing can mean torture and/or assassination, not just for themselves but for their families.

As journalists and human rights groups have widely documented, the gang slogan in El Salvador — “See, hear, and be silent” — governs gang-controlled areas. “Example killings” make others more likely to comply with gangs. What’s more, such killings reinforce the knowledge that the police cannot protect civilians. In fact, police are frequently corrupt, do not enforce the rule of law and are sometimes human rights abusers themselves.

2. Barr’s ruling will make it harder for persecuted families to secure asylum.

The U.S. attorney general has the legal power to make immigration rulings. These must be upheld by immigration judges and attorneys in the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) who prosecute asylum seekers. In this case, Barr ruled that “genetic ties” do not constitute sufficient membership in the particular social group of the family.

The ruling is at odds with how families operate socially in Latin America. In Mexico and Central America, for example, the family is the basic unit of social existence. Whether in urban or rural areas, people consider family to include not just the nuclear family of parents and children, but also the extended family. Gangs threaten or prey on their targets’ relatives to force compliance.

Barr's ruling increases the burden of proof on asylum seekers, removing the presumption that they could fear persecution just because gangs targeted members of their family.

3. Why the administration took this position

Of course, this ruling is just one among many Trump administration actions aimed at discouraging Latin American migrants. That includes separating migrant children from their families at the U.S.-Mexico border, and this month's mass immigration raids on Mississippi workplaces, in which Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) detained 680 undocumented migrants, many of them parents of U.S.-born children. Other such actions include calls to restrict green cards or citizenship applications for immigrants who have used public benefits in the past or might in the future, and continued expansion of border patrols.

Barr's ruling continues these efforts to curb undocumented migration, in keeping with Trump's campaign promises to rid the United States of Latin American migrants.

According to a recent report by the Southern Poverty Law Center on immigration courts, the Trump administration has gone much further than previous administrations in dictating rules and procedures for federal immigration courts — at the expense of maintaining an unbiased, consistent and apolitical court system.

Barr's new ruling is similar to a June 2018 decision by Jeff Sessions, the U.S. attorney general at the time, stating that domestic violence is not sufficient grounds for an asylum claim. These precedents significantly affect asylum seekers by further limiting the grounds for claiming relief from deportation proceedings. Immigration attorneys interviewed and in focus groups run by the Southern Poverty Law Center already reported abusive, arbitrary treatment of claimants by judges in immigration courts.

Countries such as El Salvador, Honduras and Mexico cannot protect vulnerable citizens from gangs and rampant violence. Police and other government officials are often beholden to gangs, and it can be difficult to tell who is calling the shots. Until these conditions change, people will continue to seek refuge.

Trump Rule Targeting Poor Immigrants Could Harm Children, Health: Advocates (US News & World Report)

US News & World Report [8/15/2019 12:45 PM, Daniel Trotta, 3196K]

A Trump administration plan to cut legal immigration by poor people will likely result in sicker children, more communicable diseases and greater homelessness in the United States, according to immigrant advocates and the federal government's own analysis.

Under a rule unveiled this week, the administration can reject applicants for temporary or permanent visas if they fail to meet high enough income standards or if they receive public assistance such as welfare, food stamps, public housing or Medicaid.

Legal immigrants are already refusing services they are legally entitled to, whether from government sources or private charities, out of concern they would harm their chances of remaining in the country, according to professionals who provide food, health and housing services.

"This will result in millions of kids losing access to healthcare, housing and nutrition," said Kristen Torres, director of child welfare and immigration for First Focus on Children, a bipartisan group that advocates for pro-child policies before the federal government.

President Donald Trump has made curbing legal and illegal immigration a cornerstone of his presidency, and presented the rule as an effort to prevent people from becoming "public charges" dependent on government support.

The federal government estimates the status of 382,000 immigrants could immediately be reviewed when the new rule takes effect Oct. 15. Immigrant advocates fear the real number could be much higher, with the policy reducing legal immigration by as much as half.

In a notice published in the Federal Register last year, the Department of Homeland Security acknowledged that the consequences of the policy could include increased obesity and malnutrition, especially for pregnant or breastfeeding women, infants, or children; increased prevalence of communicable diseases, and increased poverty.

"The real tragedy of this that young kids are going to be really penalized," said Lisa David, chief executive of Public Health Solutions, a non-profit organization funded mostly by New York City that provides social services such as enrolling women and children in food programs and health insurance.

In Houston, the Episcopal Church outreach center ECHOS noticed a sharp drop in the number of immigrants seeking out its services after Trump took office in January 2017, a trend that continued with subsequent anti-immigration initiatives, executive director Cathy Moore said.

The number of people served by ECHOS who took part in the federal food stamp program fell by 21 percent this year, the group said.

But at the same time it saw a 67-percent surge in the number of people visiting its food pantry, which the group said was a sign that immigrants were forgoing government food aid in favor of the less risky food pantry.

The data is based on 3,509 households served in the first seven months of 2018 and 4,145 in the same period of 2019, most of them Latino and immigrant families, Moore said.

When families eschew the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, commonly known as food stamps, the result is hungry kids and malnourished pregnant women, both of which could lead to long-term developmental problems, experts say.

When a proposal of the public charge rule was made public last September, New York's private Public Health Solutions observed a 20 percent drop in SNAP clients.

"People that don't have food security have more illness, they have poorer outcomes, and children certainly don't perform in school," said David, the group's CEO.

The group has regularly seen immigrants shy from seeking its services in response to White

House efforts to crack down on immigration, she said.

For instance, the group's clinic in New York's immigrant-rich Corona neighborhood typically sees 15 to 20 patients on a typical Saturday. On July 13, when Trump announced nationwide immigration raids would be begin, none showed up, David said.

[ME] Maryland recalls 8,000 Real ID driver's licenses (Washington Post)

Washington Post [8/15/2019 7:00 AM, Luz Lazo, 9425K]

The Maryland Motor Vehicle Administration has recalled the driver's licenses of 8,000 residents because they failed to meet requirements to be in compliance with the Real ID Act — a federal law designed to tighten security for state-issued identification.

That means if any of those drivers are pulled over by police for any reason, the officer could confiscate their driver's license.

If you are one of the 8,000, the MVA says you can avoid having your license confiscated by presenting the required paperwork — proof of age and identity, your Social Security number and Maryland residency — to an MVA branch.

Those required to file documents received their licenses starting in 2016, when the MVA began issuing Real ID licenses and identification cards under a process that at the time was approved by the federal government. But in late 2017, the Department of Homeland Security notified the state that all drivers who had the new Real ID would also need to have scanned copies of the documents that prove their identity and U.S. residency on file at the MVA.

Another 780,000 Maryland drivers with the state-issued Real ID license — identified by a star in the upper-right corner — also don't have the necessary documentation on file, according to the MVA. That number is down from about 1 million earlier this year. To avoid a crush at MVA offices, the state divided drivers into groups and gave them staggered deadlines. The first group was due to file documents this summer.

The 8,000 whose licenses have been recalled are among the first group who were required to present additional documentation; they had a June deadline, which then was extended to July 3. The state said they failed to respond, despite having received multiple warnings since December.

"These customers received more than six notices, and if they had previously provided a phone number they also received a personal phone call as the compliance deadline approached," MVA spokeswoman Adrienne Diaczok said. She said the MVA is sending yet another electronic reminder to the group about their recall status, urging them to visit a branch office as soon as possible to present documents.

So far, three of those drivers have had their licenses confiscated by law enforcement, Diaczok said. All three have submitted their documents and have their licenses back, she said.

In June, the MVA started mailing notices to a second group of drivers — about 150,000 —

who have until November to get their documents on file.

"We've made great strides in getting customers to our offices to satisfy the federal REAL ID requirements," Diaczok said, noting that they are seeing an increase in appointments at the MVA.

The new license was designed to comply with the Real ID Act, a law passed after the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks to tighten security for state-issued driver's licenses and identification. It aims to prevent identity fraud and sets minimum standards for state-issued driver's licenses and IDs. Applicants are required to provide proof of identity and legal U.S. residency to obtain the new ID.

Beginning in fall 2020, the only driver's licenses that will be accepted for purposes such as boarding commercial flights will be those that meet federal Real ID requirements. Enforcement at federal buildings and military bases began in 2014. Those without a Real ID license will be able to provide another acceptable form of identification such as a valid U.S. passport.

The MVA website has a lookup tool that people can use to check whether their file is missing documents. It also provides a checklist of documents needed and facilitates making an appointment at the MVA.

A U.S. birth certificate or valid U.S. passport can be used as proof of identity. You can provide your original Social Security card or a W-2 or SSA-1099 to prove a Social Security number; and proof of residency can be shown with documents such as a bank statement, insurance card, vehicle registration, utility bill or mail from a federal, state or local government agency.

According to the state, more than half of Marylanders are REAL ID compliant. MVA officials said more notices will go out this summer and fall as the state scrambles to get everyone holding a Real ID in compliance before the hard national deadline of Oct. 1, 2020.

The Department of Homeland Security last week recertified Maryland's REAL ID program, validating the state's procedures as in compliance with the federal law.

[NJ] Students Ensnared in Visa Sting at Fake N.J. University May Sue U.S., Court Rules (US News & World Report)

US News & World Report [8/15/2019 2:30 PM, Jonathan Stempel, Reuters, 3196K]

A federal appeals court said foreign-born students may sue the U.S. government over claims it wrongfully canceled their visas, following a sting where it set up a fake university to entrap corrupt visa brokers.

The 3rd U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in Philadelphia revived a proposed class action on behalf of more than 500 students who said they were deprived of due process when the government revoked their lawful immigration status after ensnaring them in the sting.

Writing for a three-judge panel, Circuit Judge Theodore McKee also faulted the government's "flip-flop" over whether the students, including many from China and India,

who thought they had "enrolled" at the fictitious University of Northern New Jersey were innocent victims, or participants in the fraud.

Spokespeople for the U.S. Department of Justice had no immediate comment.

The government in 2013 created the University of Northern New Jersey, supposedly located in the town of Cranford, to catch brokers of fraudulent student visas, even creating a website and social media accounts for the school that looked real.

It said brokers recruited more than 1,000 students to enroll, typically charged thousands of dollars for visas so they could stay, and sometimes arranged illegally for work visas.

Twenty-one arrests were announced when the university "closed" in April 2016.

The Department of Homeland Security then revoked the visas of many affected students, citing their "fraudulent enrollment," prompting the lawsuit to restore their legal status.

In October 2017, U.S. District Judge Jose Linares in Newark, New Jersey, dismissed the lawsuit, saying it was filed too soon because U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, or ICE, had yet to act on the students' reinstatement applications.

McKee, however, said visa revocations were "final" orders that could be challenged in court, even if students had other means to fight removal, and criticized the government's shifting views on whether the students were victims or conspirators.

"It would be a cruel irony indeed if we were to allow the government's own flip-flop on that characterization to deprive us of the ability to review the disputed governmental action," McKee wrote. "The flip-flop underscores the need for judicial review of a decision that would otherwise escape review by any court or agency."

Ira Kurzban, a lawyer for the students, welcomed the decision, calling it the "first salvo" in efforts to stop ICE from "trying to entrap innocent students."

McKee said it may still prove a "formidable challenge" to certify a class action because of many differences among affected students.

The case is *Fang et al v Director, U.S. Immigration & Customs Enforcement et al*, 3rd U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals, No. 17-3318.

[IL] Illinois sues over new rule that could deny green cards to those on public aid: 'It's another attempt ... to intimidate immigrants' (Chicago Tribune)

Chicago Tribune [8/15/2019 8:22 PM, Elvia Malagón, 1293K]

For U.S. Rep. Raja Krishnamoorthi, a new rule that could curb the ability of working-class immigrants to seek permanent residency in the United States struck a personal note.

Krishnamoorthi, a Democrat from Schaumburg, was an infant when his parents emigrated from India. But in the 1970s, the family had economic difficulties and relied on food stamps and public housing, he said. Still, his parents bounced back and he rose to become an

Illinois congressman.

"We were a public charge at one time and, (under the new rule) we would have been prohibited from gaining access to permanent residency and later citizenship," Krishnamoorthi said Thursday to a packed room of immigration advocates in the Loop. "And so I would not be in the halls of Congress."

He was among those who gathered Thursday to criticize the latest attempt by President Donald Trump's administration to further limit immigration. In this case, the new rule could deny green cards to legal immigrants who receive public aid such as food stamps or temporary assistance.

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, a federal agency under the Department of Homeland Security, announced the changes this week following a period of public comment last year.

The rule will go into effect Oct. 15, but it is already facing legal challenges. Illinois was one of more than a dozen states that jointly filed a federal lawsuit this week seeking to stop the rule, Illinois Attorney General Kwame Raoul announced Thursday.

"This public charge plan is not only illegal ... it's un-American," Raoul said, "and it's consistent with what (Trump) expressed early last year, and that it is racist. It's another attempt by the federal government to intimidate immigrants."

"Public charge" refers to immigrants who are primarily dependent on public assistance. But the new rule broadens the definition of a public charge, which could lead to the agency denying the application of someone who entered the country legally and is seeking permanent residency. It also applies to those seeking to extend a visa or apply for a different type of visa, according to the lawsuit challenging the rule.

Under the changes, people who have used or are likely to use programs such as Supplemental Security Income, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (or SNAP), some forms of Medicaid and certain housing programs would disqualify them from permanent residency.

Stephen Yale-Loehr, an immigration attorney and professor at Cornell Law School, said the rule change will give immigration officials more discretion when reviewing someone's application for residency or a visa. Officials also will review other factors such as a person's age, health, family status, overall assets, their employment record and how well they speak English, he said.

"It gives immigration officials discretion to weigh all of these various circumstances that's likely to mean many more denials based on public charge concerns," Yale-Loehr said.

Fred Tsao, senior policy counsel for the Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights, said the broader impact could be confusion among immigrant families, particularly those in mixed-status households that could include children who are U.S. citizens.

Tsao noted that the rule change came days after wide-scale immigration arrests in

Mississippi, and shortly after a mass shooting in El Paso whose victims were primarily of Mexican descent.

U.S. Rep. Jesús “Chuy” García of Chicago more bluntly described the rule as divisive and racist. He urged the immigration advocates to work together to stop the changes.

“It is anti-American, it is immoral, it is ineffective and it is a racist policy,” Garcia said. “We must fight this at every level.”

But Ken Cuccinelli, the acting director of U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, told reporters this week that the rule will ensure that those who immigrate to the United States don’t become a burden.

“We want to see people coming to this country who are self-sufficient,” he said. “That’s a core principal of the American Dream. It’s deeply embedded in our history, and particularly our history related to legal immigration.”

In an interview with NPR, Cuccinelli said the poem etched on the Statue of Liberty, long a symbol of America’s embrace of immigrants, should be amended to state: “Give me your tired and your poor who can stand on their own two feet and who will not become a public charge.”

A so-called “public charge” requirement dates back to the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act, but it was never defined in the way the new rule does, detractors say.

Yale-Loehr said legal challenges to the rule are likely to question whether the agency overstepped its authority to change immigration rules and policies without going through Congress.

“They’ll argue that the agency overstepped authority in trying to make this major change through a rule,” Yale-Loehr said.

The federal lawsuit is seeking to stop the rule, with states arguing it is unconstitutional and contrary to legislation and the intent of Congress, according to court records.

Sonianne Lozada of the Greater Chicago Food Depository said there has already been a “chilling effect” on immigrant communities since last year when news of the rule changes was made public. Lozada said the depository has heard from families who are opting out of programs even though they have U.S. citizen children.

“We are concerned about the effects this policy will not only have on the immigrant communities, but on our capacity to be able to provide them with food when they most need it,” Lozada said. “So while the food depository has a strong response to hunger in Chicago and Cook County ... it really doesn’t compare to the amount of food assistance that the SNAP program provides.”

[Iran] US threatens visa ban on crew of Iran tanker (Breitbart)

Breitbart [8/15/2019 3:17 PM, AFP, 2034K]

The United States on Thursday threatened a visa ban on the crew of an Iranian supertanker whose departure from Gibraltar Washington failed to block.

State Department spokeswoman Morgan Ortagus said the Grace 1 was assisting Iran's Revolutionary Guards, which the US deems a "terrorist organization," meaning crew members "may be ineligible for visas or admission to the United States under the terrorism-related inadmissibility grounds."

Customs and Border Protection

Migrant Children Are Entitled to Toothbrushes and Soap, Federal Court Rules (New York Times)

New York Times [8/15/2019 10:45 PM, Caitlin Dickerson, 22840K]

A federal appeals court panel ruled on Thursday that the government must provide detained migrant children with basic hygiene supplies such as toothbrushes and sleeping mats, ending a debate that incited national outrage after a Justice Department lawyer argued against the need to do so.

The exchange in June between the lawyer and a panel of openly aghast federal judges spread rapidly in the national media. The case grew in significance days later, when a group of lawyers told reporters they had observed distressed migrant children held in cramped, dirty conditions and without sufficient food or clean water at a Border Patrol station in Clint, Tex.

The lawyers said they saw infants being cared for by other detainees, some as young as 7 years old.

Lawmakers sprang into action, decrying the conditions. Hundreds of children were transferred out of the station, which was cleaned up, and the top Border Patrol agent who oversaw the facility was reassigned before resigning from his job.

"It's a major victory for children in federal immigration custody," Elora Mukherjee, one of the lawyers who visited the Clint facility and who has served as an official monitor on the ongoing court case for several years, said of the court's decision.

A lawyer for the government had tried to parse the meaning of "safe and sanitary" conditions — the existing legal standard for detained children — in lodging her appeal. She said that provisions such as soap and toothbrushes might not be necessary under the rules that govern facilities in which children are held for only a short period of time.

"This decision just guts all of those arguments, it shows that they have no basis," said Ms. Mukherjee, director of the Immigrants' Rights Clinic at Columbia Law School.

The ruling by a three-judge panel for the United States Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit strengthens protections for children being held in detention after crossing the border without authorization. It is the latest development in a protracted legal battle over the standards that have been in place for more than two decades, established as part of a settlement

agreement in a class-action lawsuit brought in 1985, known as the Flores agreement.

President Trump has argued that the protections have become a powerful incentive, drawing large numbers of migrant children and families. Federal officials are preparing a new set of regulations that could upend the existing rules.

Judges Marsha S. Berzon, William A. Fletcher and A. Wallace Tashima also upheld a requirement that government officials work to release detained children from custody as quickly as possible because of the detrimental impact that detention can have on their mental and physical health.

The judges rejected on procedural grounds an appeal brought by the government challenging the current limit under the Flores agreement of about 20 days.

In their opinion, the judges said the ruling represented a “common sense” reading of the agreement, which requires “safe and sanitary” conditions inside detention facilities that house migrant children.

“Assuring that children eat enough edible food, drink clean water, are housed in hygienic facilities with sanitary bathrooms, have soap and toothpaste, and are not sleep-deprived are without doubt essential to the children’s safety,” Judge Berzon wrote for the panel.

Judge Tashima’s exchanges in court with the Justice Department lawyer, Sarah B. Fabian, were widely shared on social media in part because the judge had been imprisoned in a Japanese-American internment camp in Arizona during World War II.

“It’s within everybody’s common understanding that if you don’t have a toothbrush, if you don’t have soap, if you don’t have a blanket, that’s not ‘safe and sanitary,’” he said to Ms. Fabian. “Wouldn’t everybody agree to that? Do you agree with that?”

“Well, I think it’s — I think those are — there’s fair reason to find that those things may be part of ‘safe and sanitary,’” she replied.

“Not ‘may be,’” Judge Tashima shot back. “‘Are’ a part. Why do you say ‘may be’? You mean there’s circumstances when a person doesn’t need to have a toothbrush, toothpaste and soap for days?”

In the following days, the exchange spread online and critics called for Ms. Fabian’s firing. Her office phone number was posted on the internet and she received death threats.

Migrant detention facilities, especially those along the southwestern border, have often been severely overcrowded since last fall. At that time record numbers of migrant children and families, many from Central America, began crossing through Mexico, leaving the government scrambling to find room to house them.

Some policies the administration has introduced have worsened the logjams. Immigration officials have been detaining as many migrants as possible, rather than allowing them to go free while they wait for their day in immigration court. Officials have also added significant bureaucratic hurdles that have slowed the process of releasing children from federal

custody.

The Department of Justice and the Department of Homeland Security did not respond to requests for comment on the decision.

Court upholds ruling that children held at border must have adequate food, bedding, sanitation (Los Angeles Times)

Los Angeles Times [8/15/2019 2:49 PM, Maura Dolan, 3575K]

In a closely watched case, a federal appeals court Thursday upheld an order requiring immigration authorities to provide children detained at the border with adequate food, water, bedding, toothbrushes and soap.

A three-judge panel of the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals rejected an appeal by the Trump administration to an order by a federal judge in Los Angeles who found the government was violating a 1997 settlement by failing to provide detained minors with safe and sanitary conditions.

U.S. District Judge Dolly Gee issued the order in 2017 after finding that minors in U.S. Customs and Border Protection custody were held in conditions that deprived them of sleep and did not have adequate food, clean water or basic hygiene items. The settlement, known as the Flores agreement, required the children be given safe and sanitary quarters.

The government appealed, arguing the order changed the settlement agreement. The original settlement said nothing about allowing children to sleep or wash themselves with soap, the federal government said.

The 9th Circuit disagreed, saying the enumerated items ordered by the judge fell under the settlement's requirement that children be kept in safe and sanitary conditions.

"Assuring that children eat enough edible food, drink clean water, are housed in hygienic facilities with sanitary bathrooms, have soap and toothpaste, and are not sleep-deprived are without doubt essential to the children's safety," the court said.

A video of the 9th Circuit hearing on the case in June went viral. It showed an astonished judge pressing a lawyer for the Trump administration to concede that having soap and toothbrushes were a necessary requirement for sanitary conditions.

The trial court issued the order after finding minors were "not receiving hot, edible or a sufficient number of meals during a given day," lacked clean drinking water, clean bedding, toothbrushes, soap and towels, endured "sleep deprivation" as a result of cold temperatures, overcrowding, lack of proper bedding and constant lighting.

Trump Team Loses in Defense of Migrant Shelters That Lacked Soap (Bloomberg)

Bloomberg [8/15/2019 12:21 PM, Edvard Pettersson, 5350K]

A federal appeals court dismissed the Trump administration's argument that its obligation to detain children in safe and sanitary conditions doesn't necessarily entail providing them with soap, towels, showers, dry clothing or toothbrushes.

The U.S. Court of Appeals in San Francisco on Thursday threw out the Trump administration's challenge to a judge's order two years ago that minors held at border patrol stations in the Rio Grande Valley in Texas should be provided with personal hygiene items as well as with proper sleeping conditions, reasonably comfortable temperatures, and adequate food and drinking water. The government was attempting to rewrite a 1997 agreement regarding the treatment of children in immigration detention.

"Assuring that children eat enough edible food, drink clean water, are housed in hygienic facilities with sanitary bathrooms, have soap and toothpaste, and are not sleep-deprived are without doubt essential to the children's safety," the appeals panel said in its ruling. "The district court properly construed the agreement as requiring such conditions rather than allowing the government to decide whether to provide them."

The long-running litigation over enforcement of the so-called Flores agreement from 22 years ago comes as new allegations have emerged in recent months about squalid conditions at U.S. Customs and Border Protection facilities in Texas and Florida where thousands of youngsters are housed.

Human rights activists recently asked the judge in Los Angeles who oversees enforcement of the Flores accord for an emergency order to inspect the Texas facilities and to allow independent health care specialists to examine the children held there.

Thursday's decision follows a hearing in June at which Justice Department lawyer Sarah Fabian tried to persuade an at times incredulous panel that the district judge had overstepped her authority by enumerating specific sanitary requirements for detained children that weren't specified in the 1997 agreement between the government and immigrant rights lawyers.

"It wasn't perfumed soap, it was soap," Circuit Judge William Fletcher said in response to Fabian's argument that the lower-court judge had created new requirements for housing minors. "It wasn't high-class milled soap."

The court's video recording of the argument went viral, garnering millions of views on YouTube and prompting threats against Fabian.

At issue in this specific appeal are the conditions under which children are housed, sometimes for weeks, in holding cells at border patrol stations in Texas after they are apprehended. Most of the children are eventually moved from the stations to the Ursula Central Processing Center in McAllen, Texas, called La Perrera, or doghouse, by the detainees.

Although U.S. District Judge Dolly Gee, who oversees the Flores litigation, in her 2017 order didn't find that conditions at the Ursula detention center violated the "safe and sanitary" housing requirements, recent allegations have called conditions at the facility comparable to that of torture facilities, with cold temperatures, no adequate access to medical care, basic sanitation, water or food.

President Donald Trump said July 7 that problems at U.S. border facilities have been exaggerated by the news media, and he demanded that Democrats in Congress change

asylum laws to make it more difficult for migrants to claim refuge in the U.S.

The case is Flores v. Sessions, 17-56297, U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit (San Francisco).

Judges rule migrant children must get soap and bedding, reject govt appeal (Breitbart)

Breitbart [8/15/2019 12:37 PM, AFP, 2034K]

Detained migrant children must be given soap, dry clothes and clean bedding, US federal judges ruled Thursday, dismissing an appeal by the Trump administration.

The ruling by three judges at San Francisco's federal appeals court follows reports of severe overcrowding and disease-ridden cells at US detention centers.

A surge of Central American migrants has overwhelmed US immigration services, leading to multi-pronged controversial efforts by US President Donald Trump's administration to stem the flow, resulting in court challenges.

The panel found that basic hygiene items and adequate sleeping arrangements were essential under a 1997 law requiring "safe and sanitary" facilities.

In doing so, they upheld an earlier ruling by a lower court which found the government was in breach of its obligations by failing to provide these.

The Department of Homeland Security had appealed that ruling, arguing that the "safe and sanitary" law did not specify that any of these items be provided.

"We emphatically disagree," the judges said in their judgment Thursday.

"Assuring that children eat enough edible food, drink clean water, are housed in hygienic facilities with sanitary bathrooms, have soap and toothpaste, and are not sleep deprived are without doubt essential to the children's safety," they wrote.

The lower court ruling in 2017 was right to require such conditions "rather than allowing the government to decide whether to provide them," they found.

Last month, the UN human rights chief said she was "deeply shocked" by conditions under which migrant children were held at US detention centers.

"As a pediatrician, but also as a mother and a former head of State, I am deeply shocked that children are forced to sleep on the floor in overcrowded facilities, without access to adequate health care or food, and with poor sanitation conditions," Michelle Bachelet, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, said in a statement.

Trump has described reports of hundreds of children wearing filthy clothing and packed into disease-ridden cells at a Texas border camp as a "hoax."

Panel rules soap, sleep essential to migrant kids' safety (ABC News)

ABC News [8/15/2019 4:18 PM, Amy Taxin, AP, 2702K]

Immigrant children detained by the U.S. government should get edible food, clean water, soap and toothpaste under a longstanding agreement over detention conditions, a federal appeals panel ruled Thursday in dismissing a Trump administration bid to limit what must be provided.

A three-judge panel for the Ninth U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in San Francisco tossed out the U.S. government's challenge to a lower court's findings that authorities had failed to provide safe and sanitary conditions for the children in line with a 1997 settlement agreement.

The government argued that authorities weren't required to provide specific accommodations, such as soap, under the settlement's requirement that facilities be "safe and sanitary" and asked the panel to weigh in. The appellate judges disagreed.

"Assuring that children eat enough edible food, drink clean water, are housed in hygienic facilities with sanitary bathrooms, have soap and toothpaste, and are not sleep-deprived are without doubt essential to the children's safety," the panel wrote.

The ruling followed a June hearing where a U.S. government lawyer said the agreement was vague and might not require that a toothbrush and soap be provided to children during brief stays in custody. Requiring these items, the government said, would be a change in the agreement.

Leecia Welch, senior director of legal advocacy and child welfare at the National Center for Youth Law, said the panel's ruling wasn't surprising. "It should shock the conscience of all Americans to know that our government argued children do not need these bare essentials," she said.

A message seeking comment was sent to the Department of Justice.

U.S. District Court Judge Dolly Gee in Los Angeles ruled in 2017 that authorities had breached the agreement — widely known as the Flores settlement — after young immigrants caught on the border said they had to sleep in cold, overcrowded cells and were given inadequate food and dirty water.

Since then, problems in the facilities have persisted. Gee has appointed an independent monitor to evaluate conditions.

The issues date back years. They have drawn increased attention amid a rise in the number of children and families, mostly from Central America, arriving on the southwest border.

The Flores settlement between advocates for young immigrants and the U.S. government says children should be held in facilities that meet certain standards and released as soon as is reasonably possible, which has been considered to be about 20 days.

Court says detained migrant children can't be sleep-deprived, must get soap (CBS News)

CBS News [8/15/2019 2:14 PM, Graham Kates, 3332K]

Detained migrant children must have access to soap and toothpaste, and cannot be deprived of sleep, a panel of federal judges ruled Thursday.

The Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals dismissed a federal government appeal, which was the subject of a now-infamous hearing in which a government attorney argued that the requirement that children be afforded "safe and sanitary" conditions did not necessarily mean they needed to be given basic hygiene products. The government had appealed a 2017 decision by a lower court judge that a landmark 1997 settlement called the Flores Agreement required those items even though it did not explicitly list them.

During a June hearing, Justice Department lawyer Sarah Fabian argued that the Flores Agreement — which set a nationwide standard for the treatment of migrant children in custody — was vague and therefore, "it was left to the agencies to determine" what sanitation protocols to follow.

The judges appeared incredulous during the hearing.

"It's within everybody's common understanding: If you don't have a toothbrush, if you don't have soap, if you don't have a blanket, it's not safe and sanitary. Wouldn't everybody agree to that? Do you agree to that?" Judge Wallace Tashima asked Fabian.

Another member of the panel, Judge Marsha Berzon, grilled Fabian on the sleeping conditions for children spending the night on concrete floors in crowded, frigid, brightly-lit cells.

"You're really going stand up and tell us that being able to sleep isn't a question of safe and sanitary conditions?" asked Berzon, who wrote the court's dismissal.

In the ruling, she wrote: "Those determinations reflect a commonsense understanding of what the quoted language requires. Assuring that children eat enough edible food, drink clean water, are housed in hygienic facilities with sanitary bathrooms, have soap and toothpaste, and are not sleep deprived are without doubt essential to the children's safety."

Appeals court says soap, toothbrushes can be required for detained children (CNN)

CNN [8/15/2019 6:41 PM, Geneva Sands, 6094K]

A federal appeals court on Thursday dismissed a Trump administration argument that "safe and sanitary" conditions do not specifically require access to items such as soap and toothbrushes, as well as adequate sleep for children in custody at Border Patrol stations.

A three-judge panel for the 9th US Circuit Court of Appeals ruled that a lower court had the right to specify what "safe and sanitary" conditions were required.

The lower court ordered the government to provide specific hygiene items, as well as directing the government to hire a "juvenile coordinator."

"Assuring that children eat enough edible food, drink clean water, are housed in hygienic facilities with sanitary bathrooms, have soap and toothpaste, and are not sleep-deprived are

without doubt essential to the children's safety," Thursday's ruling states.

The appeals court upheld the lower court decision to require such conditions, rather than allow the government to decide whether to provide them.

The Justice Department declined to comment on the case.

The case gained notoriety after oral arguments in June, when a Justice Department attorney said that "some of those things may not be required," when asked about the need for toothpaste, a toothbrush, and soap. The judges grilled her at the time and suggested access to such basic hygiene and the ability to sleep are clearly safe and sanitary.

Video of the court hearing went viral and caused outrage. DOJ later said that the attorney received death threats.

The appeal is part of the decades-old Flores settlement, a court agreement that sets nationwide policy for the detention and treatment of minors in immigration custody. In May 2016, the plaintiffs asked the district court to enforce the agreement, arguing that the government was in violation of the agreement by detaining minors in unsanitary and unsafe conditions at Border Patrol stations.

The Justice Department's appeal was dismissed for lack of jurisdiction.

Ninth Circuit rejects Trump's bid to limit accommodations to children detained at border (FOX News)

FOX News [8/15/2019 8:52 PM, Bradford Betz, 10258K]

The Ninth U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals, in a rejection of the Trump administration's bid to limit accommodations for immigrant children detained at the border, ruled Thursday that the children must be given adequate food, clean water, soap, and toothpaste.

A three-judge panel from the left-leaning court tossed out the U.S. government's challenge to a lower court ruling that stated authorities had failed to provide safe and sanitary conditions for the children in line with a 1997 settlement.

The settlement, known commonly as the Flores Agreement, stated that migrant children – whether accompanied by their families or not – could not be held for longer than 20 days.

U.S. District Court Judge Dolly Gee ruled in 2017 that officials had breached the settlement after young immigrants detained at the border said they had to sleep in cold, overcrowded cells and were given inadequate food and dirty water.

At a June hearing, a U.S. government lawyer argued that officials weren't required to provide specific accommodations, such as soap, under the agreement's requirement that facilities be "safe and sanitary. The appellate judges disagreed.

"Assuring that children eat enough edible food, drink clean water, are housed in hygienic facilities with sanitary bathrooms, have soap and toothpaste, and are not sleep-deprived are without doubt essential to the children's safety," the panel wrote.

The issues at border detention have dated back years, but have drawn increased attention as the result of an ongoing rise in the number of children and families, mostly from Central America, arriving on the southwest border.

Trump team loses in defense of migrant shelters that lacked soap (San Francisco Chronicle)

San Francisco Chronicle [8/15/2019 1:33 PM, Edvard Pettersson, Bloomberg, 2613K]

A federal appeals court dismissed the Trump administration's argument that its obligation to detain children in safe and sanitary conditions doesn't necessarily entail providing them with soap, towels, showers, dry clothing or toothbrushes.

The U.S. Court of Appeals in San Francisco on Thursday threw out the Trump administration's challenge to a judge's order two years ago that minors held at border patrol stations in the Rio Grande Valley in Texas should be provided with personal hygiene items as well as with proper sleeping conditions, reasonably comfortable temperatures, and adequate food and drinking water. The government was attempting to rewrite a 1997 agreement regarding the treatment of children in immigration detention.

"Assuring that children eat enough edible food, drink clean water, are housed in hygienic facilities with sanitary bathrooms, have soap and toothpaste, and are not sleep-deprived are without doubt essential to the children's safety," the appeals panel said in its ruling. "The district court properly construed the agreement as requiring such conditions rather than allowing the government to decide whether to provide them."

The long-running litigation over enforcement of the so-called Flores agreement from 22 years ago comes as new allegations have emerged in recent months about squalid conditions at U.S. Customs and Border Protection facilities in Texas and Florida where thousands of youngsters are housed.

Human rights activists recently asked the judge in Los Angeles who oversees enforcement of the Flores accord for an emergency order to inspect the Texas facilities and to allow independent health care specialists to examine the children held there.

Thursday's decision follows a hearing in June at which Justice Department lawyer Sarah Fabian tried to persuade an at times incredulous panel that the district judge had overstepped her authority by enumerating specific sanitary requirements for detained children that weren't specified in the 1997 agreement between the government and immigrant rights lawyers.

"It wasn't perfumed soap, it was soap," Circuit Judge William Fletcher said in response to Fabian's argument that the lower-court judge had created new requirements for housing minors. "It wasn't high-class milled soap."

The court's video recording of the argument went viral, garnering millions of views on YouTube and prompting threats against Fabian.

At issue in this specific appeal are the conditions under which children are housed,

sometimes for weeks, in holding cells at border patrol stations in Texas after they are apprehended. Most of the children are eventually moved from the stations to the Ursula Central Processing Center in McAllen, Texas, called La Perrera, or doghouse, by the detainees.

Although U.S. District Judge Dolly Gee, who oversees the Flores litigation, in her 2017 order didn't find that conditions at the Ursula detention center violated the "safe and sanitary" housing requirements, recent allegations have called conditions at the facility comparable to that of torture facilities, with cold temperatures, no adequate access to medical care, basic sanitation, water or food.

President Donald Trump said July 7 that problems at U.S. border facilities have been exaggerated by the news media, and he demanded that Democrats in Congress change asylum laws to make it more difficult for migrants to claim refuge in the U.S.

The case is Flores v. Sessions, 17-56297, U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit (San Francisco).

US official: 'Much better' conditions at border for migrants (ABC News)

ABC News [8/15/2019 8:28 PM, Cedar Attanasio, AP, 2702K]

A senior Trump administration official says that with fewer immigrants and more detention space, people apprehended along the U.S.-Mexico border won't be subject to the squalid, overcrowded conditions criticized earlier this year.

Kevin McAleenan, the acting Secretary of Homeland Security, thanked Congress Thursday during a tour of a new Border Patrol facility in West Texas, saying the money helped "create a much better situation."

The tent facility in Tornillo, Texas, is about 40 miles (64.37 kilometers) southeast of El Paso and can hold 2,500 migrants. It had 32 on Thursday after being open for 48 hours.

Another tent camp in Tornillo for children was closed in January.

Around 82,000 migrants were detained in July, down 20 percent from June but double the same time last year.

Border apprehensions drop for 2nd straight month: CBP says it's 'absolute proof' deal with Mexico is working (FOX News)

FOX News [8/15/2019 12:25 PM, Joshua Nelson, 10258K] Video: [HERE](#)

Customs and Border Protection Deputy Commissioner Robert Perez said Thursday that the drop in border apprehensions for a second straight month is proof that the deal with Mexico to stem the flow of migrants is working.

"It's absolute proof. Unquestionably, an agreement with the government of Mexico that was literally unprecedented by way of the degree of cooperation, the commitment they've made, to enforce and go down in numbers with their National Guard and law enforcement along their border ... [with] Guatemala," Perez told "Fox & Friends."

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) reported a significant drop in apprehensions at the southwest border in June, after an agreement with the Mexican government. For the month of July, DHS reported more than 72,000 apprehensions, down from more than 132,000 in May.

President Trump had threatened to punish Mexico with tariffs to force them to step up their own immigration enforcement efforts.

Perez added: "Interior enforcement up, as well as enforcement along our southern border--that coupled with the collaboration with the migrant protection protocol and some of the work that we've been doing with the northern triangle countries--all combined, you've seen those numbers drop now in two months in a row."

Border patrol agents have been blasted by Democratic members of Congress, who've claimed there is a "dehumanizing culture" at the southern border and in detention facilities. Meantime, more than 600 Google employees are refusing to "be complicit" in any potential cloud computing work the tech giant might do for CBP.

In a petition posted on Wednesday to Medium, the employees wrote that CBP, along with Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), is caging and harming asylum seekers, separating children from their parents and overseeing an abusive system.

Perez responded to those claims saying, "From my perspective, 26 years-plus of being in this business, policy debates are perfectly acceptable. The vilification of law enforcement professionals, not appreciating and understanding, frankly, what these dedicated public servants are doing every day, taking a sworn oath to protect their communities to put the lives of others before their own."

"Our border patrol agents alone have rescued over 4,000 people in the middle of the deserts, in running dangerous rivers just this year. That is what's really concerning to me," he said.

[VT] 26 arrested for blocking road at Vermont immigration protest (San Francisco Chronicle)

San Francisco Chronicle [8/15/2019 11:08 AM, Staff, 337K]

Police say 26 people were arrested for blocking traffic in a Vermont town as part of a protest that began as a rally supporting immigrant rights.

Hartford police say those arrested Wednesday evening were charged with "rioters refusing to disperse." They were released later after being issued citations.

The Valley News reports the rally, organized by the group Rise! Upper Valley, was held in response to reports of the arrests of undocumented immigrants by Border Patrol agents in recent weeks.

U.S. Customs and Border Protection says 18 people were arrested in the region between July 29 and Aug. 1.

The arrests came after the protesters blocked the intersection of U.S. Route 5 and state Route 14, stalling traffic for several hours.

**[TX] Feds bust stash house where smugglers ‘terrorize’ illegal immigrants
(Washington Times)**

Washington Times [8/15/2019 6:18 AM, Stephen Dinan, 452K]

Authorities in Texas busted a massive illegal immigrant stash house last week, rescuing 73 migrants from smugglers who allegedly kicked them, used a stun gun on them and carried a pistol to “terrorize” them.

One of the migrants managed to escape and flagged down a state police trooper, who alerted the Border Patrol.

They staged a rescue with the National Guard, local sheriff’s deputies and state police, raiding the ranch and finding dozens of illegal immigrants on the property in El Sauz, Texas.

Agents arrested three people they said ran the operations — all of them familiar to the Border Patrol as known smugglers — but they all invoked their rights to remain silent, and refused to talk.

But a handful of the illegal immigrants rescued from the stash house told their stories to agents, describing the violence and intimidation tactics the stash house operators used.

Victor Manuel Barahona-Mejia, a Salvadoran, said he was being charged \$11,000 to be smuggled into the U.S., and had been held for about 15 days at the ranch.

He told agents one of the smugglers carried a Taser, made a habit of kicking migrants, and also had a gun he used to threaten them.

It got so bad that he escaped and flagged down the trooper, ending his attempt to sneak into the U.S. but helping rescue the other illegal immigrants.

Others held at the stash house backed up his account. Domingo Bernane Ajpop-Tzaj, a Guatemalan who’d paid 110,000 Quetzals to be smuggled — equivalent to about \$14,000 — said he saw one of the stash house operators hold the pistol to another migrant’s head.

Heriberto Montor-Villasenor, a Mexican who was paying \$7,000 to be smuggled, told agents he was one of those who’d been threatened with being shot by Juan Carlos Berrera, the smuggler identified as carrying the pistol.

The court documents don’t say why the migrants were being held in this instance, but smugglers will often keep them at stash houses to extort more cash from their families.

Other times they’re awaiting a clear window to move the migrants from the border area north.

A network of Border Patrol checkpoints on highways leading away from the Texas-Mexico boundary acts as a secondary border, and smugglers pay drivers and foot guides

thousands of dollars to find ways to get the migrants through or around the checkpoints undetected.

Federal Emergency Management Agency

[LA] Gov. Edwards Requests Federal Assistance for Louisiana Communities Impacted by Hurricane Barry (KEDM 90.3 Public Radio)

KEDM 90.3 Public Radio [8/15/2019 12:15 PM, Cory Crowe]

Today, Gov. John Bel Edwards sent a letter to Pres. Donald J. Trump requesting a Major Disaster Declaration for the State of Louisiana due to the impact of Hurricane Barry last month. Barry made landfall July 13, 2019, near Intracoastal City with maximum sustained winds of 71 mph and gusts up to 85 mph.

The hurricane triggered extensive rainfall, flash flooding and multiple tornadoes. In addition to Barry's landfall, the state was already dealing with months of elevated river levels and continuous river flood fighting before the hurricane threatened the state.

"Federal assistance is necessary to supplement the efforts of our local and state agencies," said Gov. Edwards. "While the state was ready for this dangerous system, the costs to the state and our local governments, disaster relief organizations and compensation by insurance for disaster related losses are a tremendous burden. We are optimistic President Trump and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) will understand why this request is necessary."

The request for a Major Disaster Declaration will provide assistance for activities involved in protection of life and property, removal of debris and the repair, restoration and replacement of damaged facilities.

Gov. Edwards is requesting Public Assistance in (Categories A-B) for Ascension, Assumption, East Baton Rouge, East Feliciana, Iberville, Jefferson, Orleans, St. Charles, St. Helena, St. John the Baptist, Tangipahoa and West Feliciana parishes. Categories A and B involve debris removal and emergency protective measures.

Additionally, Gov. Edwards is requesting Public Assistance in (Categories A-G) for Allen, Iberia, Lafourche, Plaquemines, St. Mary, Terrebonne and Vermilion parishes. Categories A-G involve debris removal, emergency protective measures and permanent work on infrastructure such as roads, bridges, water control facilities, buildings, equipment, utilities and parks.

The governor also requests Hazard Mitigation statewide.

Hazard Mitigation (HM) funding is generally 15% of the total amount of Federal assistance provided to a state, territory or federally-recognized tribe following a major disaster declaration. HM is any action taken to reduce or eliminate long term risk to people and property from natural disasters.

Additional parishes may be added once the full assessment process is completed.

[CA] California county OKs plane to monitor, predict wildfires (San Francisco Chronicle)

San Francisco Chronicle [8/15/2019 4:43 PM, Staff, 2613K]

Southern California's Orange County has approved a 150-day pilot program for a plane that will monitor wildfires, providing incident commanders with real-time information on fire conditions.

The Board of Supervisors on Tuesday accepted a \$4.5 million state grant that will fund the program, the Los Angeles Times reported.

The Orange County Fire Authority will oversee operation of the dual-prop plane, which will be flown by a contractor, Courtney Aircraft.

Firefighters will have access to video shot by the aircraft's infrared cameras within five minutes of its arrival over a site.

"This new tool will immediately tell us the direction of the fire, so we can safely and rapidly evacuate residents, as well as position fire crews in precise locations to better protect life, property and infrastructure during a wildfire," OCFA Chief Brian Fennessy said in a statement.

Images obtained by the aircraft will inform the data-based computer models developed by the WIFIRE Lab at University of California, San Diego, according to the newspaper.

Board Chairwoman Lisa Bartlett said the plane will "bring state-of-the-art, military-style technology and intelligence to Orange County so we can advance our response and deployment efficiency."

The aircraft will also provide mutual aid to Los Angeles, Riverside, Ventura and San Diego counties.

[CA] Jimmy Kimmel Live!' hit with hefty fine for using emergency alert tones (FOX News)

FOX News [8/15/2019 9:47 PM, Louis Casiano, 10258K]

Alert tones used in a "Jimmy Kimmel Live!" episode earlier this year to poke fun at a presidential alert test that occurred last year cost ABC \$395,000 in fines, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) said in a Thursday statement announcing a handful of settlements with TV networks.

The FCC said it had settled with the networks for the misuse of the emergency alert system (EAS) tone. The tone is broadcast via TV, radio and other devices to warn of emergencies such as hurricanes and other national disasters.

"We remain concerned about the misuse of the EAS codes and EAS and WEA Attention Signals, or simulations thereof, to capture audience attention during advertisements; dramatic, entertainment and educational programs, and at any other time that there is no genuine alert," the agency said in a statement. "The FCC may issue sanctions for such violations, including, but not limited to, monetary forfeitures."

The comedian's late-night show used a tone three times during an Oct. 3, 2018, sketch. Earlier that day, roughly 225 million electronic devices across the U.S. received the "Presidential Alert" that read "THIS IS A TEST of the National Wireless Emergency Alert System. No action is needed."

The network said the tones were improperly used in the episode. ABC signed a consent decree with the FCC, in which it admitted using the tones.

The network said Thursday, "ABC takes regulatory compliance seriously and we are pleased to have resolved this issue."

Other networks also reached a settlement for similar violations.

AMC Networks agreed to pay \$104,000 in civil fines for using an alert tone in a February episode of "The Walking Dead."

Discovery's Animal Planet and Meruelo Radio Holdings were also fined. Discovery agreed to pay \$68,000 for using an actual wireless emergency alert tone in an episode of Animal Planet's "Lone Star Law."

Crew members received the tone on their phones during filming Texas game wardens following Hurricane Harvey.

And Meruelo paid \$67,000 for broadcasting a signal during a promotion for Southern California-based radio stations.

[CA] Jimmy Kimmel Skit With Fake Emergency Alert Ends in F.C.C. Fine for ABC (Reuters)

Reuters [8/16/2019 1:50 AM, David Shepardson, 22840K]

Simulated wireless alert tones used in a "Jimmy Kimmel Live!" skit making fun of a presidential alert test have cost Walt Disney Co's ABC \$395,000 in civil fines with the U.S. Federal Communications Commission.

AMC Networks separately on Thursday agreed to pay a \$104,000 fine for using an alert tone in a February 2019 episode of the "The Walking Dead." The commission handed down smaller fines to Discovery's Animal Planet and Meruelo Radio Holdings for other violations.

The use of emergency alert system or wireless emergency alert tones are barred by FCC rules "to avoid confusion when the tones are used, alert fatigue among listeners, and false activation of the system by the operative data elements contained in the alert tones," the agency said.

Discovery agreed to pay a \$68,000 civil penalty because during an episode of Animal Planet's "Lone Star Law" contained an actual wireless emergency alert tone. The crew was filming Texas Game Wardens following Hurricane Harvey and caught the tone of a real wireless alert received by phones during filming.

Meruelo paid \$67,000 for broadcasting a simulated signal in a promotion for its morning show on southern California-based radio stations KDAY and KDEY-FM.

AMC, Discovery and Meruelo did not immediately comment

ABC said in a statement it takes “regulatory compliance seriously and we are pleased to have resolved this issue.” In its consent decree with the FCC, it admitted it did broadcast the tones “in the absence of an actual emergency” or authorized test in an Oct. 3, 2018 broadcast.

The late-night comedy show used a simulated wireless emergency alert tone three times during a sketch regarding the nationwide presidential wireless emergency alert test that took place that day.

ABC told the FCC the tones were improperly included in the episode because a “misunderstanding that the use of the tone was permissible.” The FCC said ABC took steps to remove the portion of the episode containing the tones from its website and other online streaming sites, and decided not to rebroadcast the episode.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency in October 2018 sent presidential wireless alerts to millions of mobile phones that triggered a loud tone, a special vibration and a message reading: “THIS IS A TEST of the National Wireless Emergency Alert System. No action is needed.”

Government officials told reporters in 2018 President Donald Trump would not personally trigger the alert - from his phone or any other device - and emphasized that no president could “wake up one morning and attempt to send a personal message.”

Secret Service

[KY] Troopers Catch Couple From Michigan Caught In Laurel County In Suspected Stolen Car (WWEL103.9 FM)

WWEL103.9 FM [8/15/2019 11:18 AM, Dave Begley]

Kentucky State Police say troopers caught a couple from Michigan in a suspected stolen car. According to the arrest citation, troopers stopped Kenbee Hughey and Porsche Ries in Laurel County. The car came up stolen out of Detroit. While searching the car, investigators say they found several credit cards, a computer and a credit card reader. They turned all of that over to the U.S. Secret Service. Kenbee and Ries could face a stolen property charge among other charges. They were lodged in the Laurel County Corrections Center.

[TN] Reports of debit/credit card ‘skimmers’ on the rise locally (Courier News)

Courier News [8/14/2019 8:00 AM, Crystal Huskey]

According to Clinton Police Det. Danielle Alexander, there has been an increase in skimmers at local gas stations.

Banks have noticed it, too. While there are many more reports of skimmers in Knoxville, they’ve been reported in Clinton lately as well.

Skimmers are malicious card readers attached to ATMs or pay-at-the-pump card readers that steal the info from the magnetic strip on your bank card.

The Federal Trade Commission offers the following tips to prevent your card info being stolen by skimmers:

Make sure the gas pump panel is closed and doesn't show signs of tampering.

Many stations now put security seals over the cabinet panel. If the pump panel is opened, the label will read "void."

Look at the card reader itself. Does it look different than other readers at the station? Try to wiggle the card reader before you put in your card.

If it moves, report it to the attendant. Then use a different pump.

If you use a debit card at the pump, run it as a credit card instead of entering a PIN.

That way, the PIN is safe and the money isn't deducted immediately from your account.

If you're really concerned about skimmers, pay inside rather than at the pump.

Monitor your credit card and bank accounts regularly to spot unauthorized charges.

If your card info is stolen, report it to the bank and police as soon as possible. Many banks will refund fraudulent transactions.

[MO] Police say new kind of credit card skimmer is completely out-of-sight (KSDK News Channel 5)

KSDK News Channel 5 [8/15/2019 7:49 PM, Sara Machi, 110K] Video: [HERE](#)

Arnold Police said they recently found skimmers at four of the pumps at an area Phillips 66, not installed on the card readers but hidden behind two security panels and hooked up to the circuitry inside the pumps.

"I actually had to research at what I was looking at," Det. Joshua Wineinger said.

They were alerted to the devices by a gas pump technician.

They say someone likely bought a cheap master key to make it through the first panel, then pried open the second layer with a screwdriver.

Every time a card was swiped, the device logged the card number, name, and expiration date.

Then that was all transmitted through a Bluetooth signal to the crooks.

"I feel like we're always one step behind," the detective said of advancing technology.

Wineinger said they expect there are now more skimmers in the area so the best thing you can do is to check that the security seal is intact before you fuel up.

Customers can also see if their phone picks up a Bluetooth signal with a long, random chain of numbers while near the gas nozzles. That could be a transmitter inside the pump.

Phillips 66 locations in Belleville and St. Louis have also found the new skimmers in their systems.

[LA] Be aware of skimming across Louisiana (Minden Press-Herald Online)

Minden Press-Herald Online [8/15/2019 11:15 AM, Will Phillips, 2K]

A credit card skimming device was discovered and removed by the Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry Weights and Measures over a four day period. "The LDAF, U.S. Secret Service, Jefferson, and St. Tammany Parish Sheriff's Offices participated in a sweep of 4,830 retail motor fuel dispensers at 535 gas stations in East Baton Rouge, Jefferson and St. Tammany parishes August 6-9, 2019 to search for skimming devices. The skimmer was found in an outlying area of St. Tammany Parish," according to a press release from the LDAF.

Agriculture and Forestry Commissioner Mike Strain, D.V.M., said, "This was an extremely successful joint effort by our department and law enforcement. The goal is to stay proactive and ahead of these criminals who continue to find new ways to scam people."

The joint effort had multiple goals. "Work with local law enforcement jurisdictions to educate all involved in the detection of credit card skimmers in fuel dispensers, define standard operating procedures (SOP's) on evidence gathering and removal of devices, work to train all law enforcement on best practices to detect and remove skimming devices, develop a working relationship between all jurisdictions involved with credit card skimming devices, and to detect and remove any device in the parishes inspected," according to the press release.

In the past two years, LDAF inspectors have confiscated 48 skimming devices throughout the state. In addition to making sure all measuring devices are calibrated properly, 47 LDAF Weights and Measures inspectors are working in all 64 parishes each day to protect consumers from fraudulent practices secured from skimming devices inside gas pumps at 3,500 gas stations across the state.

While it doesn't occur as often, Webster Parish banks and gas pumps are no stranger to card skimming devices. In fact, the Minden Press-Herald covered a case three years ago where a skimmer was placed on the Citizen's Bank ATM.

However, since then banks have become more familiar with skimmers and how to protect against them. Joel Gray of Gibsland Bank & Trust took the time to share what protocols their bank does to help combat against card skimmers trying to tamper with their ATM.

"What we typically do first is to check the card reader by giving it a tug to make sure nothing is on top of that. Other than that you have to check for cameras that people place on the machine to try and record people's PIN numbers. These are typically going to be placed

here,” Gray said as he gestured to the upper lip at the top of the atm, “or they will put mirrors on the corners that look like they’re supposed to be there, but in reality they are hidden cameras pointed down to try and see the PIN.”

Gray also mentioned that bankers are pretty well connected. So if one bank finds evidence of their ATM being tampered with, chances are the other banks in the area will be notified as well.

For individuals concerned with having their card information taken by one of these skimmers, there are a few precautions one can take to help reduce the chance of using a pump or ATM with a skimmer.

According to the press release, “Whenever possible, do not use the debit card function at the gas pump, use it as a credit card in order to protect your pin number. Monitor your debit/credit card activity online and contact your bank to report unrecognized charges. Whenever using a credit card, try to use a pump that is easily seen by gas station employees. Pumps that are less visible are commonly targeted because crooks can easily install a skimmer in a short period of time. Finally, check the pump card reader for signs of forced entry like bent panels or broken security tape.”

[LA] High-speed pursuit ends with arrests (American Press)

American Press [8/15/2019 2:00 PM, Lisa Addison, 3K]

A high-speed vehicle pursuit Tuesday night ended in the arrests of three Lake Charles men, including one who was allegedly involved in a February shooting, authorities said.

Darterious Kemon "Phat Daddy" Bartie, 24, was charged with illegal possession of a stolen firearm, monetary instrument abuse, possession of CDS Schedule 2, and possession of a firearm by a person convicted of certain felonies, cyberstalking, telephone harassment and criminal trespass. He is being held without bond in the Calcasieu Correctional Center.

Dyllan Anthony Levy, 18, was charged with aggravated flight from an officer, monetary instrument abuse, possession of a CDS Schedule 2 and possession of marijuana. Tyrone Devonte Simien, 23, was charged with monetary instrument abuse, two counts of possession of CDS Schedule 2 and illegal possession of a stolen firearm. Levy and Simien are being held without bond in the Calcasieu Correctional Center.

At approximately 6:30 p.m. Tuesday, Lake Charles Police detectives Joey Romero and William Loving observed Bartie and others in the 1900 block of Prejean Drive.

Detectives attempted to stop a vehicle in which Bartie was an occupant. The person driving the vehicle refused to stop and led officers on a high-speed pursuit in south Lake Charles.

During the pursuit, occupants of the vehicle discarded numerous items that were later recovered. Among the items were narcotics, a firearm, and counterfeit money.

The pursuit eventually ended without further incident in Cameron Parish.

The Calcasieu Parish Sheriff's Office and Cameron Parish Sheriff's Office also assisted in the pursuit.

[IA] False money discovered in Clermont (KWWL)

KWWL [8/15/2019 2:56 PM, Staff, 28K]

After a two week long investigation, the Fayette County Sheriff's Office executed a search warrant on State St. on a suspected counterfeit money making operation. Fake money was found in many communities in Fayette County.

During the search, law enforcement discovered a counterfeit money lab. This included several computers, printers, scanners, special paper, thousands of dollars of fake money, pre-paid credit cards and documentation of an ongoing criminal activity were found.

Controlled substance and drug paraphernalia were also seized during the search warrant.

Charges have been filed against Jason George Massman (33) of Clermont for: Ongoing criminal conduct (class "B" felony), Falsifying public documents (class "D" felony), Forgery (class "D" felony), unlawful possession of prescription drugs (Misdemeanor) and possession of drug paraphernalia (Misdemeanor).

Massman is currently in custody at the Fayette County Jail awaiting his court appearance.

Sheriff Marty Fisher states that areas that may be affected could be numerous counties in northeast Iowa. He is asking the public to check any \$100, \$50, \$20, \$10 and \$5 dollar bills with these possible serial numbers:

JE33971376C

MF09024100D

JJ11942902A

ML86349284A

MG694983781A

CG0357533B

This is an ongoing investigation and more charges and arrests could be made.

[IA] Hy-Vee investigating if customer payment data was exposed at fuel pumps, other locations (USA Today)

USA Today [8/15/2019 6:07 AM, Aaron Calvin, 6620K]

Hy-Vee is investigating possible security issues with payment processing systems at Hy-Vee fuel pumps, drive-thru coffee shops, restaurants and store-owned Wahlburgers locations that may have left customer payment data vulnerable.

In a statement released Wednesday, Hy-Vee said it recently detected unauthorized activity

on these specific payment processing systems, which triggered the investigation with the help of leading cybersecurity firms.

No dates during which data may have been compromised nor specific affected locations were listed in the company statement, which noted "the investigation is in its earliest stages."

Hy-Vee officials said in the statement that they believe they have taken the appropriate actions to stop any unauthorized activity on the payment processing systems, have notified federal law enforcement and the payment card networks involved.

"Our investigation is focused on card transactions at our fuel pumps, drive-thru coffee shops, and restaurants," the statement said. "These locations have different point-of-sale systems than those located at our grocery stores, drugstores and inside our convenience stores, which utilize point-to-point encryption technology for processing payment card transactions."

Hy-Vee will "provide notification to our customers as we get further clarity about the specific timeframes and locations that may have been involved," according to the news release.

Customers are being advised to monitor payment card statements for any unauthorized activity.

[IA] Hy-Vee warns of security problem with credit card readers (San Francisco Chronicle)

San Francisco Chronicle [8/15/2019 7:52 AM, Staff, 337K]

An Iowa-based grocery store chain is warning customers about what it says is a security incident involving payment card systems.

Hy-Vee said in a news release Wednesday that it launched an investigation after it detected unauthorized activity on some of its payment processing systems — activity that the company thinks has stopped.

The investigation focused on card payments at Hy-vee restaurants, fuel pumps and drive-thru coffee shops. Company officials think the problem doesn't involved payments systems used inside its grocery stores, drugstores and convenience stores. They use encryption technology for processing card transactions.

Hy-vee intends to notify customers when it can share specific timeframes and locations that may have been involved.

The company is based in West Des Moines and operates more than 240 retail stores in eight Midwestern states: Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, South Dakota and Wisconsin.

[WI] Green Bay police warn stores about fake money (Green Bay Press-Gazette)

Green Bay Press-Gazette [8/15/2019 12:08 PM, Benita Mathew, 25K]

Take a good look at your money because fake bills are making their way through the city.

The Green Bay Police Department is warning people about a spike in counterfeit money seen in the city this summer.

The number of cases are declining, but many fake \$20 and \$100 bills are still being used at stores and rummage sales, said Green Bay police Lt. Ben Allen.

The bills were used primarily at businesses on the city's west side, but recently it has become more sporadic, Allen said.

Different kinds of counterfeit money have been circulating since May. Some have Chinese symbols on the back. Others say "For motion picture use only" on the front and are bleached with chemicals to remove the ink on the bills.

The police department also shared an image of one of the fake bills on Facebook. The fake bills have markings that say "This is a replica" or "Replica."

Allen advises people to study the security strip and feel the ink to determine if a bill is legitimate.

"Keep checking the money. People are noticing something's wrong when they count the money or put the bill through counters," Allen said.

Police are still investigating to find the source of the counterfeit money, Allen said.

[TX] More 'funny money' showing up in Jasper (Kjas)

Kjas [8/15/2019 1:10 PM, Steve W Stewart, 9K]

Jasper Police say more 'funny money' has been showing up in our area. According to Lieutenant Garrett Foster, officers have taken a report on yet another counterfeit bill that has shown up, and this is on top of a recent increase in the number of counterfeit money cases.

There have been various denominations of fake money being passed in Jasper over the years, Foster says this time it's counterfeit \$100's and \$20's that are cropping up.

According to numbers from the United States Department of the Treasury, there could be anywhere from \$70 million to \$200 million in counterfeit bills in circulation at any given time across the entire country.

[SD] Counterfeit money at the Brown County Fair (KSFY)

KSFY [8/15/2019 8:57 PM, Ryan Martin, 17K]

More than fifty counterfeit \$100 bills have been seized at the fair this year by Deputies from the Brown County Sheriff's Department.

All of them have been found laying on the ground. Luckily, nobody has reported somebody attempting to use the bills for a purchase.

"With the hundred dollar bills that are floating around I know to check for, on the back,

there's pink Chinese writing, and on the front there's the holographic 100 in the corner," said Jamie Neel, a vendor employee.

Vendors at the Brown County fair are taking an extra look at the cash they're handed this year.

"We haven't received any complaints of any circulating money or any money that's been used on the vendors here," Bryan Coens, Field Deputy with the Brown County Sheriff's Office.

The Brown County Sheriff's Office has seized more than fifty fake one hundred dollar bills since the start of the fair.

"This has all just been found on the grounds thus far," said Coens.

Deputies want everybody-- not just vendors to take action if they find a counterfeit bill.

"We suggest that you contact law enforcement, probably the best way would be to contact Brown County Dispatch," Coens said.

Jamie Neel is a vendor at the fair -- she has a plan for what she would do if the money were to get into her hands.

"I would keep the bill, let them know that it's counterfeit, and that I can't take it for purchase, but I need to turn it into the authorities," Neel said.

The sheriff deputies want people to contact them as soon as they get the money-- especially the vendors who will be leaving Brown County with the fair-- because the more time passes-- the harder it is for them to help.

"If you waited and reported this later on, which you would need to do to get your currency situated, but if you did that it's a little harder for us to track these people down when they're at other agencies," Coens said.

People attempting to make a purchase with counterfeit money can be charged with a felony.

[OK] Deputies warn about counterfeit money in Mayes County (KTUL-TV ABC 8 TULSA)

KTUL-TV ABC 8 TULSA [8/15/2019 1:45 PM, Megan Bell, 44K]

Mayes County deputies are warning people to be aware of counterfeit cash circulating through the county.

They've found primarily \$100 bills, but also some \$20 bills too.

Deputies have had reports from businesses all over Mayes County.

[OK] Police warn against card skimmers found on ATMs in Oklahoma City metro (Top Stories)

Top Stories [8/15/2019 6:11 PM, Staff, 96K]

Police officials on Thursday issued a warning against card skimmers found on ATMs across the Oklahoma City area.

According to Oklahoma City police, these card skimmers are very small, making them difficult to see. The card skimmer collects data from the user's ATM/debit card and a small camera hidden on or near the ATM records the user's PIN, police said.

"We were actually contacted by the credit unions themselves, and the Secret Service, as well as the task force we have, have been working on this very closely with the credit unions," Sgt. Megan Morgan said.

ATM users can attempt to protect their PIN by covering the screen/PIN pad while entering their PIN, so that critical piece of information is concealed from the camera view, police officials said.

The camera may be concealed in what would otherwise appear to be a normal part of the machine, police said, and it is typically very small, appearing to most to be nothing more than a small pinhole.

"As technology increases for us, it helps us out. But unfortunately, it increases for the criminals too," Morgan said.

Anyone who believes they may have fallen victim to the skimmers is urged to contact their bank immediately and report it the police department in the city the ATM is located. Residents in Oklahoma City can call 405-231-2121.

[Editorial note: consult video at source link]

[NV] Man accused of hacking ATMs for \$125,000 (Las Vegas Sun)

Las Vegas Sun [8/15/2019 6:38 PM, Ricardo Torres-Cortez, 61K]

A man is accused of using a computer hack known as "jackpotting" to get ATMs at a Primm gas station to erroneously spit out some \$125,000, according to the U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of Nevada.

Jesus Ernesto Reyes Garcia, a 42-year-old Venezuela national, was arrested in California and formally charged in a Las Vegas federal court Wednesday on six counts of computer fraud, officials said.

Garcia would put an unknown device behind the ATMs and use fraudulent credit cards to request \$20 withdrawals, which would then prompt the machines to dispense up to \$1,000 at a time, officials said.

Some 150 transactions over two weeks starting in February netted about \$125,000, officials said.

The hack is known as “jackpotting,” a slot machine reference used because of the large amount of cash the machines are manipulated into spitting out, officials said.

“Our office is committed to investigating and prosecuting all cybercriminals — including computer hackers who illegally ‘jackpot’ ATM machines in Nevada — as they attempt to come up with new ways to circumvent cybersecurity systems,” Nicholas Trutanich, the U.S. attorney for Nevada, said in a statement.

A trial for Garcia was scheduled for Oct. 7.

Officials said more people, who were not identified, were involved in the scheme, but it was not clear if anyone else was in custody.

The case was investigated by the U.S. Secret Service.

Coast Guard

Coast Guard cutter’s crew makes massive 4,600-pound cocaine bust, 2nd in 5 days (FOX News)

FOX News [8/15/2019 11:10 PM, Melissa Leon, 10258K]

The crew of the Coast Guard Cutter Midgett recently seized more than 4,600 pounds of cocaine, their second cocaine bust in five days.

The drugs were confiscated July 31 from a “low-profile go-fast” vessel in international waters of the Eastern Pacific Ocean, the Coast Guard announced Thursday.

The bust came just days after the July 26 seizure of more than 2,100 pounds of cocaine from a different boat, which was the pre-commissioned cutter’s first seizure since leaving its Mississippi shipyard in June, the branch noted.

The total of more than 6,700 pounds of cocaine seized in the two operations was worth more than \$89 million, the Coast Guard said.

“The national security cutter gets you further, faster and delivers more capability once on [the] scene than any other cutter in the history of our service,” said Capt. Alan McCabe, the cutter’s commanding officer. “I am incredibly proud of the crew’s efforts who made these two seizures possible, and we are eager to conduct future operations throughout the Pacific.”

According to the Coast Guard, one metric ton of cocaine contains 20 million individual doses in the U.S. Over the last five years, the Coast Guard has seized more than 923 tons - 2 million pounds -- of cocaine, or about 18.4 billion doses worth more than \$27 billion.

“Nearly 80 [percent] of all known illegal narcotics coming into North America are smuggled by international cartels through the Eastern Pacific corridor, an area greater in size than the entire United States,” the Coast Guard said. “The profits from cocaine allow drug cartels to diversify and fund other illicit trafficking activities including the smuggling of opioids, synthetics, methamphetamines, persons and weapons.”

"Low-profile go-fast vessels are purpose-built by cartels for smuggling large quantities of contraband by riding low in the water to avoid detection," the Coast Guard explained. "By design, they can be quickly sunk through the use of integrated scuttling valves, a dangerous practice that jeopardizes the safety of the suspected smugglers and the Coast Guard boarding teams."

The Midgett is the Coast Guard's eighth national security cutter. The vessel has been en route to its future homeport in Honolulu, the branch said. It's set to be commissioned with its sister ship, the Coast Guard Cutter Kimball, on Aug. 24.

[Editorial note: consult video at source link]

[CA] 1,300 pounds of marijuana found floating off California: Coast Guard (FOX News)

FOX News [8/15/2019 5:57 PM, Stephen Sorace, 10258K]

Numerous plastic-wrapped bales of marijuana – weighing a total of 1,300 pounds – were spotted floating in the ocean off the coast of Southern California, investigators said.

The Coast Guard recovered 43 bales of what were believed to be narcotics near Santa Catalina Island after a concerned citizen alerted the agency, a news release said.

U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) confirmed the bales contained an estimated \$1 million worth of marijuana.

"We appreciate the assistance provided by our partners and vigilant mariners in keeping these drugs off of our streets," said Lt. Andrew L. Fox, the Station Los Angeles-Long Beach commanding officer.

Federal officials were investigating the initial source of the bales.

Last week, \$2 million worth of cocaine wrapped in blue packaging washed up on a New Zealand beach. A crime expert cited by The Guardian said the packages likely came from Peru or Colombia.

[CA] Coast Guard finds 43 bales of pot worth \$1M floating off California (USA Today)

USA Today [8/15/2019 12:02 PM, Staff, 6620K] Video: [HERE](#)

Authorities have found 1,300 pounds of plastic-wrapped marijuana floating in the ocean near Santa Catalina Island off Southern California.

The Daily News reports Wednesday that the U.S. Coast Guard acting on a tip discovered 43 bales of pot worth about \$1 million. According to the report, which cites the U.S. Coast Guard news release, a bystander reported seeing what they believed to be narcotics floating near the island.

The marijuana was delivered to U.S. Customs and Border Protection.

Federal officials are investigating where it came from.

In July, Coast Guard members boarded a semi-submarine racing through the waves, one of many operations seizing cocaine and marijuana in international waters off Mexico and Central and South America.

The agency released dramatic video of the encounter with smugglers.

[CA] Coast Guard finds 43 bales of pot floating off California (San Francisco Chronicle)

San Francisco Chronicle [8/15/2019 9:54 AM, Staff, 2613K]

Authorities have found 1,300 pounds (590 kilograms) of plastic-wrapped marijuana floating in the ocean near Santa Catalina Island off the Southern California coast.

The Daily News reports Wednesday that the U.S. Coast Guard acting on a tip discovered 43 bales of pot worth about \$1 million.

The marijuana was delivered to U.S. Customs and Border Protection.

Federal officials are investigating where it came from.

CISA/Cybersecurity

Ex-CIA chief worries campaigns falling short on cybersecurity (The Hill)

The Hill [8/15/2019 6:00 AM, Maggie Miller, 2806K]

Democratic 2020 presidential campaigns say they are working to boost their cybersecurity, but experts worry those efforts may not be enough.

Former Acting CIA Director Michael Morell told The Hill he worries there is a “void” and that campaigns need outside help to fully address the issue.

“There is not a lot of initial thought given to cybersecurity,” Morell said about the campaigns.

Several campaigns insist they have prioritized the issue.

Chris Meagher, the spokesperson for Mayor Pete Buttigieg’s campaign, told The Hill that “our campaign is committed to digital security,” noting the hiring of a full-time chief information security officer (CISO), Mick Bacchio, last week.

“Hiring a full-time CISO is one way we are protecting against cyber attacks,” Meagher added.

A spokesperson for the presidential campaign of former Rep. Beto O’Rourke (D-Texas) told The Hill they are “actively engaged in defending our operation from disinformation and other cyber attacks.”

The spokesperson emphasized that “whether its training staff as a part of our onboarding process, requiring staff to use complex passwords to protect mobile devices, or using secure messaging services, this campaign understands that protecting our information

requires a comprehensive approach to prepare for and manage attacks.

But many campaigns have said little on their cyber efforts. The Hill reached out to other 2020 presidential campaigns but those campaigns did not provide details on their cyber efforts.

A spokesperson for Sen. Bernie Sanders (D-Vt.) told The Hill that the campaign “does not comment on matters of security.”

Repeated cyber incidents in both 2016 and 2018 have put a spotlight on the issue and raised worries about a repeat in the upcoming presidential election.

Those incidents included the hacking of emails from Hillary Clinton’s 2016 presidential campaign, and an unsuccessful attempt by hackers to access the systems of former Sen. Claire McCaskill (D-Mo.) ahead of the 2018 midterms.

Federal agencies are doing more to highlight the threat to campaigns.

According to CNN, the FBI, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), and the Office of the Director of National Intelligence briefed 2020 presidential campaigns earlier this year on potential cyber threats. CNN reported that the campaigns of former Housing and Urban Development Secretary Julian Castro and of businessman Andrew Yang were the only campaigns to confirm their attendance.

Despite the strides made by campaigns, Morrell says campaigns need to do more to seek outside help.

“The government is not allowed to come in and provide that security, and private sector organizations that do cybersecurity want to get paid for it,” he said.

Morell is on the board of the newly launched U.S. CyberDome group, a non-profit organization that aims to provide free cybersecurity protections to 2020 presidential campaigns, and potentially in future elections.

The board is chaired by former Obama Homeland Security Secretary Jeh Johnson and other board members include former DHS Secretary Michael Chertoff, who served under President George W. Bush, former Director of National Intelligence Lt. Gen. James Clapper, and Brig. Gen. Francis Taylor, the former DHS under secretary of intelligence and analysis.

Morell said one of the key goals of U.S. CyberDome is to fill the unique gaps campaigns face in the cybersecurity realm. He pointed to the fast-pace of a campaign.

“It’s not that people don’t understand what the risks are, it’s that they do understand what the risks are but they are busy doing their job,” Morell emphasized. “They are not thinking about how to protect themselves, so my sense is that when CyberDome has reached out to folks they say this makes a lot of sense.”

Morell confirmed that the group has reached out to every declared presidential campaign, on both sides of the aisle, and said CyberDome “are in conversations with a number of

them.”

U.S. CyberDome is not the only organization that has taken steps to address the cybersecurity of presidential campaigns.

Microsoft’s 365 for Campaigns tool, part of its Defending Democracy Program, was made available to political campaigns in June. The tool, which campaigns can purchase for \$5 per person per month, enables multi-factor authentication on campaign computer systems, along with mobile app protections, and safeguards against email phishing attacks.

Harvard University’s Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs published a “campaign playbook” in late 2017 meant to provide steps that campaigns can use to increase cybersecurity. It was endorsed by the managers of Clinton’s 2016 campaign, and now-Sen. Mitt Romney’s (R-Utah) 2012 presidential campaign.

On Wednesday, social media and digital protection group ZeroFOX announced election security help that includes protections for candidates and their digital assets against various forms of cyber attacks. It also includes tools to identify and remove “deepfake” videos, or those that have been altered using artificial intelligence, and the removal of fake or offensive content on candidate’s social media pages.

There’s also action at the federal level.

In July, the Federal Election Commission approved a request by cybersecurity group Area 1 Security to offer help to federal political candidates and political committees at discounted rates.

On Capitol Hill, Sen. Ron Wyden (D-Ore.), a leading voice on election security issues, introduced legislation in May aimed at securing campaigns.

His bill, the Federal Campaign Cybersecurity Assistance Act, would allow for national parties to provide cybersecurity assistance to state political parties, to candidates running for office, and for campaigns.

“The 2016 election made it painfully clear that campaigns need more help defending against sophisticated cyber threats,” Wyden said in a statement when he introduced the bill. “Foreign hackers successfully weaponized hacked emails to drive media coverage in 2016, but the government has done virtually nothing to protect campaigns from future attacks.”

The bill, however, has not moved. It has been referred to the Senate Rules Committee, where Chairman Roy Blunt (R-Mo.) has refused to bring up election security-related legislation because it is unlikely Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) will schedule a floor vote.

Despite this pushback, Morell underlined the importance of addressing the issue of campaign cybersecurity, noting that many countries may seek to interfere in 2020.

“I think this is extraordinarily important because not only do the Russians continue to do this, but there are a lot of other countries in the world that are trying to get inside these

campaigns to ... identify avenues of influence,” Morell said.

“To the extent that we can keep them out of the campaigns, the United States can be more secure.”

Over 1 million fingerprints leaked at one of world’s biggest biometric firms, researchers say (FOX News)

FOX News [8/15/2019 10:30 AM, Brooke Crothers, 10258K]

Researchers at a cybersecurity firm said fingerprint and facial recognition data was exposed at a major biometric company, saying the potential for “fraud is massive.”

“This is a huge leak that endangers both the businesses and organizations involved, as well as their employees,” cybersecurity firm vpnMentor said in a blog post about the breach on BioStar 2, a biometric security platform built by Suprema, one of the world’s top security device and security system providers.

Biometrics uses human features such as fingerprints and facial recognition for authenticating a person’s ID.

“Facial recognition and fingerprint information cannot be changed. Once they are stolen, it can’t be undone,” vpnMentor said.

Suprema’s BioStar 2 biometric technology is used widely. For example, it’s integrated into the AEOS access control system, used by more than 5,700 organizations in 83 countries, including some of the biggest multinational businesses, vpnMentor said in the post.

The platform overall has over 1.5 million worldwide installations and all could be vulnerable to the leak, according to vpnMentor. And the total number affected “could be in the tens of millions,” the cybersecurity firm said.

The breach was discovered on August 5 and by August 13 the breach was closed, according to vpnMentor’s blog post. Initially, Suprema was not responsive when contacted, vpnMentor said in the post.

But that changed when they contacted the French branch of the company. “Our call with the [Suprema] French branch helped speed up the process and the breach was closed a few hours after. We received an email from Suprema...thanking us for letting them know,” a vpnMentor spokesperson told Fox News in an email.

The data exposed also includes detailed personal information of employees and unencrypted usernames and passwords, giving hackers potential access to user accounts and permissions at facilities using BioStar 2.

“This leak allowed anyone in possession of this data to actually access customers’ accounts and steal the biometric records of the end users...fingerprints and pictures,” vpnMentor said in a statement sent to Fox News.

One of the things that surprised vpnMentor was how unsecured the account passwords

were. “Plenty of accounts had ridiculously simple passwords, like ‘Password’ and ‘abcd1234.’ It’s difficult to imagine that people still don’t realize how easy this makes it for a hacker to access their account,” the cybersecurity firm said in the blog post.

States Struggle to Update Election Systems Ahead of 2020 (Bloomberg)

Bloomberg [8/15/2019 6:39 PM, Alyza Sebenius and Kartikay Mehrotra, 5350K]

U.S. states operating outdated and insecure voting machines face major hurdles in protecting them in time for the 2020 presidential election, officials said at a meeting of elections experts.

Budgets are strained, decision-making authority is diffuse and standards put in place years ago haven’t kept up with today’s cyberthreats, according to testimony Thursday to the Election Assistance Commission in Silver Spring, Maryland.

The Senate Intelligence Committee reported last month that Russia engaged in “extensive” efforts to manipulate elections systems throughout the U.S. from 2014 through “at least 2017.” The Brennan Center for Justice reported Thursday that states will have to spend more than \$2 billion to protect their election systems in the next five years, including replacing outdated machines or purchasing the software improvements necessary to help harden existing equipment against hackers.

Updating software is a “regular and important part” of cybersecurity, the Center for Democracy & Technology warned in a statement. But even when a software patch is available, states can’t compel “severely under-resourced” local elections officials to buy and implement the improvement, said Jared Dearing, executive director of the Kentucky State Board of Elections.

On top of those hurdles, Dearing said, the process of certifying elections equipment to federal standards leaves machines in “a time capsule of when that system was developed.”

The commission was created in 2002 to establish voting machine standards for manufacturers and vendors in the aftermath of the irregularities exposed during the 2000 presidential election. Many voting machines across the U.S. haven’t been updated since the first generation of rules were approved in 2005. The commission has been debating new standards, with a vote scheduled Sept. 12.

Even if the new regulations were to be approved next month, it will take voting machine manufacturers as long as five years to build and roll out new machines, Commissioner Benjamin Hovland said in an interview with Bloomberg News last month.

“My biggest ask of this organization is to hustle up with certification and standards,” Connecticut Secretary of State Denise Merrill said. “People are out buying things right now and they need help.”

Elections pose other unique obstacles as well.

“If an important (software) patch comes out three to four weeks before an election, it causes us to wait to implement because we can’t interfere in the election process that is already in

motion,” said Kyle Ardoin, Louisiana’s secretary of state.

The Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency at the Department of Homeland Security is offering election equipment vendors testing to detect vulnerabilities -- a program gaining “increased interest,” said Geoffrey Hale, the director of the elections division of CISA.

Merrill said local elections officials are hard-pressed to ensure the safety of their equipment.

“My biggest fear is vulnerability at the local level, and so that’s exactly what we’re working on,” said Merrill.

Election officials want security money, flexible standards (Roll Call)

Roll Call [8/15/2019 5:10 PM, Dean DeChiaro, 105K]

State officials from Louisiana and Connecticut on Thursday asked for more money and clear standards from the federal government to help secure voting systems before the 2020 elections.

But the officials, Louisiana Secretary of State Kyle Ardoin and Connecticut Secretary of State Denise Merrill, stressed the differences between their election systems and asked for leeway from the federal government in deciding how to spend any future funding.

“The cultures are different and the voters have different expectations,” Ardoin told commissioners from the federal Election Assistance Commission, or EAC, at a public forum.

Both states received federal funds to upgrade cyber and physical security of their voting systems after Congress approved \$380 million for election security in 2018. They spent their share of those funds differently.

Connecticut has put much of its funding toward training, Merrill said, while Louisiana is scrambling to upgrade systems running Windows 7 to Windows 10 before Microsoft stops offering support for the older operating system in January.

Ginny Badanes, the director of Microsoft’s Defending Democracy Program, which is working to help both states and companies that build voting machines and software to prepare for the switch in operating systems, said the company “will do whatever it takes to make sure these customers have access to updates that are straightforward and affordable.”

Both the state officials and private sector witnesses urged the commission to adopt and publish standards that would set the best practices for election security.

“We’re at a point where we’re going to need to update these systems in the next few years,” said Merrill. “Hustle up with those certification standards because people are out buying things right now and they need help.”

Ardoin, of Louisiana, urged the commission to ensure that its guidance remains nonpartisan, perhaps a reference to a tweet by President Donald Trump earlier in the week that said “no debate on election security should go forward without first agreeing that [voter

identification] must play a very strong part in any final agreement.”

Voter identification is a priority for some Republican officials, who say it is needed to prevent fraudulent voting, though they lack evidence that such a problem alters election results. Democrats have opposed voter identification, calling it an attempt at voter suppression.

Ellen Weintraub, who chairs the Federal Election Commission, dismissed Trump’s tweet and said, “It’s well past time to get serious about defending democracy from real threats identified by national security experts.”

Russians “were impersonating Americans on Facebook, not in person at [the] polls,” Weintraub tweeted in response to Trump. “Support the bipartisan bills that will protect our 2020 elections.”

Slow progress

States are making some progress toward implementing best practices ahead of the 2020 cycle. Federal intelligence and law enforcement authorities concluded hackers working for the Russian military tried to infiltrate state voter databases in 2016. Among others, the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence and the National Academy of Sciences have recommended states work to thwart interference through broader use of paper ballots and post-election audits.

A report released Tuesday by the Brennan Center for Justice at New York University estimated 16 million voters would cast paperless ballots in 2020, down from 27.5 million in 2016.

Forty-two states should have paper backups by 2020, the report said, though 17 of them will not require a post-election audit. Voters in eight states — Louisiana, New Jersey, Texas, Tennessee, Kentucky, Indiana, Kansas and Mississippi — are likely to still use paperless machines.

“While there has been substantial progress in securing voting machines since 2016, there is still more to do ahead of 2020,” the Brennan Center report said. “We should replace antiquated equipment, and paperless equipment in particular, as soon as possible.”

On Thursday morning, a federal judge in Georgia ruled that the state must phase out its paperless machines prior to its presidential primary in March 2020. The state was already planning on the move, according to the Brennan Center, but the ruling could have consequences for other states that are more resistant.

Senate stalemate

In response to the Brennan Center’s report, Minnesota Sen. Amy Klobuchar, the Democratic presidential candidate who sponsored bipartisan election security legislation last year with Sen. James Lankford, R-Okla., called 16 million paperless ballots “unacceptable.”

“When we can’t go back and verify election results with paper records, it diminishes Americans’ confidence in our elections and it makes us vulnerable to attack from foreign adversaries,” she said in a statement.

Senate Democrats, including Klobuchar, spent much of the summer unsuccessfully pushing Majority Leader Mitch McConnell to bring up House-passed election security legislation (HR 2722). Critics went as far as calling the Kentucky Republican “Moscow Mitch,” insinuating that not passing a bill would enable further interference by the Kremlin.

In late July, McConnell blocked an attempt to force a vote on the House bill that would require the use of paper ballots and boost funding for election security and infrastructure. McConnell bristled at critics who called the act treasonous and said, “every single member of the Senate agrees that Russian meddling was real and is real.”

McConnell has said his position is rooted in his belief in states’ rights, arguing he doesn’t believe the federal government should tell states how to conduct elections.

Merrill, the Connecticut secretary of state, described similar rifts at the state and local level, underscoring the challenge of securing elections conducted by a diverse landscape of governments.

“I’ve had many a fight with mayors about this issue,” she said.

State officials beg Congress for more election security funding (The Hill)

The Hill [8/15/2019 2:21 PM, Maggie Miller, 2806K]

The secretaries of state for Connecticut and Louisiana on Thursday called on Congress to appropriate more funding to boost election security heading into 2020.

Speaking at a forum hosted by the Election Assistance Commission (EAC), Louisiana Secretary of State Kyle Ardoin (R) and Connecticut Secretary of State Denise Merrill (D) said additional federal funding is the best way Congress can help states shore up election security and ward off cyberattacks.

“Resources are always helpful and necessary,” Ardoin said. “We all have the same expectation, which is a secure environment for our elections, and that every vote is accurately counted and everybody gets to participate who wishes to participate.”

He added that secretaries of state are “constantly asking for additional resources to fend off cybersecurity issues, to update equipment, and to do what is necessary to secure our elections and offer our people the right to vote.”

Congress appropriated \$380 million to the EAC last year to distribute to states ahead of the 2018 midterm elections. The funding came two years after Russia’s efforts to interfere in the presidential election.

Former special counsel Robert Mueller last month told Congress that the Kremlin is planning a repeat performance in the 2020 elections.

Congressional Democrats have since pushed for more state money, but Republicans have pushed back, arguing Congress should respect state jurisdiction over elections, while noting that not all of the \$380 million has been spent.

Louisiana received \$5.8 million as part of last year's disbursement. According to Ardoin, the state has used the money to purchase new voting equipment and has "absorbed" cybersecurity needs in its own budget.

Merrill, whose state received \$5.1 million of the congressional funds, echoed Ardoin's call for further federal assistance.

"This is one of the fundamental operations of government. You're not going to privatize elections, and so it's time we put some dollars behind what's happening," Merrill said. "I do think some funding needs to come from the federal level."

Ardoin also called for officials at the local, state and federal levels to come together on election security.

"Let's face it, we're all in one large ship, and that is the ship of America," he said. "And if we aren't all working together to secure our elections and fund our elections appropriately, then what are we here for?"

[KY] Kentucky official says counties can't upgrade cybersecurity because they're 'severely under resourced' (CNN)

CNN [8/15/2019 8:58 PM, Kevin Collier, 6094K]

A top Kentucky election official said Thursday that counties there are "severely under resourced," affecting their abilities to provide adequate cybersecurity.

"Most of us cannot compel our local election jurisdictions to update their equipment," said Jared Dearing, executive director of the Kentucky State Board of Elections, before an Elections Assistance Commission panel in Silver Spring.

The comments came a week after the annual Def Con hacking conference in Las Vegas, where the three lawmakers who attended -- all Democrats -- blamed Kentucky Republican Mitch McConnell, the Senate majority leader, for the Congress' stagnation on any election security bill.

At Def Con, a group of election security researchers host a Voting Village, now in its third year, where independent hackers try to break into decommissioned voting equipment. While no system can be guaranteed safe from hackers, election security experts -- including ones consulted for the bipartisan Senate Intelligence Committee report on the subject -- resoundingly say that machines need to be routinely updated and use paper ballots so results can be audited.

Last year's Senate appropriations bill gave \$380 million for election equipment and cybersecurity services, divvied up through a preexisting Elections Assistance Commission formula established by the Help America Vote Act. But a commission study in April found that states have been slow to spend that money.

McConnell -- who has refused to take up any of the dozens of election security bills in Congress, even the bipartisan ones -- has become a bogeyman for election security enthusiasts. He has neither endorsed nor ruled out an additional round of funding in a budget bill this year.

When asked for comment, a spokesperson for McConnell pointed toward a speech he had given on the Senate floor in May, where he pointed toward the \$380 million, adding, "Congress will need to continue closely monitoring the progress and assess whether further legislative steps might be needed as well."

Dearing's comments echoed a common refrain from state and local officials who use old or outdated voting equipment: While some areas can afford solid IT staffs, some counties and local officials can't afford sufficient upgrades on their own.

"I have clerks that might have one or two staff members, and they are not digitally native. These are people who have been working on analog systems their entire career, and we're asking them to participate in what is national security," Dearing said.

"We're now also asking them to take part in the defense against foreign state actors. The cliff that is looming before us is we are failing to fund them appropriately for critical infrastructure in their own offices," he said.

[GA] Georgia Must Use Paper Ballots if New Voting System Not Up by 2020: U.S. Judge (New York Times)

New York Times [8/15/2019 3:01 PM, Peter Szekely, Reuters, 22840K]

A federal judge on Thursday ordered Georgia to be ready to use handmarked ballots in next year's presidential primary in case a new \$106 million voting system is not ready in time for its 2020 Democratic nominating contest.

In a long-running dispute over Georgia's voting system, the judge banned use of the paperless voting machines after 2019, but denied a request to bar them for municipal elections this November.

The state's "long and twisted saga" of voting systems "is finally headed towards its conclusion," U.S. District Court Judge Amy Totenberg wrote in a 153-page ruling.

Georgia, one of five states to use touchscreen machines with no paper record, has used direct-recording electronic voting machines since 2002. The machines have drawn criticism from various advocacy groups and federal agencies, including U.S. Department of Homeland Security officials.

The state earlier this year ordered a new voting system with ballot-marking devices, which Secretary of State Brad Raffensperger has said will be installed in time for the March 24 presidential primary.

Both sides expressed satisfaction with the judge's split ruling, with Raffensperger accusing critics of using "scare tactics to try to undermine Georgia elections," and the plaintiffs

crediting the court with prodding the state into action.

The Coalition for Good Governance, a voting-rights group, and several Georgia voters, filed the lawsuit in 2017.

"This is a big win for all Georgia voters and those working across the country to secure elections and protect the right to vote," said Washington-based attorney David Cross who represents some of the plaintiffs.

Totenberg previously denied a plaintiff's request to force Georgia to use paper ballots in the 2018 congressional election, citing the potential for last-minute confusion.

In her latest ruling, Totenberg also ordered the state to "address significant deficiencies in the voter registration database" and its ExpressPoll system which is used to check voters in to their precincts.

During the November election, various problems were reported with voter registration and the ExpressPoll systems in several counties.

[GA] Judge rules Georgia must phase out paperless voting machines by 2020 (The Hill)

The Hill [8/15/2019 3:07 PM, Maggie Miller, 2806K]

A federal judge on Thursday ruled that the state of Georgia may not use direct-recording electronic (DRE) voting machines in any election after 2019, but stopped short of mandating that the state switch to paper ballots as had been requested.

In addition, the ruling from U.S. District Judge Amy Totenberg in Georgia also requires the state to develop contingency measures should the rollout of machines with paper records not be complete by March 2020.

The nonprofit organization Coalition for Good Governance, along with a group of Georgia citizens, had filed suit against the state to mandate that only paper ballots be used in future elections, citing election security concerns stemming from the use of outdated machines.

"The long and twisting saga of Georgia's non-auditable DRE/GEMS voting system — running on software of almost two decades vintage with well-known flaws and vulnerabilities and limited cybersecurity — is finally headed towards its conclusion," Totenberg, an Obama appointee, wrote in the ruling.

The decision was made in the midst of a fiery debate at the national level over next steps around election security, with Republicans and Democrats disagreeing over what, if anything, the federal government should do heading into the 2020 cycle.

The debate over election security intensified following testimony from former special counsel Robert Mueller in July when he said he expects the Russians to attempt to interfere in U.S. elections in 2020, just as his report said they did in 2016.

Marilyn Marks, the executive director of the Coalition for Good Governance, said in a

statement that she is “very pleased that the voters of Georgia will see an end to the unconstitutional touchscreen DRE voting systems plaguing their elections for 17 years.”

David Cross, a partner at Morrison and Foerster who represented the group of Georgia citizens who filed the suit, described the decision as “a big win for all Georgia voters and those working across the country to secure elections and protect the right to vote.”

“The court ordered Georgia to finally take critical steps it has long refused to take to protect elections against interference and voters against disenfranchisement,” he said.

The ruling was made weeks after Georgia Secretary of State Brad Raffensperger (R) announced that Dominion Voting Systems had been awarded a multimillion dollar contract to implement a voter-verified paper ballot system in the state prior to the March 2020 elections.

The contract was awarded due to a new law that requires the replacement of all Georgia DRE voting machines with electronic ballot-marking devices and optical scanners.

However, Marks announced on Thursday that the coalition would “promptly file a legal challenge to the State’s decision to adopt this new touchscreen electronic voting system that is just as insecure and un-auditable as the current system.”

Raffensperger said in a statement that he is “pleased the Court endorsed the policy decisions of the state’s elected officials to move to a new paper ballot voting system in time for the 2020 elections while not disrupting 2019 elections.”

“These activist plaintiffs continue fruitlessly attempting to force their preferred policy outcomes on Georgia voters without success,” he said in the statement. “While we fully expect these activists and their attorneys to incessantly use scare tactics to try to undermine Georgia elections, their own experts admitted under oath that there is no evidence of Georgia’s voting machines ever being compromised or not accurately counting the votes of our citizens. The Secretary of State’s office is already moving full steam ahead to implement Georgia’s new paper ballot voting system in time for the March 2020 Presidential Preference Primary.”

In her ruling, Totenberg pushed back against previous assertions by Raffensperger that attacks on Georgia voting systems aren’t a potential danger.

“The imminent threats of contamination, dysfunction, and attacks on State and county voting systems, disparaged by the Secretary of State’s representatives at the 2018 hearing virtually as a fantasy and still minimized as speculative at the 2019 hearing, have been identified in the most credible major national and state cybersecurity studies and official government reports,” Totenberg wrote.

[GA] Judge Says Georgia Must Scrap Outdated Electronic Voting Machines After 2019 (NPR)

NPR [8/15/2019 11:46 AM, Stephen Fowler]

A federal judge has denied a request to move all of this fall’s municipal elections in Georgia

away from "unsecure, unreliable and grossly outdated technology" and toward hand-marked paper ballots that are optically scanned and counted.

The order from U.S. District Court Judge Amy Totenberg Thursday also requires the state to cease using its direct-recording electronic voting machines after 2019 and expresses doubts about the state's ability to roll out its new ballot-marking device system in time for the March 24, 2020, presidential primary election.

In the decision, Totenberg also directs the Georgia secretary of state's office to develop a plan to "address errors and discrepancies in the voter registration database" and have paper copies of poll books at each voting precinct.

The state must also create a contingency plan for the 2020 elections in case the new system is not completely rolled out. That includes designating several pilot jurisdictions that will use hand-marked paper ballots with optical scanners in their elections this fall.

A group of election integrity advocates and Georgia voters sued the secretary of state's office in 2017 alleging that the current DRE system is not secure and is vulnerable to hacking. Last year, Totenberg denied a similar motion for preliminary injunction that would have blocked the DREs from being used in the 2018 midterm election.

The current motion sought to prevent the machines from being used this fall in several hundred local elections.

After a two-day hearing in July, Totenberg said deciding on the matter was "very daunting," as she heard cybersecurity experts express serious concerns about the security of Georgia's elections and the logistical concerns local elections officials had about switching to hand-marked paper ballots under a tight timeline.

Ultimately, Totenberg wrote that she deferred to the state's legislative and procurement processes to select and implement a new system in time for next year's elections.

"The Court remains concerned, based upon the entirety of the record evidence, about the State's capacity to manage a transition to paper ballots for the 2019 elections while overseeing and undergoing a simultaneous transition to the newly enacted voting system during this time," Totenberg wrote in the order.

On July 29, Georgia Secretary of State Brad Raffensperger announced Dominion Voting Systems would be the state's new elections vendor, winning a \$107 million contract to provide new touch-screen machines that print out a paper ballot with a summary of the voter's selection plus a QR code that is scanned and stored.

Marilyn Marks, executive director of the nonprofit group Coalition for Good Governance and a plaintiff in the lawsuit, called the ruling a victory for election security advocates.

"This is the first time that a court in the United States has held that you cannot do electronic voting and it must be replaced," she said. Marks' group plans to sue to block the new ballot-marking devices from being used as well.

Raffensperger's office released a statement Thursday that his office was still reviewing the ruling and that he was "pleased the Court endorsed the policy decision of the state's elected officials to move to a paper ballot voting system in time for the 2020 elections while not disrupting 2019 elections."

Terrorism Investigations

FBI Puts Alleged Al-Qaeda Operative in Brazil on 'Most Wanted' List (Breitbart)

Breitbart [8/15/2019 12:49 PM, Ben Kew, 2034K]

The FBI is seeking to interrogate an alleged Egyptian al-Qaeda operative living in Brazil accused of planning terrorist attacks against the United States, reports revealed this week.

On their "Most Wanted" list on their website, the FBI said it was "seeking information" on Mohamed Ahmed Elsayed Ahmed Ibrahim, who they warned should be considered "armed and dangerous."

"Mohamed Ahmed Elsayed Ahmed Ibrahim is wanted for questioning in connection with his alleged role as an Al Qaeda operative and facilitator who has allegedly been involved in plotting attacks against the United States and its interests, and in providing material support to Al Qaeda since approximately 2013," the FBI said in a statement. "He is located in Brazil."

Responding to the FBI's warrant, the Brazilian government that they "stand ready to cooperate with authorities in the United States" to locate and detain Ibrahim for interrogation.

The warrant comes weeks after the Brazilian Justice Ministry issued new regulations making it easier to deport foreigners who are deemed dangerous or a threat to national security.

The request also comes as Brazilian leader Jair Bolsonaro seeks to strengthen ties with the U.S. and President Donald Trump, who he considers an ideological ally. Bolsonaro has recently proposed bilateral trade pact between the two countries, while Brazil already maintains strong security ties with the U.S., particularly useful during the 2016 Summer Olympics in Rio de Janeiro, which authorities feared would be a prime target for Islamist terror attacks.

The threat of Islamic terrorism has risen considerably in Brazil and other parts of Latin America in recent years as various jihadist groups are actively trying to radicalize and recruit people across the region, particularly those with links to violent street gangs in the United States.

Last year, authorities charged 11 individuals with attempting to establish an Islamic State terror cell to recruit jihadis to fight in Syria, as well as carry out terror attacks in Brazil and other parts of the Western world. In 2016, the SITE Intelligence group also confirmed that a jihadist cell known as the "Soldiers of the Caliphate Brazil" had pledged its allegiance to the Islamic State and its members were "prepared for the sacrifice of becoming martyrs."

In Venezuela, Nicolás Maduro's socialist regime is also reportedly allowing growing numbers of Islamist groups, including Hezbollah and the Islamic State, to operate within the country. Some regional authorities fear such groups may be planning to infiltrate the U.S. through the southern border with Mexico.

[OH] Coroner: Cocaine, Anti-Depressants, Booze in Dayton Gunman's System (Breitbart)

Breitbart [8/15/2019 8:15 PM, Awr Hawkins, 2034K]

The Associated Press reported Harshbarger indicating that a "pipe device and a clear baggie carrying cocaine was found on Betts' body" after the shooting, as well.

Harshbarger was able to confirm that the nine victims in the shooting were killed by the gunman and, therefore, did not die as a result of officers' response to the gunman's attack. He noted that two of the victims were struck by police fire but those rounds were not fatal. Rounds from the gunman caused the deaths.

The Dayton gunman "was shot by police about 24 times with wounds mostly to [his] upper torso and lower extremities."

On August 12, 2019, Breitbart News reported that 24-year-old Ethan Kollie was arrested after allegedly buying the rifle parts that were assembled and used in the Dayton attack. Kollie was not arrested for buying the gun parts, per se, but for allegedly lying on the background check form when asked about marijuana use.

Law enforcement made clear there was nothing keeping the Dayton shooter from passing a background check to acquire the gun parts himself. However, the gunman wanted to hide the parts—and assembled weapon—from his parents.

[OH] Dayton gunman had cocaine and other drugs in his system, coroner says (The Hill)

The Hill [8/15/2019 3:56 PM, Chris Mills Rodrigo, 2806K]

The Montgomery County, Ohio, coroner announced Thursday that the gunman identified in the mass shooting in Dayton earlier this month had cocaine and other drugs in his system at the time of the shooting, The Associated Press reported.

Dr. Kent Harshbarger added during a press conference that a bag of cocaine was found on the body of Connor Betts, the alleged shooter. Betts also reportedly tested positive for alcohol and antidepressants.

Police say Betts, 24, killed nine people, including his sibling, before he was shot and killed by police at the scene.

A friend of the suspected gunman who "indicated he purchased body armor and a firearm accessory for Betts" is now facing federal charges partially linked to his drug use.

Ethan Kollie is being charged with lying on federal firearms forms about drug use and illegally possessing weapons.

Kollie told agents that that he had done "hard drugs," marijuana and acid four to five times a week with Betts during 2014 and 2015.

A motive for the shooting has yet to be determined.

[OH] Suspected Dayton shooter had cocaine, alcohol and anti-anxiety drugs in system, coroner says (ABC News)

ABC News [8/15/2019 4:07 PM, Matt Zarrell and Karma Allen, 2702K]

The alleged shooter who killed nine in Dayton, Ohio, was found to have cocaine, alcohol and anti-anxiety drugs in his system, according to the Montgomery County Coroner.

A pipe device containing cocaine was also found in the pocket of Connor Betts, the coroner, Dr. Kent E. Harshbarger, announced on Thursday.

Betts's weapon was connected with the killing of all nine victims, Harshbarger said. One deceased victim was also shot by police, but that victim died of a gunshot wound from the suspect.

Betts was fatally shot by nearby police officers about 30 seconds after began opening fire, ending a bloody rampage that killed nine, including the alleged gunman's own sister, and injured more than two dozen others.

Police have yet to reveal a motive in the shooting, or explain why the alleged gunman killed his sister, but they said his family is cooperating with the ongoing investigation.

Last week, investigators said Betts had been exploring violent ideologies and the prospect of committing a mass shooting before he opened fire in Dayton.

[OH] Dayton shooter had cocaine in his system, coroner says (CNN)

CNN [8/15/2019 6:07 PM, Theresa Waldrop and Jamiel Lynch, 6094K]

The man who opened fire on a crowded bar district in Dayton, Ohio, had cocaine in his system, the county coroner said Thursday.

Cocaine, anti-anxiety medication and alcohol were found in Connor Betts' blood during the autopsy, Montgomery County Coroner Kent Harshbarger said at a press conference.

Preliminary autopsy results also found that two of the victims were also struck by police bullets, he said.

Armed with a .223-caliber high-capacity rifle, Betts opened fire on August 4 in the popular Oregon district, killing nine people, including his sister, and wounding 17 others. He was killed by patrol officers 30 seconds after he opened fire.

"A pipe device was found in his pocket with an attached clear plastic baggie that has been determined to contain cocaine," Harshbarger said. "And the assailant's cavity blood sample was found to contain cocaine, alprazolam and ethanol."

Two of the those killed were also hit by police gunfire, but Harshbarger said he believes one

of them, a female, had already been fatally shot by Betts. The other had a superficial wound from a police officer's bullet, the coroner said.

"I believe by positioning, by pathway, by evaluating the scene, the video evidence, the first round was the - the lethal round - was the shooter's, or assailant's, weapon, which has been scientifically confirmed to be from his weapon," Harshbarger said.

Dayton Police Chief Richard Biehl told reporters that it "weighs heavily on us that some of our rounds caused additional wounding."

"We are confident in the coroner's finding that no rounds fired by our officers resulted in death of any innocent citizens," Biehl said.

In what Biehl described as a "dynamic and chaotic" situation, the police were focused on preventing more deaths, he said.

"There is a danger in shooting, and there is a danger in not shooting. Both decisions can result in adverse outcomes, and that is true in this incident," Biehl said. "However, the substantial danger in not shooting and not stopping the assailant would have without question resulted in exponentially more fatalities."

The shooter, who was wearing a bullet-proof vest, was probably shot at least 24 times as police tried to stop him, Harshbarger said. Betts had 52 gunshot wounds in his upper and lower torso, but some of them could be exit wounds, the coroner said.

Biehl said the shooter made two efforts to get back on his feet after being downed by police officers, and that "lethal force" was warranted as long as Betts was still armed.

[OH] Dayton, Ohio, gunman had cocaine, alcohol and antidepressants in system: coroner (FOX News)

FOX News [8/15/2019 8:40 PM, Talia Kaplan, 10258K] Video: [HERE](#)

The gunman who carried out a deadly mass shooting in Dayton, Ohio, this month had cocaine and other drugs in his system at the time, according to a coroner's report.

In a news conference on Thursday the Montgomery County coroner, Dr. Kent Harshbarger, said cocaine, antidepressants and alcohol were found in Connor Betts' system when he opened fire with an AR-15 style gun in the city's historic Oregon District on Aug. 4, killing nine people before police shot and killed him. That shooting came just hours after another deadly gun rampage, this time in El Paso, Texas.

Harshbarger added that investigators also found a pipe device and a clear bag containing cocaine on the 24-year-old Betts.

The coroner also told reporters that two people shot by Betts also were shot by police, but none fatally. He said all the deadly gunshot wounds to the nine victims came from Betts' weapon.

Harshbarger said police shot Betts about 24 times in all, mostly striking his upper torso and

lower extremities.

Dayton Police Chief Richard Biehl said the officers' goal at the time was to "immediately stop the killing."

On Tuesday, Biehl said Betts shot 26 people in the span of 32 seconds before responding officers fatally shot him.

Surveillance footage released this week, which was pieced together from several local businesses, showed Betts spending nearly two hours in the area before his spree began.

Betts was first caught on camera in the area at 11:04 p.m. when he parked his car and walked to a bar, Blind Bob's, with his sister Megan and another companion.

Police said the footage "strongly suggests that his [the siblings'] companion," who was wounded in the rampage, "had no idea what he [Betts] was gonna do nor did he have any knowledge of the weapons that were in the trunk of that vehicle."

All three remained at the bar until 12:13 a.m. Betts left the bar alone and went across the street to another bar, Ned Peppers, staying there until 12:42 a.m.

Police said he then went back to his car, changed into a hoodie and took items out of the trunk of the vehicle, including a "very heavy backpack."

Investigators said Betts then made his way from the parking lot toward the strip of bars again, through an alley, while he loaded his gun. He emerged and opened fire near Blind Bob's at 1:04 a.m.

Police confirmed that the shooter's sister, Megan Betts, was one of the first three fatalities, but Biehl conceded that law enforcement officials had "radically different views" about whether the shooter intentionally killed his sister first.

Although investigators could not confirm the shooter's motive, Biehl said Betts had a "history of obsession with violence and violence ideations, the discussion of interests in mass shootings and the expression of desire to carry out a mass shooting."

Investigators have said there was nothing in Betts' background to prevent him from buying the gun, which was purchased online from a dealer in Texas and shipped to another firearms dealer in the Dayton area.

[OH] 2 victims in Dayton hit by police bullets; shooter had drugs in system (USA Today)

USA Today [8/15/2019 4:47 PM, Sarah Brookbank and Kevin Grasha, Cincinnati Enquirer, 6620K] Video: [HERE](#)

One victim of the mass shooting in Dayton, Ohio, was struck by two bullets fired by police after she was dying from a shot fired by the gunman, Connor Betts, Montgomery County's coroner said Thursday.

Kent Harshbarger said the first round that struck her was the lethal round, and it was from Betts' gun.

At a news conference, Harshbarger said he determined that "by positioning, by pathway, by evaluating the scene, (and) the video evidence."

He said the bleeding process had started, and she was on the ground when she was struck by the two bullets fired by police.

Officials did not specify which victim it was, other than to say it was a woman.

A second victim sustained a "superficial" gunshot wound from police, Harshbarger said. That person was shot multiple times by Betts, he said.

The coroner also said toxicology results showed Betts had cocaine, alcohol and the prescription drug Xanax in his system. The concentrations had not been determined.

Dayton Police Chief Richard Biehl talked about the victims' families, saying: "I express my deepest condolences for their loss and profound regret for any actions taken by members of the Dayton Police Department resulting in any harm to their loved ones."

Of the 17 injured, Biehl said it is believed none was shot by police. One small projectile fragment has not yet been matched to a firearm, he said.

Betts suffered at least 24 gunshot wounds, Harshbarger said. After being shot, Biehl said, Betts tried at least twice to get up. Officers, Biehl said, are trained to use force until a threat has ended.

"He is still armed, he still has significant firepower," Biehl said. "Until he is separated from his firepower, lethal force is warranted."

Earlier this week, Biehl would not confirm if all the victims of the shooting were killed or shot by Betts. He said the coroner would examine that issue.

Ten people, including the gunman, were killed in the shooting in the Oregon District. Officials on Tuesday updated the casualty list to 17 wounded by gunfire.

Betts, 24, of Bellbrook was shot and killed by police 32 seconds after the shooting began. He was armed with .223-caliber "assault-style" weapon and had body armor and extra magazines, according to officials.

On Aug. 9, the coroner released preliminary causes of death for the victims and the gunman.

Here's what we know so far:

Monica E. Brickhouse, 39, was killed by multiple gunshot wounds.

Nicholas P. Cumer, 25, was killed by multiple gunshot wounds.

Derrick R. Fudge, 57, was killed by gunshot wounds of the torso.

Thomas J. McNichols Sr., 25, was killed by multiple gunshot wounds.

Lois L. Oglesby, 27, was killed by gunshot wound of the head.

Saeed S. Edris, 38, was killed by gunshot wounds of the torso.

Logan M. Turner, 30, was killed by multiple gunshot wounds.

Beatrice N. Warren-Curtis, 36, was killed by gunshot wounds of the torso and right arm.

Megan Betts, 22, was killed by gunshot wounds to the chest and right arm.

Connor S. Betts, 24, was killed by multiple gunshot wounds.

National Security News

Trump Administration Asks Congress to Reauthorize N.S.A.'s Deactivated Call Records Program (New York Times)

New York Times [8/14/2019 1:08 PM, Charlie Savage, 22840K]

Breaking a long silence about a high-profile National Security Agency program that sifts records of Americans' telephone calls and text messages in search of terrorists, the Trump administration on Thursday acknowledged for the first time that the system has been indefinitely shut down — but asked Congress to extend its legal basis anyway.

In a letter to Congress delivered on Thursday and obtained by The New York Times, the administration urged lawmakers to make permanent the legal authority for the National Security Agency to gain access to logs of Americans' domestic communications, the USA Freedom Act. The law, enacted after the intelligence contractor Edward J. Snowden revealed the existence of the program in 2013, is set to expire in December, but the Trump administration wants it made permanent.

The unclassified letter, signed on Wednesday by Dan Coats in one of his last acts as the director of National Intelligence, also conceded that the N.S.A. has indefinitely shut down that program after recurring technical difficulties repeatedly caused it to collect more records than it had legal authority to gather. That fact has previously been reported, but the administration had refused to officially confirm its status.

"The National Security Agency has suspended the call detail records program that uses this authority and deleted the call detail records acquired under this authority," Mr. Coats wrote. "This decision was made after balancing the program's relative intelligence value, associated costs, and compliance and data integrity concerns caused by the unique complexities of using these company-generated business records for intelligence purposes."

Complicating matters, three other surveillance authorities primarily used by the F.B.I. are

also set to expire in mid-December. They include provisions that let investigators get court orders to collect business records relevant to a national security investigation, wiretap “lone wolf” terrorists without links to a foreign power, and keep wiretapping someone suspected of being a spy or a terrorist who switches phone lines in an effort to evade surveillance.

Mr. Coats’s letter said the administration supported making those three provisions permanent as well, rather than merely subjecting them to another extension of several years, as Congress has previously done.

The executive branch had been internally divided over whether to push for an extension of the part of the Freedom Act that authorizes the phone records program. Months ago, the N.S.A. presented a bleak assessment of the program to the White House, saying it carried high costs and few benefits, but some officials argued that it made sense to keep the legal authority in case technical solutions emerged to make it work better, according to officials familiar with internal deliberations.

Mr. Coats’s letter adopted the latter argument, saying the administration supports permanently reauthorizing the provision even though the system was dysfunctional. He noted that “as technology changes, our adversaries’ tradecraft and communications habits will continue to evolve and adapt,” suggesting that such a system might become more useful.

While extending the three other provisions is less disputed, their fate will now be caught up in a broader debate about the phone records law. Privacy advocates, including Patrick Toomey of the American Civil Liberties Union, called for Congress to instead let the phone records program die.

“It’s long past time that this surveillance program was shuttered once and for all,” Mr. Toomey said. “The NSA has been vacuuming up hundreds of millions of Americans’ call records as part of a program that is hopelessly complex and lacks any discernible evidence of its value. We should not leave such a sweeping, unaccountable power in the hands of our spy agencies.”

The Times reported last month that the House Judiciary Committee has already started drafting a bill to extend the three expiring F.B.I. tools, but without extending the N.S.A. phone records program.

The N.S.A.’s ability to gain access to and analyze Americans’ domestic calling records traces back to the aftermath of the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, when the Bush administration set up its then-secret Stellarwind program. It was a basket of surveillance and bulk data collection activities that relied on a raw claim of executive power to bypass legal constraints.

One component of the program collected customer calling records from large telecoms like AT&T and MCI, which later became Verizon. The N.S.A. used the metadata — logs showing who contacted whom, but not what was said — as a social map, scrutinizing indirect links between people as it hunted for hidden associates of known terrorism suspects.

In 2006, the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court began issuing secret orders requiring the companies to participate in the program.

The orders were based on a creative and disputed interpretation of Section 215 of the Patriot Act, which said the F.B.I. may obtain business records “relevant” to a terrorism investigation. The spy court decided that all records could be seen as “relevant” — a theory that a federal appeals court would later reject as stretching the law too far.

But the bulk phone records program clearly came into public view only in June 2013 when The Guardian published the first revelation from the trove of classified files leaked by Mr. Snowden, the former intelligence contractor. It was a top-secret surveillance court order to Verizon requiring it to give the N.S.A. a copy of all customer calling records.

In the ensuing debate, intelligence officials could not point to any specific attack the program had thwarted. But they defended it as a useful tool when new terrorism-linked phone numbers were identified, and suggested that had it been in place before Sept. 11, it might have helped uncover Al Qaeda’s plot. Critics rejected the Sept. 11 argument as exaggerated and portrayed the program as ripe for abuse and as a legally dubious invasion of privacy.

Eventually, the Obama administration and Congress agreed on a reform law that would end the N.S.A.’s bulk collection of domestic calling data, but preserve its ability to swiftly gain access to records held by telecoms when a judge agreed that a specific number had terrorism links. The idea was to reduce the risk of abuse while preserving the analytical capability.

That law — the USA Freedom Act of 2015 — permitted the N.S.A. to build a system linking up with the telecoms under which the agency could retrieve logs of phone calls and texts for a specific suspect, as well as the logs of communications by everyone who had ever been in contact with that suspect — even when they were customers of different phone companies.

Under the old program, the N.S.A. had been vacuuming up billions of logs about Americans’ communications every day. Under the replacement Freedom Act system, that number dropped significantly, although its scale remained large in absolute terms. In 2016, the agency obtained orders to target 42 suspects and collected 151 million records. In 2017, it obtained orders to target 40 suspects and collected 534 million records.

But public signs of trouble with the Freedom Act system began to emerge in June 2018, when the N.S.A. announced that it had discovered “technical irregularities” that caused it to collect more phone records than it had legal authority to gather.

The agency has been coy about the details, saying they are classified, but in broad strokes has said that for various reasons telecoms were returning both accurate and inaccurate numbers in the list of accounts a suspect had been in contact with. When the N.S.A. fed those numbers back into the system to get the “second hop” of calling data from the suspect’s contacts, it compounded the problem.

Unable to separate the good data from the bad, the agency deleted its entire collection of

Americans' phone records — hundreds of millions of communications logs — and started over. But in October 2018, it discovered that the problem was happening again, and, once again, had to purge the data, according to a recently declassified inspector general report.

The recurring headaches, including the inability of the N.S.A. to verify whether the data returned from the phone companies, was accurate, and the relatively low value of the intelligence that was being gleaned from it, contributed to an intelligence community decision in late 2018 to start winding the program down, officials familiar with the matter have said.

A slightly garbled sign of that move first came to light in March, when a senior Republican congressional aide said in a national security podcast interview, with what was apparently overstatement in terms of the timing, that the N.S.A. had not been using the program "for the past six months." But for months, the government had refused to say what its status was.

Trump administration urges Congress to reauthorize NSA surveillance program (The Hill)

The Hill [8/15/2019 3:38 PM, Emily Birnbaum, 2806K]

The Trump administration is urging Congress to reauthorize the National Security Agency's (NSA) authority to collect phone record information on millions of Americans, according to a letter obtained by The Hill.

Dan Coats, the departing director of national intelligence (DNI), in a letter to senators dated Wednesday urged Congress to reauthorize all provisions in the USA Freedom Act, a controversial law that is set to expire later this year.

Top Republicans on the key committees overseeing the reauthorization of the law are likely to follow DNI's lead.

"I write to express the support of the Intelligence Community (IC) and Administration for the permanent reauthorization of the provisions of the USA Freedom Act of 2015 that are currently set to expire in December," Coats wrote in the letter, which was addressed to the top members of the Senate Judiciary Committee and Senate Intelligence Committee.

"These provisions provide the [intelligence community] with key national security authorities, and we look forward to working with the Congress on their permanent reauthorization," Coats added.

The administration's input comes as Congress braces for a battle over the reauthorization of the USA Freedom Act, which gives the government a broad range of surveillance authorities.

In the letter, Coats confirmed that the NSA has shuttered the call records program, the most contested provision of the law. But he said the government should retain its authority to restart the program if needed.

"The National Security Agency has suspended the call detail records program that uses this

authority and deleted the call detail records acquired under this authority," Coats wrote. "This decision was made after balancing the program's relative intelligence value, associated costs, and compliance and data integrity concerns caused by the unique complexities of using these company-generated business records for intelligence purposes."

"However, as technology changes, our adversaries' tradecraft and communications habits will continue to evolve and adapt," he added. "In light of this dynamic environment, the Administration supports reauthorization of this provision as well."

The call detail records program allows the government to collect metadata — information like the length of calls, or when information is sent — on phone calls and text messages during terrorism investigations. Privacy activists have long maintained it is possible to glean highly sensitive information from those details.

A coalition of top privacy and civil rights groups in a letter on Wednesday pushed to end the NSA's mass phone data collection program, arguing it poses insurmountable threats to the privacy and civil liberties of millions of people, and called for other "meaningful surveillance reforms" to the law.

Coats is calling for Congress to reauthorize all of the provisions in the law, including those that allow the government to wiretap "lone wolf" terrorists and collect business records during a national security investigation.

A spokesperson for Sen. Dianne Feinstein (Calif.), the top Democrat on the Senate Judiciary Committee, confirmed they have received the letter and are reviewing it.

While some lawmakers have already called for the sunset of Section 215 authorities, many of the key players in the congressional debate have not weighed in publicly yet.

Trump administration mulls \$4.3B in foreign aid cuts (Politico)

Politico [8/15/2019 8:09 PM, Caitlin Emma, 2512K]

The Trump administration is looking to cut more than \$4 billion in foreign aid spending, including severe cuts to the United Nations budget that advocates say will threaten national security and increase human suffering around the globe.

The White House budget office is eyeing \$2.3 billion in cuts to USAID and a \$2 billion cut to the State Department through a process called rescission, an administration official speaking on background confirmed to POLITICO. The official cautioned that the numbers are subject to change.

The requested cuts to be sent to Congress— which the foreign aid advocacy community is widely expecting — would include \$787 million for U.N. international peacekeeping activities, \$522 million in core funding for the U.N. and \$364 million for a range of U.N. humanitarian and human rights programs, the administration official confirmed. Two advocates, also speaking on background, said their understanding is the same.

The administration is angling for the funding cuts just two weeks after Trump signed a two-

year budget deal that's projected to add \$1.7 trillion to the federal debt over a decade.

The Office of Management and Budget did not respond to a request for comment.

Congress typically has 45 days to approve a presidential rescission package, which aims to rescind funding previously appropriated by Congress. The money is frozen during that time, and if Congress doesn't approve the package, the funding is released.

But advocates expect the Trump administration to submit its package early next week, which would effectively cancel the funding by freezing it through the Sept. 30 end of the fiscal year, when the money is set to expire.

Critics say the move would amount to a violation of the Impoundment Control Act of 1974, which spells out the steps that the president must take in order to pull back funds appropriated by Congress.

The proposed cuts would come after OMB temporarily hit pause on 10 pots of foreign aid, which many took as a sign that a rescission package was imminent.

Already, top Republicans and Democrats on the House Foreign Affairs Committee and Senate Foreign Relations Committee have urged OMB to abandon the proposal, in addition to Democratic spending leaders Rep. Nita Lowey (D-N.Y.) and Sen. Patrick Leahy (D-Vt.).

Lowey, who also chairs the House spending subcommittee that funds the State Department and foreign aid, called the idea of a rescission package "wrong-headed."

"The funds were appropriated by overwhelming bipartisan majorities and the lengthy negotiations between the House, the Senate, the White House," Lowey said during a phone interview this week. "And they were signed into law by the president. So cuts to foreign aid have repeatedly been rejected on a bipartisan basis. And I do believe that there's bipartisan, widespread understanding that these funds are essential for U.S. global leadership and protecting the security of the American people."

The Trump administration also pursued a foreign aid rescission package last year, but the effort proved wildly unpopular, sparking criticism from both Republicans and Democrats. The administration eventually dropped the proposal.

The cuts sought by the administration "would be devastating," said Jordie Hannum, executive director of the Better World Campaign, an organization that works to strengthen the relationship between the U.S. and the U.N.

"They'd be sabotaging these missions and ensuring untold suffering for millions of innocent civilians who rely on the missions for protection," Hannum said. "If we cut funds for U.N. Peacekeeping missions around the world, our country will be less safe. This is a direct threat to U.S. national security."

A host of other organizations have also urged OMB to drop the rescission package, including the Professional Services Council, a trade association that represents federal contractors.

“Failing to obligate existing appropriations not only creates the false appearance that these are somehow excessive funds while ongoing development work remains underfunded, it also ignores the fact that ongoing programs — implemented at the behest of federal government — need to be paid for,” said David Berteau, the association’s president and CEO, in a statement.

“Rescinding funds rather than using them would also undermine Congressional intent and direction in the FY19 appropriations legislation,” he said.

[Gibraltar] US asks Gibraltar to hold Iranian tanker in detention: govt lawyer (Breitbart)

Breitbart [8/14/2019 11:57 PM, AFP, 2034K]

The United States requested Thursday that Gibraltar hold in detention an Iranian supertanker at the centre of a stand-off between Tehran and London that sparked tensions in the oil-rich Gulf.

The British overseas territory’s Supreme Court was set to release the Grace 1, which is suspected of smuggling oil to Syria, when the US Justice department applied for the vessel to be seized.

The move was announced by attorney Joseph Triay and delayed the court decision on the vessel’s fate.

Triay did not detail the basis for the US request other than as “mutual legal assistance”.

“The US Department of Justice has applied to seize the Grace 1 on a number of allegations which are now being considered,” a government spokesman said.

Chief Justice Anthony Dudley made clear that were it not for the US move, “the ship would have sailed”.

The Gibraltar Supreme Court decision on the fate of the ship was adjourned until after four pm (14:00 GMT).

The captain and three officers from Grace 1, had their police bail lifted and were formally released without any charges, a Gibraltar government spokesman said.

The supertanker, carrying 2.1 million barrels of Iranian oil, was seized by Gibraltar police and British special forces, provoking a diplomatic crisis.

It was suspected of carrying oil to war-torn Syria in violation of separate EU and US sanctions.

Iranian authorities believe Britain detained the ship at the behest of the Trump administration.

Iran described Britain’s actions as “piracy” and hit back seizing a British tanker, the Stena

Impero, on July 19 in the strategic Strait of Hormuz — the conduit for much of the world's crude — for breaking “international maritime rules”.

Tehran repeatedly called for the release of Grace 1, insisting it had been in international waters and not headed to Syria.

The capture of the tankers heightened frictions just as European nations scramble to try to save a landmark nuclear deal with the Islamic Republic after the US pulled out of the accord in May last year and started imposing sanctions on Iran.

Iran responded by suspending some of its commitments under the nuclear deal.

The situation threatened to spiral out of control with ships attacked, drones downed and oil tankers seized.

At the height of the crisis, Trump called off air strikes against Iran at the last minute in June after its forces shot down a US drone.

President Hassan Rouhani said on Tuesday that Iran favours talks with the US if it lifts sanctions against the Islamic republic.

“Peace for peace and oil for oil,” he said. “You cannot say that you won’t allow our oil to be exported.

“It cannot be that the Strait of Hormuz is free for you and the Strait of Gibraltar is not free for us.”

[Gibraltar] U.S. Moves to Prolong Iranian Tanker Detention in Gibraltar (US News & World Report)

US News & World Report [8/15/2019 10:05 AM, Paul D. Shinkman, 3196K]

THE U.S. IS TRYING TO interfere in a British decision to release an Iranian oil tanker near Gibraltar the U.K. seized last month.

The Justice Department seeks to extend the detention of the ship, the Grace 1, prompting the Supreme Court in Gibraltar – a British overseas territory – to put off a scheduled ruling on the issue, according to local media reports.

The British Foreign Office referred questions about the action to the government of Gibraltar, the Associated Press reports.

British marines last month stormed the tanker in the Strait of Gibraltar and detained it. The British government asserted the ship was bound for Syria in violation of international sanctions.

Officials in Iran immediately blasted the move and pledged retaliation. The U.K. "will heavily regret their deeds," Iran navy chief Adm. Ali Fadavi said at the time. Iran attempted to seize a British tanker near the Strait of Hormuz shortly afterward and succeeded in detaining another ship a week later in the same area.

The incidents were part of broader escalations between Tehran and the U.S. and its allies, following what the Trump administration asserted was an increased threat posed by the Iranian regime.

Flashpoints in recent weeks threatened to escalate the tensions into all-out conflict. Iran shot down a U.S. drone over international waters in June, and the Pentagon began preparing a military response. President Donald Trump canceled the retaliatory strikes shortly before they were supposed to begin due to concerns it was not a retaliatory response.

A series of U.S. responses that some have considered unpredictable have prompted its allies to reconsider whether the Trump administration is a reliable partner in facing off against Iran, analysts say, opting instead to cool tensions with Tehran themselves.

"The Gulf states appear to have concluded that easing Tehran's unrest over the U.S. maximum pressure campaign is preferable to a war that could destroy much of the infrastructure investments the Gulf states have made in recent decades," private intelligence firm The Soufan Group wrote in an analysis earlier this month.

It also threatens to pit the U.S. against some of its strongest traditional allies.

"Just as Iran-UK-Gibraltar were set to have Grace1 tanker released today, Trump admin moves in to spoil the effort. Will become another source of tension in Europe-US relations over Iran policy," Ellie Geranmayeh, with the European Council on Foreign Relations, tweeted Thursday.

[Gibraltar] U.S. bid to seize Iranian tanker halts its release from Gibraltar (Reuters)

Reuters [8/15/2019 6:23 AM, Guy Faulconbridge, Marco Trujillo, 5436K]

The United States applied on Thursday to seize an Iranian tanker detained by Gibraltar, halting its expected release at the last minute and preventing a possible swap for a British-flagged tanker held by Iran.

The two seized tankers - an Iranian one in Gibraltar and a British one in Iran - have become pawns in the standoff between Iran and the West, with their fate tangled in the diplomatic differences between the EU's big powers and the United States.

The Iranian Grace 1 oil tanker was seized by Royal Marine commandos in a landing in darkness off the coast of the British overseas territory on July 4.

Gibraltar said the tanker was suspected of selling oil to Syria in breach of European Union sanctions. Two weeks later, Iran's Revolutionary Guards seized the British-flagged Stena Impero in the Gulf on July 19.

Gibraltar was due to release the Grace 1 on Thursday, but just hours before, the U.S. Department of Justice sought to seize it.

"The U.S. Department of Justice has applied to seize the Grace 1 on a number of

allegations which are now being considered,” the government of Gibraltar said, adding the matter would return to the supreme court of Gibraltar at 1400 GMT on Thursday.

Further details were not immediately released about the grounds for the U.S. Justice Department’s application. The U.S. Justice Department was not immediately available for comment.

A source in Gibraltar had told Reuters ahead of Thursday’s court hearing that the Grace 1 would probably be allowed to leave, stoking speculation about a possible tanker swap with Iran.

The Gibraltar Chronicle newspaper, which was first to report the news, said the court’s chief justice, Anthony Dudley, made clear that were it not for the U.S. move, “the ship would have sailed”.

While both Britain and Iran deny they were planning to swap the vessels for each other, there has been widespread expectation that the British-flagged ship will not be freed until the Iranian tanker is released.

European countries including Britain strongly disagreed with Washington’s decision last year to abandon an international agreement that guaranteed Iran access to trade in return for curbs to its nuclear program.

Washington has imposed sanctions on Iran with the aim of halting its oil exports altogether. European countries have lifted sanctions against Iran itself but still have a ban on selling oil to Syria, in place since 2011.

Gibraltar denies that it was ordered to detain the Grace 1, which was carrying up to 2.1 million barrels of oil, but several diplomatic sources have said the United States asked the United Kingdom to seize the vessel.

Britain, which has insisted its Iran policy will not change under new Prime Minister Boris Johnson who took office last month, has repeatedly indicated it wants a compromise over the tanker.

U.S. national security adviser John Bolton visited London on Sunday to Tuesday, offering Washington’s help on Britain’s exit from the EU, due on Oct. 31. Britain has announced plans to join a U.S.-led maritime security mission in the Gulf.

Iranian navy commander Rear Admiral Hossein Khanzadi repeated Iran’s longstanding demand that Western navies leave the Gulf, which Iran says should be patrolled only by the countries of the region.

“The enemies of the region, America, England and the Zionist regime and their allies, should know that the time of parading, loitering and putting on a hypocritical show in the Persian Gulf region and the sea of Oman is over,” Khanzadi said, according to ISNA news agency.

“The enemies must leave the region as quickly as possible.”

[Editorial note: consult video at source link]

[Gibraltar] Gibraltar to release Iranian tanker despite U.S. intervention (Politico)

Politico [8/15/2019 1:18 PM, Nahal Toosi and Manon Jacob, 2512K]

Gibraltar's top court agreed Thursday to release an Iranian tanker that was seized near the British overseas territory last month, despite a last-minute intervention from the United States.

The supertanker Grace 1 was stopped by Royal Marines on July 4, on suspicion that it was shipping 2.1 million barrels of crude oil to Syria. Gibraltar's Chief Minister Fabian Picardo said Thursday that an investigation had confirmed this, but that Tehran had given "written assurance" that if released, the vessel would not go to Syria or any destination "that is subject to European Union sanctions."

"In light of the assurances we have received, there are no longer any reasonable grounds for the continued legal detention," Picardo said in a statement.

Gibraltar's decision further exacerbates tensions between London and Washington over relations with Iran that grew following U.S. President Donald Trump's decision last year to withdraw his country from an international agreement with Tehran that curbed its nuclear program in exchange for a lifting of sanctions.

Earlier in the day, the U.S. Department of Justice had sought to stop the tanker's release by requesting a "new legal procedure for the detention of the vessel," according to Picardo.

"That is a matter for our independent Mutual Legal Assistance authorities who will make an objective, legal determination of that request for separate proceedings," he said.

The White House referred the question to the Department of Justice, which did not immediately offer comment.

However, a Trump administration official called the behind the scenes U.S.-U.K. struggle over the tanker "a crushing failure of diplomacy."

The Justice Department's attempt to stop the tanker's release followed a visit to Britain by Trump national security adviser John Bolton. Neither country's officials would say whether Bolton or others in the U.S. alerted the U.K. ahead of time about the Justice Department's intentions.

"If our closest ally won't help us with one of our top foreign policy objectives and stop millions of dollars for the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, then something is deeply wrong," the official said.

A British Foreign Office spokesperson said that "Iran must abide by the assurances they have provided" to Gibraltar.

"We will not stand by and allow Iran — or anyone — to bypass vital EU sanctions on a

regime that has deployed chemical weapons against its own people," the spokesperson said.

After the Iranian tanker was originally stopped, Tehran seized a British-flagged tanker, and there has been speculation of a swap for the Grace 1.

Promoted by

The Foreign Office spokesperson said there is "no comparison or linkage between Iran's unacceptable and illegal seizure of, and attacks on, commercial shipping vessels in the Strait of Hormuz and the enforcement of EU Syria sanctions by the Government of Gibraltar."

Iran's ambassador to London, Hamid Baeidinejad, hailed America's "miserable defeat" in the Grace 1 decision.

"The U.S. attempted to abuse the legal system to steal our property on the high seas. This piracy attempt is indicative of Trump admin's contempt for the law," he wrote on Twitter.

[Gibraltar] Seized Iranian tanker released despite US efforts to halt the move (CNN)
CNN [8/15/2019 11:46 AM, Sara Mazlounsaki and Lauren Said-Moorhouse and Vasco Cotovio, 6094K]

A seized oil tanker at the center of a standoff between the UK and Iran is free to set sail, despite eleventh-hour efforts by the United States to halt the move to release it.

The Supreme Court in the British territory of Gibraltar approved the release of the Grace 1, which was seized off the country's coast by authorities last month, after officials said they no longer wished to detain it.

Gibraltar said it had received assurances from Iran and the owners of the oil that, were the tanker to be released, its cargo would not be taken to Syria, which would be in breach of European Union sanctions.

The ship was seized six weeks ago as it passed through Gibraltar's territorial waters. Two weeks later, Iran seized a British ship in the Gulf, in what was widely regarded as a tit-for-tat operation.

As tensions increased, the two sides conducted delicate negotiations in London. "Gibraltar has taken a very careful approach to the detention of Grace 1," Gibraltar's Chief Minister Fabian Picardo told CNN "We only acted in July when we had evidence that the cargo aboard the vessel was going to Syria."

"What we found aboard the vessel has confirmed the view that we took was the correct view. We have only released the vessel... when we have been convinced that the vessel is not now going to Syria," he added.

A last-minute intervention by the US threatened to scupper the deal to release the Grace 1. In a court hearing Thursday morning, instead of announcing the release of the tanker, the

Gibraltar attorney general's lawyer Joseph Triay said the US Department of Justice had applied to extend its seizure. The basis of Washington's legal efforts was unclear Thursday. The State Department referred CNN to the Department of Justice, which declined to comment.

The court adjourned until later Thursday afternoon, when the release of the Grace 1 was confirmed.

Picardo told CNN that Gibraltar was still looking at the request from the US and "making an independent assessment" of it. That review had not been completed ahead of Thursday's court hearings "but could of course come at any time before the vessel sails." Picardo declined to elaborate on the basis of the US request to extend the seizure of the vessel.

Iran's Foreign Minister Javad Zarif denounced the US move as a "piracy attempt," in a post on Twitter.

Tehran's ambassador to the UK, Hamid Baeidinejad, said the Grace 1 would leave Gibraltar soon. "The US in a last minute attempt made a futile effort to block the release of the oil tanker and were faced with humiliating defeat. With recent attempts, all necessary preparations and technical issues to release the tanker to an open sea have been arranged and the ship will soon leave Gibraltar," he wrote on Twitter, in Farsi.

British Royal Marines and Gibraltar port and law enforcement agencies stormed the ship on July 4. It was accused of carrying oil destined for Syria, which would have been in violation of EU sanctions.

Spain's acting foreign minister, Josep Borrell, said at the time that the United States had asked the UK to intercept the ship. Gibraltar is a British overseas territory on the edge of southern Spain.

Iran has criticized the seizure as "illegal" and condemned the operation as "piracy."

Less than two weeks later, Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) captured the British-flagged Stena Impero in the Strait of Hormuz and accused it of "violating international regulations."

A spokesperson for the Stena Impero's owners said that the Grace 1 "is an entirely separate situation from our perspective" but its release "could be seen as a positive step" for the Stena Impero.

Prior to the seizures, tensions in the Persian Gulf had been steadily escalating after Iran confirmed it would stop complying with several parts of the 2015 nuclear deal, which the Trump administration withdrew from last year.

[Editorial note: consult source link for video]

[Uganda] Uganda's cash-strapped cops spend \$126 million on CCTV from Huawei (Reuters)

Reuters [8/15/2019 4:30 AM, Elias Biryabarema, 5436K]

A forest of slender white poles topped with dark, unblinking eyes is quietly sprouting on the rubbish-strewn, potholed street corners of the Ugandan capital.

Police say the new \$126 million closed-circuit television camera (CCTV) system, supplied by Chinese telecommunications giant Huawei Technologies Co Ltd, will slash spiraling violent crime.

Opposition leaders say law enforcement agencies are too corrupt and overburdened to use the footage to identify criminals. They worry police may use the cameras, which have facial recognition technology, to target demonstrators in violent clampdowns as an election approaches in 2021.

“The CCTV project is just a tool to track us, hunt us and persecute us,” said Ingrid Turinawe, a leader in the Forum for Democratic Change, Uganda’s largest opposition party.

Facial recognition technology has become increasingly pervasive around the world, raising concerns about potential abuses. Officials in San Francisco voted in May to ban its use by city personnel.

Huawei technicians have already helped intelligence officials in Uganda and at least one other African country spy on their political opponents, according to an investigation published by the Wall Street Journal on Wednesday.

In Uganda, they helped crack the encrypted communications of popular musician turned politician Bobi Wine; police swarmed a concert that would have featured surprise opposition speakers and arrested him and dozens of supporters, the paper said.

In Zambia, Huawei employees helped the government access the phones and Facebook pages of bloggers critical of the president so they could be tracked and arrested, the paper reported.

Huawei rejected the Journal’s “unfounded and inaccurate allegations”, telling Reuters in an email: “Huawei’s code of business conduct prohibits any employees from undertaking any activities that would compromise the data or privacy of our customers or end users, or that would breach any laws.”

Uganda’s cameras are part of Huawei’s Safe City initiative, which has been rolled out in more than 200 cities worldwide, including in China, Pakistan and Russia.

In Africa, Huawei has sold CCTV systems to countries such as Kenya, Egypt and Zambia where activists have raised similar concerns over privacy and effectiveness. In Europe, France, Germany and Serbia have small projects with Huawei’s initiative.

The U.S. government has restricted trade with Huawei and four other Chinese firms, accusing them of espionage and stealing intellectual property. It is also lobbying to persuade U.S. allies to keep Huawei out of next-generation 5G telecommunications infrastructure, citing concerns the company could spy on customers.

Huawei has repeatedly denied it is controlled by the Chinese government, military or intelligence services.

Surging crime in Uganda is fuelling public anger towards President Yoweri Museveni, 74, who has been in power since 1986 and will likely seek another five-year term.

Police in the oil-rich East African nation recorded 4,497 homicides last year, nearly double the number of five years ago. Kidnappings for ransom, once rare, rose to 202 cases in 2018, an eightfold jump from 2017.

In one notorious case, the 28-year-old daughter of a wealthy businessman was kidnapped and killed despite her family paying kidnappers \$200,000.

Police investigations currently rely heavily on witness interviews, Charles Twine, a spokesman for the police Criminal Intelligence and Investigations Department, told Reuters.

It's a notoriously slow and unreliable way to build a case.

There are not enough detectives and no forensic specialists.

Twine declined to give statistics but said police manpower was "critically wanting."

The police website said in 2015 the force was 45,000-strong. That's about half the United Nations-recommended ratio of one policeman per 500 citizens.

A 2015 budget paper for the ministry of internal affairs said there were about 5,500 detectives. Twine said police must turn to civilian experts if they need DNA analysts, toxicologists or fiber experts.

He hopes CCTV footage will be the answer, letting investigators "know who has committed the crime, how did he commit it, which route did he take, and which tools did he have."

About 2,500 out of a planned 3,200 cameras covering metropolitan Kampala have been installed. Huawei will eventually extend the system to all major towns in the country.

But some current and former law enforcement officials are skeptical that high-tech aids such as CCTV or new forensic tools such as planned DNA and fingerprint databases will have an impact on crime.

Uganda's police are poorly paid and have little investigative training, said Herbert Karugaba, a Ugandan police investigator for 17 years before he joined the U.N. to probe genocide and war crimes in Rwanda and Cambodia.

"It's money down the drain," said Karugaba. "It is the quality of the man and woman in uniform... that matters."

Uganda's Human Rights Awareness and Promotion Forum, an advocacy group, had its own CCTV running in May 2016 when robbers killed a guard and stole computers. The group gave the video to police. Nothing happened.

“After months of investigations they eventually told us our case file is lost. There’s no record anywhere of our case,” said Adrian Jjuuko, the group’s head. “If there’s no political will to investigate or prosecute crime, nothing will change. It’s all nonsense, CCTV or no CCTV.

Police start on a monthly salary of about \$150. Most prosecutors earn about \$270. Lawmakers take home around \$6,500.

Most police barracks have not been renovated or expanded since colonial days. Families live in tiny circular iron cabins, often leaking, overcrowded and dirty, an internal police report said.

Poor pay and living conditions encourage corruption.

Ugandans frequently swap stories of police who demand bribes, meaning some crimes go unreported.

At police stations, evidence moulders while cases await trial, said Mike Chibita, a former judge appointed in 2013 as director of public prosecutions.

There are only 400 prosecutors in Uganda, a country of 42 million. It takes an average of four years to get a hearing, Chibita said. Roughly half of the country’s 59,000 prisoners are on pre-trial detention, according to the prison service.

Trying old cases is a “big nightmare” Chibita said. Exhibits disappear or decay. Witnesses disappear or forget. In one case, a blood-stained shirt disappeared in a puff of dust and mould when it was produced in a 2012 murder trial.

“Everybody in court began coughing,” Chibita said.

Expensive tools also do little to address underlying causes of crime, such as high unemployment or disputes over land, said appeals court judge Geoffrey Kiryabwire.

Four out of every 10 young Ugandans are out of work. Of those with jobs, around 80% work in low-paid informal jobs, the finance ministry said.

They include people such as Aggrey Tugume, a 27-year-old motorbike taxi driver. He thinks the cameras are an expensive election ploy.

“If someone is determined to kill or steal, a camera would be a small obstacle,” he said. “This is a waste of money by politicians ... to create a false perception that government is acting on crime.”

[Iran] The U.S. Has Joined Secret Talks With Israel and the U.A.E. The topic? Iran. (New York Times)

New York Times [8/15/2019 7:25 PM, Lara Jakes and Edward Wong, 22840K]

The United States is participating in secret talks between the United Arab Emirates and Israel to confront threats posed by Iran, a shared adversary among the three countries.

The talks aim to broaden cooperation for military and intelligence sharing between the United Arab Emirates and Israel, two cautiously allied Middle Eastern nations, a foreign official with knowledge of the diplomacy said on Thursday.

The United Arab Emirates and Israel already share some security connections, experts said, and have held below-the-radar discussions in the past. Both view Iran as a top threat to the region, and Israel has sold fighter jet upgrades and spyware to the United Arab Emirates.

But including the United States in a new phase of security talks could signal the United Arab Emirates' intent to demonstrate its commitment to the Trump administration's so-called maximum pressure campaign against Iran — even as Emirati officials have stepped back from some of their own hard-line policies targeting Tehran.

The three-sided talks, which were first reported by The Wall Street Journal, grew out of a February conference in Warsaw that was billed as a Middle East security forum but was used by the Trump administration to push its campaign against Iran. Since then, the three allies have met twice.

The foreign official confirmed the talks were being coordinated by Brian H. Hook, the senior State Department envoy on Iran issues. The official spoke on the condition of anonymity to confirm the secret discussions.

Neither the State Department nor the Israeli Embassy in Washington responded to requests for comment, and Emirati officials refused to discuss the issue.

Last month, the United Arab Emirates pulled most of its forces from Yemen after years of supporting Saudi Arabia's efforts there against Houthi rebels supported by Iran. Emirati officials also recently held maritime security talks with Tehran.

Emirati officials are trying to "strike a very careful balancing act," said Ilan Goldenberg, the director of the Middle East Security Program at the Center for a New American Security.

"They want to signal to the Trump administration and members of Congress — especially Republicans — that they aren't walking away from the administration's policies and the maximum pressure campaign against Iran," he said.

The Trump administration's campaign against Iran has been met with mixed success since the United States withdrew in May 2018 from a nuclear accord between Tehran and world powers.

United States sanctions have stopped Iran from exporting oil and other goods to foreign buyers, starving its economy. But the economic constraints have also irritated American allies and other nations that had sought to open markets in Iran.

On Thursday, in a sign of the diplomatic strain, the authorities in Gibraltar released an Iranian oil tanker that the United States had sought to seize. Gibraltar is a semiautonomous British territory.

The United Arab Emirates and other Arab states are generally careful to avoid appearing too close to Israel, given longstanding disputes over the rights of Palestinians and access to the Al Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem, one of the holiest sites in Islam.

Mr. Goldenberg said it was surprising that Emirati officials would agree to allow the United States into its longstanding and secretive talks with Israel.

"It is a sign they are willing to lean further forward, that they are not as worried about secrecy as they were," said Mr. Goldenberg, who worked on regional security issues at the State Department and Pentagon during the Obama administration.

[Iran] U.S. Threatens Sanctions Over Iranian Tanker After Court Release (Bloomberg)
Bloomberg [8/15/2019 6:09 PM, Jonathan Browning, Alex Longley, and Nick Wadhams, 5350K]

The U.S. is gravely disappointed with the U.K. after a Gibraltar court allowed the release of an Iranian tanker suspected of hauling oil to Syria, and threatened sanctions against ports, banks and anyone else who does business with the ship or its crew, two administration officials said.

The court's decision Thursday to release the Grace 1 was a missed opportunity and the Trump administration hopes that the U.K. government and authorities in Gibraltar will reconsider, according to the officials, who asked not to be identified discussing private deliberations. They said the court order rewards Iranian terrorism and Tehran will interpret the action as appeasement.

The Grace 1 had been held in Gibraltar after British forces seized it last month on suspicion that it was hauling Iranian crude oil to Syria. The U.S. Department of Justice is seeking to block the vessel's release, but the Gibraltar Supreme Court on Thursday said American authorities hadn't filed the appropriate legal application.

The two administration officials said the Grace 1 should now be considered a pariah. Anyone that does business with the ship, its crew or its owners, or provides financial transactions or port services to the vessel could be liable for evading U.S. sanctions, the officials said.

They argued that the U.K. should think of the tanker issue in terms of the broader relationship with the U.S., particularly as Prime Minister Boris Johnson's government presses forward with departing the European Union and seeks a free-trade agreement with the U.S. While the people wouldn't say the release threatens prospects for that deal, they added that the U.K. should ask if it wants to do business with the U.S. or Iran.

Iran said the ship wouldn't sail to a sanctioned destination and is now rushing to return it to international waters before the U.S. finds a way to prolong its six-week detention.

"In light of the assurances we have received, there are no longer any reasonable grounds for the continued legal detention of the Grace 1 in order to ensure compliance" with European sanctions, the Gibraltar government said in an emailed statement.

The decision now essentially sets up a race between Iran and the U.S. over the ship's fate. The vessel is bound for a port in the Mediterranean, Iran's Mehr news agency said, citing Jalil Eslami, deputy for maritime affairs of the Iranian ports and maritime organization. Tanker-tracking data compiled by Bloomberg show that the vessel hadn't moved as of 5:30 p.m. New York time.

Diplomatic Row

The seizure of the tanker set off a diplomatic row, underscoring tense relations between Iran and the West that have only worsened since the U.S. reimposed sanctions on the Persian Gulf state last year. Tensions have been high in the region in recent months amid a series of vessel attacks and seizures, which have threatened shipping in the Strait of Hormuz, the world's most critical chokepoint for oil shipments.

Following the detention of the ship on July 4, Iran seized a British-flagged vessel, the Stena Impero, which it continues to hold.

Gibraltar's decision to release the Grace 1 "is a satisfactory result for the U.K.," Cara Hatton, an analyst at Falanx Assynt Ltd., a geopolitical risk consulting firm, said in an emailed statement. It "fully justifies Britain's initial seizure of the ship, and increases the likelihood that Iran will now release the Stena Impero without giving the impression that the countries are engaged in a tanker swap."

The U.K. Foreign and Commonwealth Office cautioned that there was no connection between Gibraltar's enforcement of sanctions and Iran's activities at the mouth of the Persian Gulf.

"There is no comparison or linkage between Iran's unacceptable and illegal seizure of, and attacks on, commercial shipping vessels in the Strait of Hormuz and the enforcement of EU Syria sanctions by the Government of Gibraltar," it said in an emailed statement. "Freedom of navigation for commercial shipping must be respected and international law upheld."

The two U.S. officials rejected that idea, saying that the U.K. was trying to deescalate the situation with Iran and remove any distractions it faces to focus on Brexit.

The Gibraltar government said in its statement that it held several meetings with Iranian representatives this month and last to negotiate the tanker's fate, and on Tuesday, the Islamic Republic agreed that the ship's final destination wouldn't be subject to European Union sanctions.

Iran agreed to re-flag and insure the vessel, which was carrying about \$140 million in crude oil to the Baniyas refinery in Syria. It will now travel under the Iranian flag.

Four crew members from the Grace 1 -- the captain, chief officer and two second mates -- have been released, according to the Gibraltar government. The vessel's captain has no intention of going back aboard the ship, said his lawyer, John Wilkinson. "He wants to go home to India," he said. Most of the 28 crew are on board, he said.

[Afghanistan] Trump meeting security officials as concerns mount over US withdrawal from Afghanistan (CNN)

CNN [8/15/2019 9:12 PM, Kylie Atwood and Nick Paton Walsh, 6094K]

President Trump is expected to meet with his top national security advisers on Friday to review a US-Taliban peace plan that could end America's longest running war -- but could also trigger a surrender for the US and a betrayal of the Afghan government, critics say.

Trump is expected to meet at his Bedminster golf resort with Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and national security adviser John Bolton, according to two sources familiar with the planning. Several defense officials tell CNN that Secretary of Defense Mark Esper and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Joseph Dunford are expected to be present.

The major topic will be Afghanistan and the plan that Taliban negotiator, Zalmay Khalilzad, has been working on for months to end the conflict there, according to two sources familiar with the planning.

The peace plan is expected to formalize a significant withdrawal of US forces from Afghanistan -- from about 15,000 troops to 8,000 or 9,000 troops -- and enshrine official commitments by the Taliban to counterterrorism efforts in Afghanistan, according to the multiple sources familiar with the plan.

While the deal will include other elements, including a US-Taliban ceasefire, it also has at least one crucial omission: it is not expected to secure a commitment by the Taliban to hold its fire on the Afghan people or the Afghan military, according to sources familiar with the talks.

The Taliban do not recognize the Afghan government, which has not been involved in the talks the US has been holding with the Taliban in Qatar. While some minutiae of Khalilzad's agreement are still under discussion, sources say that the plan is 99% done.

The Taliban's insistence on only committing to a ceasefire with the US was a serious obstacle during the negotiations, a source close to the talks told CNN. US bilateral security agreements with the Afghan government mean they are obliged to assist their Afghan partners on the battlefield, which could complicate this agreement.

Not including a Taliban-Afghan ceasefire in the deal could lead to a situation in which the conflict continues without the Americans playing a significant role, changing the balance of forces against Kabul's government.

One source explained that the agreement is seen as paving the way for the US to leave the country without a high number of US casualties in the coming months. But another source said that in their opinion, the Taliban was hoping to use a deal to remove the US from the military equation, allowing them to tackle the embattled Afghan army, imperiled without American support.

Bill Roggio, a senior fellow at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies and editor of FDD's Long War Journal, said that if the plan turns out as expected, it amounts to a betrayal.

"I would argue the Trump administration sold the Afghan government out the minute they excluded the Afghan government from the talks and this US-Taliban ceasefire is just an extension of that," Roggio said.

"The US is 100% betraying the Afghan people, the Afghan government, and the Afghan military in order to extricate itself from the country," Roggio said, adding that "this peace deal is essentially a surrender for the US."

Roggio continued, adding of the Taliban that "whatever counterterrorism guarantees they give are garbage, that is a big lie. ... The one thing the Taliban can give is to say 'you surrender to us and we will stop attacking you.' "

The conflict has become America's longest-ever war and has ground into a stalemate, with neither side able to defeat the other and casualties rising among civilians as well as combatants.

Taliban attacks have not slowed down in recent years or months, even as the US has continued talks with the group.

On August 7, the Taliban claimed responsibility for a suicide attack in which an explosive-laden vehicle targeted Afghan security forces in Kabul, killing 14 people and wounding 145, mostly women, children and civilians.

The Taliban has also claimed responsibility for many of the more than 1,500 civilians killed or wounded in the country in July, the highest monthly toll in over two years, according to the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan. In 2018, there were almost 4,000 civilian deaths in Afghanistan, according to a UN report, the highest recorded number in the 17-year war.

Those who defend the step by step approach that the US-Taliban peace plan is expected to trigger say the US will not completely pull its troops out before the Afghan government and the Taliban come to the table to establish their own ceasefire and enter into negotiations over a power-sharing government.

The plan will also have mechanisms for how to deal with violations, so that a single violation of the US-Taliban ceasefire won't completely derail the forward momentum meant to lead a full US withdrawal.

But high-profile opposition is gathering. In the last week, members of Congress have reiterated their position that a US withdrawal from Afghanistan would be deadly.

"The United States must not put our security in the hands of the Taliban or accept a deal that enables future attacks by Al Qaeda and ISIS," wrote Rep Liz Cheney on Twitter. "Any deal based on political timelines would mean retreating and ceding the battlefield to the enemy who killed 3000 Americans on 9/11."

General David Petraeus, a retired general who commanded troops in Afghanistan and Iraq, echoed those sentiments in a Wall Street Journal op-ed, saying that a full US troop withdrawal would result in a "full-blown civil war and the re-establishment of a terrorist sanctuary" like the country had before 9/11.

Once Trump gives his stamp of approval, sources say Khalilzad will travel back to Doha to cement the peace plan with the Taliban.

Last month, Pompeo declared during a visit to Afghanistan that he and Ghani had agreed to "accelerate efforts" to end war in Afghanistan. Even in kickstarting that effort, the top US diplomat said that Trump remains committed to a "conditions-based drawdown."

But Pompeo has also promised to follow through on Trump's "directive" to have all US troops out by the 2020 US presidential election.

Afghan officials expect to see a draft of the US-Taliban peace plan before it is made public and have seen past drafts.

On Sunday, US-backed Afghan President Ashraf Ghani, appeared to question the negotiations, saying his nation would decide its future, not outsiders.

"Our future cannot be decided outside, whether in the capital cities of our friends or neighbors. The fate of Afghanistan will be decided here in Afghanistan," Ghani told a gathering for prayers marking the Eid al-Adha Muslim festival, according to Reuters.

After reviewing the agreements to date with Trump administration officials in Washington, both at the State Department and at the White House, Khalilzad is expected to travel to Doha to finalize the deal in the coming days. Sources say this could happen around August 19, Afghanistan's independence day.

Meanwhile, the Trump administration is considering sending another top US official, such as Pompeo or Bolton, to Afghanistan, while Khalilzad is in Doha to sign a declaration of peace.

That is under consideration because the "choreographing" will be important, as the US wants to be careful that it does not appear that they are selling out the Afghans in favor of the Taliban a source familiar with the process explained.

The State Department and the NSC did not reply to requests for comment.

[Editorial note: consult video at source link]

[Afghanistan] Shared Afghanistan Interests Create Opening for U.S.-Iran Back Channel-Sources (Reuters)

Reuters [8/16/2019 1:06 AM, Jonathan Landay, Lesley Wroughton, 22840K]

Western intermediaries are trying to persuade arch foes Iran and the United States to cooperate on bolstering security in Afghanistan as U.S. President Donald Trump seeks to extract America from its longest war, according to three source familiar with the efforts.

The intermediaries, the sources say, secretly have been relaying messages between Washington and Tehran for months in hopes of getting the sides talking at a time of heightened hostility on a range of issues.

"Afghanistan is one area where there is common ground," one source with knowledge of the correspondence told Reuters, speaking on condition of anonymity.

The White House declined to comment and the U.S. State Department did not respond to requests for comment.

Iran officially denies any back channel talks with the United States over any topic.

The United States and Iran share an interest in ensuring that a departure of the more than 20,000 U.S.-led foreign troops does not plunge Afghanistan into a civil war that restores the Taliban's harsh version of Islamic rule, and does not allow al Qaeda or other Sunni Muslim extremist groups to expand there.

Moreover, with U.S. sanctions hammering its economy, Tehran wants to avoid Afghans fleeing to neighboring Iran if there was a surge in bloodletting, regional experts said, as has happened over decades of war in the central Asian country.

Trump and Tehran have another shared interest: Both want U.S. troops out of Afghanistan.

There are no signs, however, that either Tehran or Washington are ready to put aside disputes over Iran's nuclear program and U.S. and Iranian activities and alliances in the Mideast to cooperate on Afghanistan.

One message seen by Reuters and conveyed to Washington outlined Iran's concerns with the Trump administration's negotiations with the Taliban on a U.S. troop withdrawal and intra-Afghan talks on a political settlement.

Afghan-born veteran U.S. diplomat Zalmay Khalilzad has erred in taking "over-zealous shortcuts by talking directly to the Taliban," a senior Iranian official said in the message.

This approach has given "political supremacy" to the Taliban as they are gaining militarily, the message said. Taliban leaders, it continued, have told their Iranian interlocutors they will not "accept anything less than a Taliban-dominated government" that rules "an Islamic emirate."

Shi'ite Muslim-dominated Iran long has been wary of the Sunni Muslim Taliban. It nearly went to war during Taliban rule when the militants killed at least eight Iranian diplomats and an Iranian journalist in 1998.

Direct contact between Iran and the United States would be a stark contrast to the tensions that took them to the brink of military confrontation after Iran downed an unmanned U.S. drone in the Gulf in June and Trump then halted a retaliatory air strike on Iran's coast.

While Iran is open to talks, it wants at the very least a suspension of U.S. sanctions designed to slash its oil exports to zero, Tehran's main source of income, according to two sources familiar with the U.S. and Iranian positions.

Iranian officials believe that a new peace process should be devised in which the Afghan government - which has been excluded from the U.S.-Taliban talks in Qatar - played a

“dominant” role, the message said.

Several back-channel efforts, the sources said, are driven by a hope that cooperation on Afghanistan could lead to negotiations to lower the tensions ignited when Trump pulled the United States out of the 2015 international agreement designed to prevent Iran from developing a nuclear weapon in exchange for sanctions relief.

But one source familiar with the U.S. and Iranian positions said as far as Iran was concerned, if Washington acknowledged common interests in Afghanistan “and is willing to talk to Iran on the basis of equality about those common interests, then Iran will talk to the United States.” Now all Iran is getting from the United States is that they have no common interests, the source added.

U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and national security adviser John Bolton oppose any sanctions relief for Iran and were opposed to any talks on Afghanistan, believing Tehran will give in to U.S. demands, one of the sources said, who asked not to be identified. The U.S. State Department declined comment.

One former Afghan official pointed out that since the 2001 U.S.-led invasion to oust the Taliban government, Iran has built ties to the Taliban that it could use to help shape a peace settlement and a U.S. troop withdrawal.

Iran “could be very valuable,” said Ali Jalali, who served as Afghanistan’s first post-Taliban interior minister. “This is a very good opportunity for Iran.”

Tehran maintains high-level Taliban contacts and is a haven for some insurgent families. It has supplied limited quantities of weapons to the insurgents to keep pressure on U.S. forces near its border, according to Western officials.

Pompeo has accused Iran of being a “co-conspirator” of the Taliban. But some regional experts counter that Tehran is hedging its bets in case the militants return to power. It also sees the Taliban as a counter force to Islamic State’s Afghan affiliate.

Tehran also wields influence in Kabul, having backed Afghan governments for nearly two decades.

Iran maintains close ties with the Shi’ite Hazaras, Afghanistan’s third largest ethnic group, and strongmen of other ethnic minorities.

Washington and Tehran, regional experts said, also share the goal of preventing Afghanistan from reverting to a base of Sunni Muslim extremist groups, especially an affiliate of Islamic State, whose avowed enemies include the United States and Iran.

Whether Iran can play a meaningful role in any peace effort, or that Washington would allow it to do so, is an open question, said Ryan Crocker, a former U.S. ambassador to Kabul.

“I’m pretty skeptical that they (the intermediaries) will get any traction ... because of the policy this administration has developed on Iran. I’m afraid that ship has sailed.”

[China] China Says U.S. Block on Nuclear Firms a 'Misuse' of Export Controls (US News & World Report)

US News & World Report [8/15/2019 8:06 PM, David Stanway, Reuters, 3196K]

A U.S. decision to stop China General Nuclear Power Corp (CGN) and its subsidiaries from dealing with U.S. companies was a misuse of export control measures and would harm both U.S. and Chinese firms, China's foreign ministry said.

Washington this week said CGN was involved in activities contrary to the national security and foreign policy interests of the United States and would be added to an "Entity List" of firms banned from doing business with U.S. enterprises.

"China resolutely opposes the U.S. side harming the interests of China and the world through unilateralist and protectionist policies," Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying said in a statement issued late on Thursday.

CGN is one of China's major state-owned reactor builders. The other firms added to the list on Wednesday include the Suzhou Nuclear Power Research Institute Co. Ltd, a CGN subsidiary that got the go-ahead to build a nuclear reactor project in Guangdong province earlier this year.

An editorial in the state-run China Daily linked the ban to the trade row between the world's two largest economies and said the U.S. administration had abused the blacklist.

"The U.S. would do well to de-escalate the heightening tensions if it really wants to strike a deal," it said.

The United States already tightened controls on CGN's ability to import civil nuclear technology last year after a Chinese-American nuclear engineer was indicted for espionage.

China's nuclear program includes technologies transferred from the U.S.-based Westinghouse, including the world's first AP1000 third-generation reactor units on the country's east coast.

CGN said in a statement posted on its official Wechat account late on Thursday that its inclusion on the Entity List would disrupt its supply chains and restrict commercial contracts with U.S. companies, but the impact was "controllable".

"The suppression of CGN is an important option for the United States to hinder the development of China's nuclear power industry," it said.

[North Korea] North Korea Testing Missiles Faster Than Days of 'Fire and Fury' (Bloomberg)

Bloomberg [8/16/2019 4:00 AM, Jihye Lee, 5350K]

North Korea fired two more ballistic missiles into its eastern sea -- the sixth such volleys in three weeks -- extending the regime's most prolific run of tests since U.S. President Donald Trump took office.

The weapons, which were likely short-range ballistic missiles, were launched from the

Tongchon region in the southeastern province of Kangwon on Friday and traveled 230 kilometers (140 miles), South Korea's defense ministry said. The test appeared consistent with Kim Jong Un's push to demonstrate the ability to strike all of South Korea and parts of Japan with new hard-to-intercept missiles.

North Korea has tested 15 ballistic missiles since abandoning an 17-month testing freeze in May, exceeding the pace of launches in 2017, when Kim's tests prompted Trump to threaten him with "fire and fury." Trump has said he won't let such incidents get in the way of talks between the two leaders, since North Korea has refrained from testing nuclear bombs or the larger, intercontinental ballistic missiles needed to carry them to the U.S.

Critics of Trump's strategy say he risks needless giving up leverage in negotiations and could even encourage the regime to cross the U.S.'s red line on nuclear testing. Even the smaller ballistic missiles Kim has focused on since May represent a breach of United Nations sanctions and pose a threat to South Korea and the some 28,500 American troops stationed there.

"This is North Korea's pattern. The fact that they're making provocations is a sign that things aren't going the way they want them to," said Choi Soon-mi, professor of North Korean studies at Ajou University's Institute for Unification near Seoul. "The number of missiles doesn't mean much -- it's simply North Korea pushing the U.S. for more talks in the way that it wants, including discussion of lifting economic sanctions."

The White House was aware of reports of a missile launch from North Korea and was continuing to monitor the situation in consultation with South Korea and Japan, a senior administration official said. Japan said the missiles fell outside its exclusive economic zone and posed no threat to its national security.

Trump said earlier this month that Kim sent him a letter offering "a small apology" for testing the missiles and expressed a willingness to resume talks after joint U.S.-South Korea military exercises come to an end next week. While Kim has described previous missiles tests as a warning to the U.S., North Korea focused its criticism Friday on South Korean President Moon Jae-in.

The launch comes a day after Moon used a speech marking the anniversary of the peninsula's liberation from Japan to assert that North Korea's "provocations" haven't disrupted dialogue between the two rivals. A spokesperson for North Korea's Committee for the Peaceful Reunification of the Country denounced Moon's remarks as "reckless" while South Korea participates in the joint drills.

"His open talk about 'dialogue' between the north and the south under such situation raises a question as to whether he has proper thinking faculty," the spokesperson said, according to the state-run Korean Central News Agency. "We have nothing to talk any more with the south Korean authorities nor have any idea to sit with them again."

The pair of ballistic missiles launched by North Korea just after 8 a.m. local time Friday reached a velocity six times the speed of sound and an altitude of 30 kilometers, a flight pattern similar to other difficult-to-intercept missiles tested in recent weeks. It wasn't immediately clear whether the latest missiles were also KN-23s, a weapon that appears

based on Russia's Iskander model.

Moon, who has pledged to put the two Koreas on the path to peace before his single term ends in 2022, signaled a growing willingness to criticize Kim's missile launches. His office said in a statement Friday that North Korea's actions were causing "concern over heightened military tensions," instead of previous messages calling them merely "unhelpful to the peace process."

An official for South Korea's Unification Ministry said Pyongyang's statement was "rude" and had crossed the line.

"Launching from different locations is an indication that North Korea is developing a wide variety of missiles," said Kim Hyun-wook, a professor at the Korean National Diplomatic Academy. "The fact that it is targeting South Korea as its subject for criticism shows North Korea doesn't need South Korea anymore for negotiations."

[North Korea] S. Korea says N. Korea has fired more projectiles into sea (Breitbart)
Breitbart [8/15/2019 2:17 PM, Associated Press, 2034K]

South Korea's military said North Korea fired more projectiles into the sea Friday to extend a recent streak of weapons tests believed to be aimed at pressuring Washington and Seoul over slow nuclear diplomacy.

South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff said projectiles were twice launched from an area on the North's eastern coast, but didn't immediately say what the weapons were, how many were launched or how far they flew.

It was North Korea's sixth round of weapons launches since late July when it began stepping up its weapons demonstrations while expressing frustration over stalemated nuclear negotiations with the United States and continuance of U.S.-South Korea joint military drills that the North sees as an invasion rehearsal.

South Korea's presidential office said national security adviser Chung Eui-yong was presiding over an emergency National Security Council meeting about the launches and President Moon Jae-in was being briefed on the developments. Japan's Defense Ministry said the North Korean projectiles did not reach the country's territorial waters or its exclusive economic zone. The White House said it was aware of reports of the launches and was consulting with Seoul and Tokyo.

The weapons the North tested in recent weeks included a new rocket artillery system and what security analysts say are two new short-range mobile ballistic missile systems that would potentially expand the North's ability to strike targets throughout South Korea, including U.S. bases there.

Experts say President Donald Trump's downplaying of the North's launches allowed the country more room to intensify its testing activity while it seeks to build leverage ahead of a possible resumption of negotiations, which could happen sometime after the end of the allied drills later this month.

The North has ignored South Korean calls for dialogue recently and is seen as dialing up pressure on Seoul to coax major concessions from Washington on its behalf.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff alerted reporters to the launches hours after the North issued a statement berating South Korea, saying it's "senseless" for Seoul to hope for a resumption of inter-Korean dialogue while it continues its military exercises with the United States.

The statement by the North's Committee for the Peaceful Reunification of the Country came a day after Moon said in a speech that the momentum for dialogue remains alive despite the series of "worrying actions taken by North Korea recently."

"A sure thing is that the (South) Korean chief executive is (such a) funny man as he just reads what was written by his juniors," the statement said while avoiding calling Moon by his name.

It would be "senseless" for Moon to believe that inter-Korean dialogue will automatically begin after the end of U.S.-South Korea military drills, the statement said.

The North had recently said it plans to talk only with Washington and not Seoul, and that inter-Korean dialogue won't resume unless South offers a "plausible excuse" on why it keeps hosting military drills with the United States.

[North Korea] North Korea fires more projectiles into the sea, South Korea says (CBS News)

CBS News [8/15/2019 9:23 PM, Staff, 3332K]

South Korea's military said Friday that North Korea had fired more projectiles into the sea, the latest in a series of launches since July 25 that have included the test firing of a new missile system. South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff said Friday's projectiles were twice launched from an area on the North's eastern coast.

The types of projectiles fired Friday were not immediately identified.

A senior Trump administration official said they are "aware of reports of a missile launch from North Korea, and we continue to monitor the situation. We are consulting closely with our Japanese and South Korean allies."

South Korea's presidential office said national security adviser Chung Eui-yong was presiding over an emergency National Security Council meeting about the launches and President Moon Jae-in was being briefed on the developments. Japan's Defense Ministry said the North Korean projectiles did not reach the country's territorial waters or its exclusive economic zone.

The North Korean missile tests, which President Trump has repeatedly played down, come amid stalled diplomatic talks with the U.S. on the North's nuclear program. So far, North Korea has stuck by its unilateral suspension of nuclear and long-range missile tests, which came during a diplomatic outreach to Washington last year.

The North has been conducting a slew of short-range ballistic tests in recent weeks in what

is seen as an effort to build leverage ahead of negotiations with the U.S., which may resume sometime after the end of joint U.S.-South Korea military drills later this month.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff alerted reporters to the new launches hours after the North issued a statement berating South Korea, saying it's "senseless" for Seoul to hope for a resumption of inter-Korean dialogue while it continues its military exercises with the United States.

The statement by the North's Committee for the Peaceful Reunification of the Country came a day after Moon said in a speech that the momentum for dialogue remains alive despite the series of "worrying actions taken by North Korea recently."

"A sure thing is that the (South) Korean chief executive is (such a) funny man as he just reads what was written by his juniors," the statement said while avoiding calling Moon by his name.

It would be "senseless" for Moon to believe that inter-Korean dialogue will automatically begin after the end of U.S.-South Korea military drills, the statement said.

[North Korea] North Korea fires projectiles, rejects South Korea's dialogue pledge (Reuters)

Reuters [8/15/2019 9:02 PM, Jack Kim, Hyunjoo Jin, and Josh Smith, 5436K]

North Korea launched at least two projectiles into the sea on Friday, South Korea's military said, shortly after Pyongyang described South Korea's president as "impudent" and vowed that inter-Korean talks are over.

The North has protested against joint military drills conducted by South Korea and the United States, which kicked off last week, calling them a rehearsal for war. It has fired several short-range missiles in recent weeks.

North Korea fired two more unidentified projectiles into the sea off its east coast on Friday morning, South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff said in a statement. South Korea's National Security Council was meeting to discuss the latest launches.

Japan's defense ministry said it did not see any imminent security threat from the latest projectile launch.

The launches have complicated attempts to restart talks between U.S. and North Korean negotiators over the future of Pyongyang's nuclear weapons and ballistic missile programs.

Those denuclearization talks have been stalled despite a commitment to revive them made at a June 30 meeting between U.S. President Donald Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un.

Earlier on Friday, Pyongyang rejected a vow by South Korean President Moon Jae-in a day earlier to pursue talks with the North and to bring unification of the Koreas by 2045.

The loss of dialogue momentum between the North and South and the stalemate in

implementing pledges made at an historic summit between their two leaders last year was entirely the responsibility of the South, a North Korean spokesman said.

The unidentified spokesman repeated criticism that the joint U.S.-South Korea drills were a sign of Seoul's hostility against the North.

"We have nothing to talk any more with the South Korean authorities nor have any idea to sit with them again," the North's spokesman for the Committee for the Peaceful Reunification of the Country said in a statement carried by the North's official KCNA news agency.

The committee is the North's government agency tasked with managing relationships with the South. The rival Koreas are technically still at war after the 1950-53 Korean War ended with a truce rather than a peace treaty.

Moon and Kim have met three times since April last year, pledging peace and cooperation, but little progress has been made to improve dialogue and strengthen exchanges and cooperation.

The South's Moon said in a Liberation Day address on Thursday it was only through his policy of Korean national peace that dialogue with the North was still possible.

"In spite of a series of worrying actions taken by North Korea recently, the momentum for dialogue remains unshaken," Moon said in remarks marking Korea's independence from Japan's 1910-45 colonial rule.

The North's spokesman described Moon as an "impudent guy" who is "overcome with fright".

He said Moon had no standing to talk about engagement with the North because of the ongoing military maneuvers by South Korea.

"His open talk about 'dialogue' between the North and the South under such a situation raises a question as to whether he has proper thinking faculty," the spokesman said.

It was "senseless" to think that inter-Korean dialogue would resume once the military drills with the United States were over, he said.

The spokesman left open the possibility of talks with the United States.

Trump and Kim have met twice since their first summit in Singapore last year and said their countries would continue talks. However, little progress has been made on the North's stated commitment to denuclearize.

[North Korea] North Korea fires missiles, derides South Korea's Moon as 'impudent' (Reuters)

Reuters [8/16/2019 3:58 AM, Jack Kim and Josh Smith, 5436K]

North Korea launched at least two short-range ballistic missiles on Friday, South Korea's

military said, shortly after Pyongyang described South Korea's president as "impudent" and vowed that inter-Korean talks are over.

The North has protested against joint U.S.-South Korea military drills, largely computer-simulated, which kicked off last week, calling them a rehearsal for war. It has also fired several short-range missiles in recent weeks.

North Korea fired two more short-range projectiles into the sea off its east coast on Friday morning, South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) said in a statement.

Japan's defense ministry said it did not see any imminent security threat from the latest projectile launch.

A U.S. official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said initial information indicated at least one projectile was fired by North Korea and appeared to be similar to the short-range missiles fired in previous weeks. Another official said the United States was consulting with South Korea and Japan.

An official at Seoul's defense ministry said the latest test involved ballistic technology and detailed analysis was under way with the United States with the possibility that the North fired the same type of missiles it used on Aug. 10.

The missiles were launched shortly after 8 a.m. Friday (2300 GMT Thursday) and flew around 230 kms (142 miles) to an altitude of 30 kms (18 miles), South Korea's JCS said.

The launches have complicated attempts to restart talks between U.S. and North Korean negotiators over the future of Pyongyang's nuclear weapons and ballistic missile programs.

Those denuclearization talks have been stalled despite a commitment to revive them made at a June 30 meeting between U.S. President Donald Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un.

Earlier on Friday, Pyongyang rejected a vow by South Korean President Moon Jae-in a day earlier to pursue talks with the North and to unify the two Koreas by 2045.

The loss of dialogue momentum between the North and South and the stalemate in implementing pledges made at an historic summit between their two leaders last year was entirely the responsibility of the South, a North Korean spokesman said.

The unidentified spokesman repeated criticism that the joint U.S.-South Korea drills were a sign of Seoul's hostility toward the North.

"We have nothing to talk any more with the South Korean authorities nor have any idea to sit with them again," the North's spokesman for the Committee for the Peaceful Reunification of the Country said in a statement carried by the official KCNA news agency.

The committee manages relationships with the South. The rival Koreas are technically still at war after the 1950-53 Korean War ended with a truce rather than a peace treaty.

South Korea's unification ministry called North Korea's comments about Moon "not in line" with inter-Korean agreements and unhelpful for developing relations between them.

After an emergency meeting of South Korea's National Security Council held to discuss the launches, officials reiterated that the joint drills are simply an opportunity to evaluate whether South Korea could eventually assume wartime control of the allied forces on the peninsula.

Moon and Kim have met three times since April last year, pledging peace and cooperation, but little progress has been made to improve dialogue and strengthen exchanges and cooperation.

"North Korea makes it exceedingly difficult to build trust when it interprets restraint as weakness and looks to exploit divisions within South Korea," said Leif-Eric Easley, a professor at Ewha University in Seoul.

Seoul and Washington should continue to seek working-level talks with North Korea but the allies should also prepare new sanctions and renewed military cooperation if Pyongyang continues to violate United Nations resolutions and threaten its neighbors, Easley said.

The South's Moon said in a Liberation Day address on Thursday it was only through his policy of Korean national peace that dialogue with the North was still possible.

"In spite of a series of worrying actions taken by North Korea recently, the momentum for dialogue remains unshaken," Moon said in a speech marking Korea's independence from Japan's 1910-45 colonial rule.

The North's spokesman described Moon as an "impudent guy" who is "overcome with fright".

He said Moon had no standing to talk about engagement with the North because of the ongoing military maneuvers.

"His open talk about 'dialogue' between the North and the South under such a situation raises a question as to whether he has proper thinking faculty," the spokesman said.

It was "senseless" to think that inter-Korean dialogue would resume once the military drills with the United States were over, he said.

However, the spokesman left open the possibility of talks with the United States.

Trump and Kim have met twice since their first summit in Singapore last year and said their countries would continue talks. However, little progress has been made on the North's stated commitment to denuclearize.

[Editorial note: consult video at source link]

[North Korea] North Korea Calls Off Further Talks With South, Launches More Projectiles (Public Radio East)

Public Radio East [8/16/2019 4:43 AM, Scott Neuman, 1K]

North Korea rejected further peace talks with Seoul Friday on the same day it launched at least two projectiles — the sixth such test in a month, according to South Korea's military.

The statement from North Korea followed a speech on Thursday by South Korean President Moon Jae-in marking the 74th anniversary of Korean independence. In it, Moon vowed reunification of the Korean peninsula by 2045 — a subject that Pyongyang views as provocative.

In response, an unidentified spokesman for the North's Committee for the Peaceful Reunification of the Country said in a statement carried by the official KCNA news agency that Moon is an "impudent" person "overcome with fright." Pyongyang's decision to break off talks, it said, was "completely the fault of South Korea's actions."

Meanwhile, South Korea's military said the North had launched two "unidentified projectiles" that landed in the waters off the peninsula's east coast after reaching an altitude of about 18 miles and flying a distance of about 142 miles.

Although officials in Seoul did not say what the projectiles were, the apogee and range of them appeared to be consistent with earlier tests identified as North Korea's KN-23, a hypersonic short-range ballistic missile designed to evade missile defense systems.

Japan's Defense Ministry said the North Korean projectiles fell short of its territorial waters. The White House said it was aware of the launches and was consulting with Seoul and Tokyo, according to The Associated Press.

Less than a year ago, the Koreas appeared to be on the path to rapprochement.

Following a summit between President Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un in Singapore, there was talk of the North and South forging a lasting peace and putting decades of animosity behind them. In September, Kim and Moon even signed a broad agreement to work toward removing all nuclear weapons from the Korean peninsula.

Since then President Trump, who initially vilified Kim, has consistently praised him, describing the North Korean strongman as a "friend" and joking that the two "fell in love."

Earlier this month, the president dismissed the North's spate of missile tests as "very standard" and "very much under control."

In June, Trump and Kim met at the Demilitarized Zone dividing the Koreas and renewed a pledge to work toward denuclearization.

But the North's rhetoric and actions have turned sour in recent weeks over joint military exercises held this month between the U.S. and South Korea. Pyongyang has long viewed the annual war games as dress rehearsals for an invasion.

"We have nothing to talk any more with the South Korean authorities nor have any idea to sit with them again," the North Korean spokesman said Friday.

[South Korea] S. Korea holds emergency meeting amid new launches (USA Today)

USA Today [8/15/2019 10:08 PM, Deirdre Shesgreen, 6620K]

South Korea's government held an emergency national security meeting Thursday after North Korea conducted another apparent round of weapons tests.

South Korea's president, Moon Jae-in, convened the emergency session soon after his government detected North Korea's launch of two unidentified projectiles into the East Sea, according to Yonhap News Agency.

North Korea has conducted a half-dozen weapons tests over the last three months. Kim Jong Un's regime has said its aggressive actions are a response to the joint military drills conducted by the United States and South Korea.

President Donald Trump has publicly downplayed the tests, saying that Kim is only testing "short-range" missiles, not intercontinental or nuclear weapons. But Trump's national security adviser, John Bolton, has expressed alarm over North Korea's actions.

The missile tests are "troubling for everybody watching the peninsula," Bolton told Voice of America on Wednesday. He noted that the missiles "could probably hit" all of South Korea and parts of Japan, and that would endanger American military forces deployed in the region.

[Taiwan] Trump administration plans \$8 billion fighter jet sale to Taiwan, angering China (Washington Post)

Washington Post [8/16/2019 12:37 PM, Ellen Nakashima and Anne Gearan, 9425K]

The Trump administration is moving ahead with for an \$8 billion sale of F-16 fighter jets to Taiwan despite strong objections from China, a U.S. official and others familiar with the deal said Thursday.

The administration notified Congress late Thursday that it would submit the package for informal review, said the people familiar with the sale. It would be the largest and most significant sale of weaponry to the self-governing island in years, and comes amid stalled trade talks and a deteriorating relationship with China.

Lawmakers from both parties had questioned whether the White House would scuttle the sale to soften the ground for a U.S.-China trade deal, or otherwise use the fighter jets as a bargaining chip in deadlocked negotiations.

The State Department told Congress to expect the arms package to be informally submitted to them by Friday evening, according to a U.S. official and another person familiar with the matter.

The Senate Foreign Relations Committee and House Foreign Affairs Committee would review the package. They are not expected to raise objections.

The people familiar with the proposed sale requests anonymity to discuss a sensitive pending deal. Neither the State Department nor the White House immediately responded to requests for comment.

China claims Taiwan as a breakaway province, and last month accused the United States of a “vain plot” to arm the island. The Trump administration approved more than \$2 billion in lower-level arms sales to Taiwan last month, and allowed Taiwan’s leader to visit New York.

Approval of the latest sale also comes amid pro-democracy protests in Hong Kong, a semiautonomous part of China, and fears that China could launch a military crackdown there. Such a crackdown could embolden Beijing also to confront Taiwan, which is backed by the United States.

Taiwan requested 66 American-made fighter jets, which lawmakers have said is a test of U.S. resolve.

Sen. Robert Menendez (D-N.J.), the top Democrat on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, is among lawmakers who have warned the administration not to link the jet sales to President Trump’s effort to broker a new bilateral trade agreement. Trump accuses China of foot-dragging and bad faith, and the talks have remained stalled for months.

The Chinese government accused the Trump administration of “playing the ‘Taiwan card’” last month when Taiwanese President Tsai Ing-wen visited New York.

The People’s Daily newspaper, the mouthpiece of the Communist Party of China, wrote that Washington “should immediately cancel the planned arms sale to Taiwan, stop selling weapons to Taiwan and terminate military contact with Taiwan, and exercise caution and prudence when handling Taiwan-related issues to avoid serious damage to China-U.S. relations and cross-strait peace and stability.”

Trump took the unusual step of speaking by phone with Tsai in 2016 when he was president-elect, which rocked the delicate U.S. foreign policy stance called the “One China” policy, and alarmed China. Since then he has courted a warm relationship with Chinese President Xi Jinping and said little about Taiwan.

“Taiwan’s defense is intrinsically important to the United States, but the timing of this move, amid the trade war and major instability in Hong Kong, is exceptionally precarious,” said Evan Medeiros, former White House senior director for Asia in the Obama administration and a professor at Georgetown University. “It will make trade negotiations and managing the Hong Kong situation even harder than it already is.”

He added that it would fuel conspiracy theories that the United States is behind the unrest in Hong Kong.

Bonnie Glaser, senior adviser for Asia at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, was less perturbed. “China never likes U.S. arms sales to Taiwan,” she said. “Will they object? Yes. Is this going to trigger a crisis in the relationship? No. This in and of itself is not going to derail progress on a trade agreement.”

She said the new aircraft would be comparable in capability to F-16 jet upgrades approved by the Obama administration. "This is not a new capability," she said.

However, both Medeiros and Glaser noted Beijing's previous threats to sanction U.S. companies that sell arms to Taiwan. Though China has not acted on its threat in the past, Glaser said, "there is some possibility that they will follow through on their threat this time."

Tsai faces reelection next year and is casting her leadership as a counterpoint to an increasingly repressive and assertive mainland China. This has endeared her to Trump administration officials who are hawkish on China, but Trump's own views are unclear.

Taiwanese media reported that U.S. national security adviser John Bolton, a China hawk, met with his Taiwanese counterpart in May. That would be the first time the top national security officials of the United States and Taiwan had met since formal diplomatic relations were severed in 1979.

In July, the State Department said it would sell \$2.2 billion worth of weapons, including 108 Abrams tanks and 250 Stinger surface-to-air missiles, to Taiwan to help it "meet current and future regional threats."

Taiwan split from China in 1949 when nationalist leader Chiang Kai-shek fled from the Communists led by Mao Zedong and set up a rival government in Taipei. Beijing continues to view Taiwan as a renegade state that will one day return to China.

Presidential Tweets

Donald J. Trump @realDonaldTrump

Tweet1 [8/15/2019 7:43 AM] Two great entertainers and, more importantly, great people! Check out their show. [Editorial note: consult retweet at source link]

Donald J. Trump @realDonaldTrump

Tweet2 [8/15/2019 8:00 AM] Thank you, and the Wall is under major construction! [Editorial note: consult retweet at source link]

Donald J. Trump @realDonaldTrump

Tweet3 [8/15/2019 8:26 AM] Go out and get Andrew McCarthy's new book, "Ball of Collusion." "Supervision became the investigator, and when they pushed the envelope, there was nobody there to tell them NO. It goes right to the President (Obama). Plenty of information that Obama was informed & knew exactly.....what they were doing. There's plenty of indication, we don't have to speculate." @SteveDoocy "Holy cow, got to read this book." @ainsleyearhardt "WOW!" @foxandfriends A very serious situation. Can never be allowed to happen again! DRAIN THE SWAMP

Donald J. Trump @realDonaldTrump

Tweet4 [8/15/2019 8:59 AM] The Philadelphia shooter should never have been allowed to be on the streets. He had a long and very dangerous criminal record. Looked like he was having a good time after his capture, and after wounding so many police. Long sentence - must get much tougher on street crime!

Donald J. Trump @realDonaldTrump

[Tweet5](#) [8/15/2019 9:57 AM] It would show great weakness if Israel allowed Rep. Omar and Rep. Tlaib to visit. They hate Israel & all Jewish people, & there is nothing that can be said or done to change their minds. Minnesota and Michigan will have a hard time putting them back in office. They are a disgrace!

Donald J. Trump @realDonaldTrump

[Tweet6](#) [8/15/2019 10:04 AM] If President Xi would meet directly and personally with the protesters, there would be a happy and enlightened ending to the Hong Kong problem. I have no doubt! [Editorial note: consult retweet at source link]

Donald J. Trump @realDonaldTrump

[Tweet7](#) [8/15/2019 11:26 AM] The United States is now, by far, the Biggest, Strongest and Most Powerful Economy in the World, it is not even close! As others falter, we will only get stronger. Consumers are in the best shape ever, plenty of cash. Business Optimism is at an All Time High!

Donald J. Trump @realDonaldTrump

[Tweet8](#) [8/15/2019 12:24 PM] Our Great Farmers know how important it is to win on Trade. They will be the big winners!

Donald J. Trump @realDonaldTrump

[Tweet9](#) [8/15/2019 12:30 PM] Wow! The Deputy Editor of the Failing New York Times was just demoted. Should have been Fired! Totally biased and inaccurate reporting. The paper is a Fraud, Zero Credibility. Fake News takes another hit, but this time a big one!

Donald J. Trump @realDonaldTrump

[Tweet10](#) [8/15/2019 12:38 PM] Representatives Omar and Tlaib are the face of the Democrat Party, and they HATE Israel!

Donald J. Trump @realDonaldTrump

[Tweet11](#) [8/15/2019 12:52 PM] The Fake News Media is doing everything they can to crash the economy because they think that will be bad for me and my re-election. The problem they have is that the economy is way too strong and we will soon be winning big on Trade, and everyone knows that, including China!

Donald J. Trump @realDonaldTrump

[Tweet12](#) [8/15/2019 3:29 PM] Biden doesn't have a clue! I will solve the China problem. [Editorial note: consult retweet at source link]

Donald J. Trump @realDonaldTrump

[Tweet13](#) [8/15/2019 3:57 PM] Andrew, thank you! We will never forgive or forget. [Editorial note: consult retweet at source link]

Donald J. Trump @realDonaldTrump

[Tweet14](#) [8/15/2019 4:05 PM] Sadly, much truth to this! [Editorial note: consult retweet at source link]

Donald J. Trump @realDonaldTrump

Tweet15 [8/15/2019 4:14 PM] "If they don't get this Trade Deal with the U.S. done, China could have it first recession (or worse!) in years. There's disinvestment in China right now. Also, the Fed is too tight (I agree)." Steve Moore, Heritage Foundation

Donald J. Trump @realDonaldTrump

Tweet16 [8/15/2019 4:18 PM] Walmart, a great indicator as to how the U.S. is doing, just released outstanding numbers. Our Country, unlike others, is doing great! Don't let the Fake News convince you otherwise.

Donald J. Trump @realDonaldTrump

Tweet17 [8/15/2019 9:33 PM] Thank you New Hampshire. KEEP AMERICA GREAT! #KAG2020 [Editorial note: consult images at source link]

Donald J. Trump @realDonaldTrump

Tweet18 [8/15/2019 10:52 PM] Great news! Tonight, we broke the all-time attendance record previously held by Elton John at #SNHUArena in Manchester, New Hampshire! [Editorial note: consult retweet at source link]

{End of Report} RETURN TO TOP