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**TO: THE DIRECTOR AND SENIOR STAFF**

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## LEADING THE NEWS

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**Georgia Recertifies Election Results As Trump Legal Efforts Continue Elsewhere.**

Norah O'Donnell said on the [CBS Evening News](#)<sup>Vi</sup> (12/7, story 5, 1:45, 4.74M) that with "more states certifying their results, there are questions tonight about the future of the President's legal fight to overturn the election." In Georgia, CBS' Paula Reid reported, Secretary of State Brad Raffensperger, "a Republican, recertified the results [Monday] after a second recount." Raffensperger: "We have now counted legally cast ballots three times, and the results remain unchanged." On [NBC Nightly News](#)<sup>Vi</sup> (12/7, story 5, 1:30, Holt, 6.35M), Hallie Jackson said Joe Biden's "win [was] recertified in Georgia after a recount, with a top Republican there dismissing the campaign's baseless claims of widespread fraud."

[CNN](#) (12/7, Collins, 83.16M) reports on its website that according to "multiple sources," there is "a sense developing within Donald Trump's legal team and what remains of his campaign staff that their efforts to overturn or delay the results of the election are coming to an end...despite what the President has said publicly. ... Following the news of Rudy Giuliani's coronavirus hospitalization, staffers only speculated further that it's a matter of time before their legal efforts come to a halt completely."

The [Washington Post](#) (12/7, 14.2M) reports that Raffensperger "said Monday that the office would recertify the state's election results, which would reaffirm Biden's victory after a second statewide recount of presidential votes." The [New York Times](#) (12/7, Roose, 18.61M) reports Raffensperger's office "dedicated part of a morning news conference to debunking" several "falsehood[s]...in what was called 'Disinformation Monday.'" According to the [AP](#) (12/7, Brumback), "the total number of votes in the recount results certified Monday and posted on the secretary of state's website was 766 fewer than the number certified when the ballots were first tallied after the election. Biden's lead dropped from 12,670 to 11,779."

The [Atlanta Journal-Constitution](#) (12/7, 895K) says the President's "efforts to overturn Georgia's election results have met a wall of opposition from an unlikely source: Republican state officials and GOP-appointed judges who have loudly rejected his calls to undo Joe Biden's narrow victory in the state. ... Trump's pleas to top state officials to interfere in the election have been soundly rejected by Republican politicians he once endorsed."

The [Wall Street Journal](#) (12/7, Corse, Subscription Publication, 7.57M), [Axios](#) (12/7, 521K), and [The Hill](#) (12/7, Greenwood, 2.98M) also cover the certification, while other outlets examine the impact of the fight between Trump and his party's leaders in Georgia on the two January 5 Senate runoffs. Steve Osunsami said on [ABC World News Tonight](#)<sup>Vi</sup> (12/7, story 4, 2:20, Muir, 7.76M), "The deadline in Georgia to register to vote in this upcoming runoff election" was Monday night. At a weekend rally, Trump "was trying to help the two sitting Republican senators who hope to hold onto their seats. ... The real worry: that Republicans might not show up to vote is born from the President's own made-up stories about widespread election fraud in the November election." [Politico](#) (12/7, Arkin, 4.29M) reports, "During a feverish weekend of campaigning...Georgia Republicans continued to indulge Trump's untruths about the last election, while imploring their backers to show up for the next one."

The [AP](#) (12/7) reports that Secretary of State Pompeo "plans to deliver a speech extolling the Trump administration's foreign policy this week in Georgia, ahead of key Senate run-off elections in the state that will determine control of the upper chamber of Congress." [Fox News](#) (12/7, Steinhauser, 27.59M) reports on its website that while it is "normal for secretaries of state to speak to domestic audiences, the address by Pompeo comes as the nation's campaign spotlight is shining on Georgia. ... And it comes as Pompeo, who political pundits consider a potential 2024 GOP presidential contender, has faced criticism this year for giving speeches considered to be tinged with political overtones."

The [New York Times](#) (12/7, Herndon, 18.61M) looks at GOP strategy in the contests, writing that Republicans are focusing primarily on Raphael Warnock, the African American minister challenging Sen. Kelly Loeffler (R-GA), and largely ignoring Jon Ossoff, the Democratic challenger to Sen. David Perdue (R-GA).

**Trump Reached Out To Pennsylvania House Speaker.** The [Washington Post](#) (12/7, Gardner, Dawsey, Bade, 14.2M) reports the office of Pennsylvania House Speaker Bryan Cutler

has confirmed that Trump called the GOP speaker "twice during the past week to make an extraordinary request for help reversing his loss in the state." Cutler spokesman Michael Straub said, "The President said, 'I'm hearing about all these issues in Philadelphia, and these issues with your law. What can we do to fix it?'" The Post says the calls "make Pennsylvania the third state where Trump has directly attempted to overturn a result."

The [Philadelphia Inquirer](#) (12/7, Roebuck, 347K) reports, "With less than a day to go until the federal deadline for states to lock in their delegates for the Dec. 14 Electoral College vote, Pennsylvania Republicans have bombarded state and federal courts with a flurry of new legal filings, grasping for last-minute traction in their thus far unsuccessful attempts to overturn the results of the presidential election."

**Trump Campaign Appeals To Nevada Supreme Court.** The [AP](#) (12/7, Ritter) reports attorneys for the Trump campaign are appealing to the Nevada Supreme Court "to overrule a lower court judge and nullify...Biden's electoral win in Nevada. ... A hearing was not immediately scheduled, but the appeal is expected to get fast-track handling." The [Las Vegas Review-Journal](#) (12/7, 345K) reports, "Campaign attorneys representing Trump's proposed slate of presidential electors filed a notice of appeal in the District Court shortly after Judge James Russell denied their request to essentially overturn the state's presidential result."

**Sidney Powell Suits Rejected In Two States.** [Reuters](#) (12/7, Hals, Brice) reports federal judges in Georgia and Michigan rejected efforts by Sidney Powell, "a former lawyer for the Trump campaign," to decertify Biden's win in those states. US District Judge Timothy Batten in Atlanta and US District Judge Linda Parker in Detroit "ruled that the plaintiffs lacked the legal standing to bring the lawsuits and that the cases were filed too late." Batten "said [in] a hearing on Monday that the plaintiffs were seeking 'perhaps the most extraordinary relief ever sought' in connection with an election." Batten said, "They want this court to substitute its judgment for that of two-and-a-half million Georgia voters who voted for Joe Biden, and this I am unwilling to do."

The [Washington Post](#) (12/7, 14.2M) reports that Batten, "who was appointed by President George W. Bush, forcefully rejected the plaintiffs' requests. Citing other technical reasons, Batten said that he was unwilling to reverse the decision of Georgia's voters, which has been reaffirmed through two recounts of presidential votes." [Bloomberg](#) (12/7, Davis, 4.73M) reports that Powell, "who is no longer associated" with Trump's legal team, "filed the suits last month on behalf of Republican voters." According to Bloomberg, Powell has "claim[ed] that foreign agents from Iran and China conspired with Democratic officials and poll workers to infiltrate voting machines and switch votes" from Trump to Biden.

The [Detroit Free Press](#) (12/7, 1.52M) reports Parker said in her opinion, "This lawsuit seems to be less about achieving the relief Plaintiffs seek – as much of that relief is beyond the power of this Court – and more about the impact of their allegations on People's faith in the democratic process and their trust in our government."

**Amistad Project "Has A Tie To President Trump's Legal Team."** The [Washington Post](#) (12/7, Swaine, Helderman, Dawsey, Hamburger, 14.2M) reports that the Amistad Project, "a conservative legal organization that has filed lawsuits challenging the election results in five states, has a tie to President Trump's legal team, raising questions about the independence of what has appeared to be an endeavor separate from the president's last-gasp legal maneuvering." Trump campaign legal adviser Jenna Ellis "serves as special counsel to the Thomas More Society, which has filed lawsuits through the newly formed Amistad Project alleging problems with the vote in Arizona, Georgia, Michigan, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin."

**Trump's Capitol Hill Defenders Urge Him Not To Concede.** [CNN](#) (12/7, Raju, Herb, 83.16M) reports on its website that Trump's "staunchest defenders on Capitol Hill are urging him not to concede even after [Biden] wins the Electoral College vote next week, calling on their party's leader to fight for his unsubstantiated claims of widespread election fraud all the way to the House floor in January. ... Asked if Trump should concede next Monday," Rep. Jim Jordan (R-OH) said, "No. No way, no way, no way." However, the [Dallas Morning News](#) (12/7,

946K) reports veteran Rep. Mac Thornberry (R-TX), who is retiring, "referred Monday to 'President-elect Biden' in a briefing call about a major defense bill pending in the House, becoming only the third Texas Republican in Congress" to have done so.

## PROTESTS

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### **Activists: Some Georgia-Related Federal Prosecutions Aim To Blunt Future Protests.**

The [Atlanta Journal-Constitution](#) (12/7, 895K) reports, "Paul Torino, a member of the Atlanta Anti-Repression Committee," is among the activists claiming that some Georgia-related federal prosecutions launched in the wake of George Floyd's death "are intended to blunt future protest against the government." But after five men were "arrested in June for allegedly setting an unoccupied Gainesville Police car on fire," FBI Special Agent in Charge Chris Hacker stated, "We are not focused on peaceful protests, but instead concentrating on identifying, investigating and disrupting those individuals who are taking advantage of the protests to incite violence and engage in criminal activity."

### **Growing Number Of Prosecutors Join Effort To Revisit Lengthy Prison Sentences.**

The [Washington Post](#) (12/7, Jackman, 14.2M) reports on a "push to begin revisiting lengthy prison sentences, as part of the justice reform effort being promoted by big city prosecutors around the country," that is "gaining momentum even in states like Maryland, where there is no formal mechanism for prosecutors to revisit settled cases." The Post says Baltimore State's Attorney Marilyn Mosby on Monday "announced the launch of a sentencing review unit in Baltimore to address both mass incarceration and racial inequities in the justice system. ... Also Monday, the newly elected district attorney of Los Angeles, George Gascón, announced at his swearing-in that he, too, is launching a sentencing review unit." The Post adds similar initiatives are being launched by prosecutors in San Francisco, Boston, Philadelphia and Brooklyn.

### **Northam Signs Virginia No-Knock Search Warrant Ban.**

[USA Today](#) (12/7, Atkinson, 10.31M) reports that with members of Breonna Taylor's family "there to witness," Virginia Gov. Ralph Northam (D) on Monday "ceremoniously signed the so-called 'Breonna's Law' bill into Virginia's books. ... It was the second time Northam signed the legislation banning no-knock search warrants across Virginia – he originally approved it in late October." The [Washington Post](#) (12/7, Schneider, 14.2M) says the Monday ceremony "was designed to highlight the law as a step to address racial inequity, with Northam noting that no-knock warrants have been found to disproportionately target Black people."

The [Richmond \(VA\) Times-Dispatch](#) (12/7, Leonor, 277K) reports two of Taylor's aunts "wore black shirts that read 'no more no-knocks,' and face masks with Taylor's name and photo. They emphasized that justice for Taylor won't be realized until the officers involved in her killing face criminal charges – officials in Kentucky have so far declined – but celebrated Virginia for being 'on the right side of this fight.'"

## COUNTER-TERRORISM

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### **FBI Spoke To IS Fighter About Australian Terrorist.**

The [News \(AUS\)](#) (12/6, Schelle, 355K) reports, "An Islamic State fighter told FBI agents in Syria that he visited a convicted Australian terrorist in jail before he travelled overseas," but "lawyers for terror plotter Abdul Nacer Benbrika argued in the Supreme Court of Victoria that it was not relevant in the case to keep their client behind bars for longer." According to the News, "The terrorist fighter Jamil Shqeir told the United States intelligence agency in 2019 that he had gone to visit Benbrika in jail before he left for Syria years prior." According to the News, "Benbrika has spent the past 15 years behind bars for plotting attacks on Melbourne's MCG and

Crown as well as a nuclear reactor in Sydney and was due to be released this year," but "the Australian government wants to keep him in jail for an extra three years because they believe he's at risk of committing further terrorist acts."

### **Opinion: Al-Qaeda Persists Despite Shifting US Priorities, Is Poised For "Comeback."**

Colin P. Clarke, a Senior Research Fellow at The Soufan Center, writes in an op-ed in [Newsweek](#) (12/7, 1.53M) that Al-Qaeda "has sidestepped the dilemma of leadership decapitation." It has shifted "its organizational structure to afford its affiliates in the Sahel, the Arabian Peninsula and elsewhere with the operational autonomy to develop attack plans and map out strategic objectives." In recent years, the group "has focused on grassroots organizing in an attempt to make inroads with local populations in countries like Mali, Yemen, and Syria. By lowering its profile, including by working through front organizations, al-Qaeda has concentrated its resources on gaining popular support." Though the US and its allies want to move on from the Global War on Terrorism, "al-Qaeda and its network of global affiliates will remain a significant challenge, and in some parts of the world may be poised for a major comeback."

### **New Zealand Commission: "No Plausible Way" Mosque Attacker's Plans Could Have Been Detected.**

The [New York Times](#) (12/7, Graham-McLay, 18.61M) reports that an official commission in New Zealand has concluded that "there was 'no plausible way'" Christchurch mosque attacker Brenton Tarrant's plans "could have been detected by New Zealand's government agencies 'except by chance.'" Still, the inquiry "faulted the government on several counts. It found that lax gun regulations had allowed Mr. Tarrant to obtain a firearms license when he should not have qualified. And it said that the country's 'fragile' intelligence agencies had a limited understanding of right-wing threats and had not assigned sufficient resources to examine dangers other than Islamist terrorism."

## **COUNTER-INTELLIGENCE**

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### **Senate GOP Set To Link Durham Appointment To Confirmation Of Next AG.**

[The Hill](#) (12/7, Bolton, 2.98M) says Attorney General Barr "is setting the stage for a Senate brawl on his way out the door with the appointment of U.S. Attorney John Durham to serve as special counsel well beyond the end" of the current Administration. Senate Republicans say Joe Biden's choice for attorney general "should promise not to terminate Durham." The [New York Post](#) (12/7, Jacobs, 4.57M) says the next attorney general "will be the only one in public office with the ability to fire Durham or revoke his prosecutorial authority, meaning that whoever he selects as AG will likely face conflicting demands from both parties on the matter."

### **Appeals Court Denies Request For NSA Leaker To Leave Prison Early.**

The [Washington Examiner](#) (12/7, Dunleavy, 448K) reports, "An appeals court denied a request by Reality Winner...to serve out the remainder of her prison sentence in home confinement because of the coronavirus outbreak." Judges of the 11th Circuit "upheld the district court's decision to deny Winner's request to leave prison early amid the pandemic." Judge Beverly Martin wrote, "Ms. Winner argues the District Court abused its discretion when it denied her motion because it refused to hold a hearing and did not properly consider her evidence." Winner's lawyer Joe Whitley argued that his client "signed up to serve her sentence under the care, custody, and safety of the Bureau of Prisons – she did not agree (nor did this Court require her) to be confined to an institution that was caught unprepared for this virus."

### **Ratcliffe: "No Greater Threat" To US Than China.**

DNI Ratcliffe said on [Fox News' Tucker Carlson Tonight](#) (12/7), "There are a lot of people who for economic reasons do not want China to be our greatest threat. There are a lot of people who for political reasons don't want China to be our greatest threat in America. But the intelligence doesn't lie. China is our greatest threat, and it's not even close. No other country has the capability of essentially taking away the American dream and the specific plan to do so."

***US Sanctions Chinese Officials Tied To Hong Kong Crackdown.*** [Reuters](#) (12/7, Pamuk) reports that on Monday, the Trump Administration "imposed financial sanctions and a travel ban on 14 Chinese officials over their alleged role in Beijing's disqualification last month of elected opposition legislators in Hong Kong." Reuters says the sanctions "targeted the vice chairpersons of the National People's Congress Standing Committee (NPCSC), the top decision-making body of the Chinese legislature."

The [AP](#) (12/7, Lee) reports that "just last week, the administration further restricted visa access for Chinese Communist Party officials as part of the campaign which has also seen penalties imposed on China for its actions in western Xinjiang province, Tibet, Taiwan and the South China Sea." Secretary of State Pompeo released a statement reading, "Beijing's unrelenting assault against Hong Kong's democratic processes has gutted its Legislative Council, rendering the body a rubber stamp devoid of meaningful opposition." The [Wall Street Journal](#) (12/7, Talley, Subscription Publication, 7.57M) reports that the Chinese Embassy had no immediate comment, though earlier Monday said such moves would be construed "as meddling in China's sovereign affairs."

***US Says China Flouting Sanctions On North Korea.*** The [Wall Street Journal](#) (12/7, Subscription Publication, 7.57M) reports US officials are charging China with increasingly flouting international sanctions on North Korea, no longer bothering to try to obscure some of the efforts. One senior State Department official said, "It is not particularly disguised or hidden. The fact that China is making it easier on them makes it a much more reliable revenue stream than they've had."

### **Report Concludes Directed Pulse Microwave Energy Likely Responsible For Diplomats' Illnesses.**

Andrea Mitchell reported on [NBC Nightly News](#)<sup>Vi</sup> (12/7, story 7, 1:50, Holt, 6.27M) that the National Academies of Sciences [has concluded](#) that "the most likely explanation" for illnesses that struck US diplomats and CIA officers in China, Cuba, and Russia is "directed pulse microwave energy." David Relman, National Academies of Sciences report editor: "Pulsed directed microwave radiation can be focused on a particular space or physical environment at the level of several yards or a dozens of yards." Mitchell: "Russia has a long history of working on these weapons but denies involvement."

### **NDAA Would Alter Reporting Structure Of JAIC.**

[C4ISR & Networks](#) (12/7, Eversden) reports that the 2021 NDAA "would alter the reporting structure of the Joint Artificial Intelligence Center, raising the office to report directly to the deputy secretary of defense, instead of the department's chief information officer." As such, Congress has "signaled its confidence in the Pentagon's young artificial intelligence office through a series of measures to increase its standing in the agency, including giving its director acquisition authority." The bill "establishes a board of advisers to give the center strategic advice and technical expertise on AI matters." It "still needs President Donald Trump's approval." CSIS fellow Lindsey Sheppard said, "This NDAA would clear that roadblock by giving the JAIC its own acquisition authorities to get technology in the door."

### **DISA Planning "Grey Network" To Support Classified Remote Programs.**

[MeriTalk](#) (12/7, Mayo) reports that DISA "is looking to implement an enterprise 'grey network' to enable" DOD components to "securely support classified remote programs." Head of DISA's

Emerging Technology Directorate Dr. Stephen Wallace "laid out the agency's approach to a grey network at AFCEA's TechNet Cyber conference on December 3." Wallace said, "we're looking for is a global Enterprise Grey Network that has many of the common services that these classified remote programs rely on, but in a consistent enterprise fashion, so that you're not recreating the wheel time and time again." Wallace added, "We do realize the urgency in it, and our ability to provide something like that will bring a lot of value to our mission partners, and we've heard that from them, so we're very interested in delivering something like that as quickly as possible."

### **Reports: Iran's Supreme Leader May Have Transferred Power To Son.**

[Fox News](#) (12/7, McKay, 27.59M) reports that amid speculation "over the declining health of Iran's Supreme Leader, the Grand Ayatollah Ali Khamenei," there were "unconfirmed reports over the weekend" he had "transferred power to his son, cleric Sayyid Mojtaba Hosseini Khamenei." The son "has been seen as a potential successor to his father's throne" for over a decade, and his "increasingly dogmatic role overseeing numerous security and intelligence departments are viewed as part of the grooming process to ascend to the top spot, according to the Jerusalem Post." He has "been profiled as a mostly hardline, conservative figure – even more refractory than his father – with especially tight ties" to the IRGC. However, the "process of succession isn't quite as simple as the Ayatollah merely making a preference. Iran has constitutional laws with regards to the process of choosing the next-in-line."

## **CRIMINAL INVESTIGATIONS**

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### **Sentencing Hearing In Nebraska Murder Rescheduled Over COVID Concerns.**

The [Lincoln \(NE\) Journal Star](#) (12/7, Pilger, 399K) reports, "A multi-day hearing to determine whether Aubrey Trail will get the death penalty for the killing of a 24-year-old Lincoln woman has been reset for March after one of his attorneys tested positive for COVID-19." According to the Journal Star, "On Friday, the defense filed a motion to continue the aggravation and mitigation hearing, which was set to start next week in Wilber. In the filing, attorney Ben Murray listed a number of COVID-related reasons prompting him to ask for a continuance. Among them, that the pandemic was making it impossible for out-of-state witnesses, who included Trail's relatives in Tennessee, to travel to Nebraska. 'The present pandemic substantially impairs counsel's ability to take on the "extraordinary responsibility" of representing a person whose life is at stake and provide effective representation,' he wrote."

### **Marijuana Subpoena May Have Been Linked To Missouri FBI Probe.**

The [Independence \(MO\) Examiner](#) (12/7, Hancock, 13K) reports, "The head of Missouri's medical marijuana program testified under oath that a grand jury subpoena his agency received late last year was likely connected to an FBI investigation in Independence." The Examiner adds, "The revelation by Lyndall Fraker, director of medical marijuana regulation at the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services, is the first indication of the target of the federal subpoena. In November 2019, the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services received the subpoena, which was issued by the United States District Court for the Western District. It demanded the agency turn over all records pertaining to four medical marijuana license applications. The copy of the subpoena that was made public redacted the identity of the four applicants at the request of the FBI."

### **FBI, BIA Probing Discovery Of Body On Montana Reservation.**

The [Billings \(MT\) Gazette](#) (12/7, Kordenbrock, 180K) reports, "A death investigation involving two federal agencies is ongoing after a body was found on the Crow Indian Reservation in late November." An FBI spokesperson "confirmed the investigation Monday afternoon. The FBI and

the Bureau of Indian Affairs are investigating jointly, according to the FBI." The FBI "was notified on Nov. 29 that a body had been discovered on the Crow Reservation. Citing the ongoing nature of the investigation, FBI Public Affairs Specialist Sandra Yi Barker said by email that additional information could not be shared Monday, but that more information would be released when possible."

### **FBI Joins Search For Missing Florida Teacher.**

The [Daytona Beach \(FL\) News-Journal](#) (12/7, Kustura, 166K) reports, "The FBI and local law enforcement agencies are helping Port Orange police in the search for a teacher missing since Oct. 25." The News-Journal adds, "In a press conference Monday morning, Sgt. Steven Nagy, a Port Orange police detective, said that in addition to the FBI, the Florida Department of Law Enforcement, the Volusia County Sheriff's Office, Daytona Beach police and the Brevard County Sheriff's Office are assisting with the investigation into the disappearance of Robert Heikka. Heikka, 70, a teacher at Creekside Middle School, failed to show up for work on Oct. 26, Andre Fleming, an officer and spokesman for Port Orange police, said."

### **Ohio Firefighter Arrested On Child Pandering Charges.**

The [Zanesville \(OH\) Times Recorder](#) (12/7, Holmes, 34K) reports, "A member of the Frazesburg Fire Department is in jail on child pandering charges stemming from a recent FBI case." The Times Recorder adds, "On Thursday, officials in Muskingum County became aware of the information and began their own investigation. According to Sheriff Matt Lutz, deputies arrested Chad Buchanan, 42, on Thursday after a search of his house on 2525 Country Side Road around 9 p.m. Lutz said several items were seized from the home." Buchanan "has been charged with one second-degree felony count of pandering obscenity involving a minor, one second-degree felony count of pandering sexually oriented material involving a minor and one third-degree felony count of gross sexual imposition. Lutz said no other members of the fire department are anticipated to have been involved in the investigation."

### **Attorneys Seek Bail For Ghislaine Maxwell.**

The [AP](#) (12/7, Neumeister) reports from New York, "A lawyer for the onetime girlfriend of Jeffrey Epstein said Monday that her client, who again seeks release on bail, has lost weight and hair as she suffers under onerous jail conditions imposed in part because Epstein killed himself last year in a federal lockup." According to the AP, "The claims by defense attorney Bobbi Sternheim were made on Ghislaine Maxwell's behalf after lawyers for the Metropolitan Detention Center warden in Brooklyn defended conditions at the facility in a Friday letter that was publicly filed on Monday. 'Ms. Maxwell remains in good health,' the lawyers wrote in the letter as they defended her treatment as by-the-book following of rules to ensure the safety of all federal inmates. The letters were filed on the same day that a Nov. 25 letter was unsealed in which two of Maxwell's lawyers said they were renewing her application to be released on bail after compiling information not available when her initial request was rejected in July. Judge Alison J. Nathan said she will decide later this month whether to conduct a hearing."

### **FBI Seizes 40 Pounds Of Meth, Two Pounds Of Heroin In New Mexico.**

The [Albuquerque \(NM\) Journal](#) (12/7, Gallagher, 196K) reports, "FBI agents seized 40 pounds of methamphetamine and two pounds of heroin last week during an investigation of an Albuquerque man suspected of being a member of the notorious SNM prison gang." According to the Journal, "Agents arrested Michael Anthony Hernandez, 44, known as 'Polo,' as part of a five-year racketeering investigation into the gang, which has sought to extend its influence from inside the prison to the streets of cities and towns throughout New Mexico. According to a search warrant affidavit, agents believe Hernandez put out a 'hit' or 'greenlight' on a lower-level drug dealer who owed him money for a drug transaction. He was being held on probation and

parole violations pending further charges. He has not been charged in connection with the alleged hit plan."

### **Resident Of State Of New York Sentenced To Decade In Prison For Selling Crack.**

The [Schenectady \(NY\) Daily Gazette](#) (12/7, Cook, 82K) reports Schenectady resident Robert J. Chaires has been sentenced "to 10 years in federal prison for" selling crack cocaine. The Chaires "case was investigated by the FBI and its Capital District Safe Streets Gang Task Force, which includes FBI Special Agents and members of federal, state and local law enforcement" organizations. The [WTEN-TV](#) Albany, NY (12/7, 71K) website also covers this story.

### **Two Florida Men Charged In Ohio "Grandparent Scam."**

The [Warren \(OH\) Tribune Chronicle](#) (12/7, 72K) reports from Cleveland, "Two Tampa, Fla. men are charged in a nine-count federal indictment involving the scamming of elderly people throughout the Northern Ohio district." John Tyler Pla, 25, and Johnny Lee Palmer, 25, both of Tampa, "are charged with conspiracy to commit wire fraud and wire fraud, according to U.S. Attorney Justin Herdman. A federal grand jury sitting in Toledo returned the indictments. 'Protecting our district's elderly and vulnerable populations from scammers and fraudsters is an important part of the work we do every day at the Justice Department,' Herdman said." FBI Special Agent Eric B. Smith "said his unit is increasingly watching over the elderly to prevent scams. 'The FBI encourages everyone to educate their elderly family and friends on financial scams such as this,' Smith said, referring to the case against the Florida men."

### **Pennsylvania Man Gets Long Prison Sentence For Conspiring To Distribute Heroin.**

The [Wilkes-Barre \(PA\) Times Leader](#) (12/7, Lewis, 115K) reports Pennsylvania resident Hakim Wilburn has been "sentenced to more than 16 years in federal prison" for "conspiring to distribute more than one kilogram of heroin." Wilburn "and his wife, Danielle Moore, were arrested when agents with the Federal Bureau of Investigation and police in Hanover Township and Wilkes-Barre executed search warrants at a residence on Boland Avenue, Hanover Township, and other properties." The [Wilkes-Barre \(PA\) Citizens' Voice](#) (12/7, 149K) also covers Wilburn's 198-month sentence.

### **Three Indicted For Selling Fentanyl In Connecticut.**

The [Connecticut Post](#) (12/7, O'Neill, 347K) reports Connecticut residents Kyle Pitts, Curon Jonson and Jabari Walcott "face federal charges for selling fentanyl in the Hartford area," according to a federal grand jury indictment. The Post highlights that "the FBI's Northern Connecticut Gang Task Force" was involved with the investigation of this case.

### **Army Expected To Take Action Against "Significant Number" Of Servicemembers At Fort Hood.**

The [AP](#) (12/7, Baldor) reports, "Army leaders are expected to fire or suspend a 'significant number' of officers and enlisted soldiers at Fort Hood, Texas, in a dramatic purge to correct a command culture they believe failed to address leadership failures and a pattern of violence that included murders, sexual assaults and suicides." According to "officials familiar with the matter," Army Secretary McCarthy "will take administrative action that will remove soldiers from their jobs, and likely trigger investigations that could lead to a wide range of punishments."

### **Death Of Green Beret, Army Veteran At Fort Bragg Under Investigation.**

The [New York Times](#) (12/7, Levenson, Ismay, Opam, 18.61M) reports the Army is "investigating the deaths last week of a Green Beret and an Army veteran whose bodies were found in a training area at Fort Bragg in North Carolina." While officials have not said how they died, "they said the deaths were not related to official unit training activities." Chris Grey, a spokesman for

the Army Criminal Investigation Command, said in a statement, "I can confirm that we are investigating this as a homicide investigation. ... I will release more at the appropriate time."

### **Connecticut Sailor Pleads Guilty To Sexually Assaulting Children, Producing Child Pornography.**

The [New London \(CT\) Day](#) (12/8, Florin, 109K) reports, "Navy sailor Randall J. Tilton faces up to 210 years in prison after pleading guilty Monday in U.S. District Court in New Haven to what investigators say is one of the worst cases of sexual abuse of young children, two of whom were just 4 and 6 months old when he began to violate them." According to the Day, "The 31-year-old New Hampshire native, a Machinists Mate 1st Class stationed since 2016 at the Naval Submarine Base in Groton aboard the USS South Dakota, is also accused of producing pornographic images of his victims that were distributed via the internet and dark web. He pleaded guilty to seven counts of production of child pornography, each of which carries a mandatory minimum sentence of 15 years in prison."

## **FINANCIAL CRIME & CORPORATE SCANDALS**

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### **New Jersey Lab At Center Of FBI COVID-19 Test Warning Only Recently Opened.**

The [Press of Atlantic City \(NJ\)](#) (12/7, Lowe, 177K) reports from Ventnor, New Jersey, "The North Jersey-based diagnostic lab at the center of an FBI warning last week regarding the efficacy of its COVID-19 tests only recently moved into its Atlantic Avenue storefront, the building owners said." On Friday, the FBI "released a statement directing anyone who received a coronavirus test at the Infinity Diagnostic Laboratory at 6715 Atlantic Ave. to be retested as soon as possible. Although the statement did not specify what initiated the warning, it did include a notice that a 'rapid' finger prick blood test is an antibody test and should not be used for diagnosing active cases of COVID-19." NBC10 News "reported that the building was raided by the FBI on Thursday, but officials from the FBI declined to comment citing an ongoing investigation."

### **Former Los Angeles Councilman Pleads Not Guilty To Corruption Charges.**

The [AP](#) (12/7) reports from Los Angeles, "Former City Council member Jose Huizar pleaded not guilty Monday to federal charges that he took bribes to help developers win favors for large building projects in the city's burgeoning downtown district." Huizar "entered the plea to a new racketeering indictment that added additional charges. The 41-count complaint includes allegations of bribery, honest services fraud and money laundering." Huizar "was arrested in June on allegations that he masterminded a \$1.5 million pay-to-play scheme tied to the approval of developments. They included a 77-story tower in Huizar's district that would have been the largest skyscraper west of the Mississippi River. The developer, who already had a hotel in the district, was accused of providing cash and benefits worth \$800,000 to Huizar and others that included a dozen trips to Las Vegas casinos and funds to settle a sexual harassment lawsuit against the councilman."

The [My News LA \(CA\)](#) (12/7) reports, "Huizar, 52, of Boyle Heights, has a June 22 trial date in the case, which is a result of a federal investigation into alleged widespread corruption at Los Angeles City Hall that has also ensnared political operatives, lobbyists and the former general manager of the Los Angeles Department of Building and Safety." Huizar "was charged in July in a 34-count indictment that alleged a conspiracy to violate the Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations Act in which he's accused of agreeing to accept at least \$1.5 million in illicit financial benefits. The racketeering charge alleges 402 overt acts that Huizar and his co-conspirators are accused of committing to further their criminal enterprise, including bribery, honest services fraud, and money laundering."

[KTLA-TV](#) Los Angeles (12/7, Gutierrez, 766K) reports, "The superseding indictment also names Raymond Chan, a deputy mayor who oversaw economic development for Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti in 2016 and 2017. He also is a former general manager of the Los Angeles Department of Building and Safety. The case has already resulted in guilty pleas from a former Huizar aide, a City Hall lobbyist and two real estate consultants."

### **Bribery Trial Of Cincinnati Councilman Delayed.**

[WXIX-TV](#) Cincinnati (12/7, Baker, 42K) reports from Cincinnati, "The January trial date for suspended Cincinnati City Councilman Jeff Pastor on federal corruption-related charges has been postponed at the request of his lawyer and the attorney representing his business partner, who also faces charges, court documents show. 'In order to permit adequate time to review the voluminous discovery in this case, and due to the difficulties created by the recent surge in COVID-19 cases in Ohio and nationwide, Defendants' counsel jointly requested a continuance of this matter. The Government did not object to the request,' the records state. 'Having been so advised and for good cause shown, the Court vacated the trial date previously set for January 11, 2021 and converted the final pretrial conference set for January 4, 2021 at 3:00pm to a telephonic status conference.'" Pastor "was accused in an indictment last month of bribery, extortion, wire fraud, money laundering and other crimes related to his role on council."

### **Cincinnati Councilman Accepts Suspension After Bribery Arrest.**

The [Cincinnati Enquirer](#) (12/7, Coolidge, 223K) reports, "Cincinnati City Councilman P.G. Sittenfeld has accepted a suspension from council, a process initiated by Ohio Attorney General Dave Yost after Sittenfeld was arrested on federal bribery charges. Sittenfeld will be paid his \$65,000 salary while temporarily suspended. He said: 'This has been a very difficult time, ensuring false accusations, inaccurate stories and having some folks not be willing to wait to get the complete and accurate facts is painful for me and those around me.'" The Enquirer adds, "It will now be up to Hamilton County Probate Court Judge Ralph 'Ted' Winkler, a Republican, to name a temporary replacement for Sittenfeld, who is a Democrat." Sittenfeld "is one of three Cincinnati councilmembers arrested and accused of pay-to-play schemes this year and the second member of council to accept a state suspension, which bars them from working, but allows them to collect their salary."

### **US Charges Maryland Attorney In Alleged Scheme To Obtain Somali Government Assets.**

The [Washington Post](#) (12/7, Marimow, 14.2M) reports, "More than a decade ago, Bethesda lawyer Jeremy W. Schulman began working to reclaim millions of dollars belonging to the government of Somalia from accounts frozen during the country's years of political turmoil. Now, Schulman is facing the possibility of decades in prison after the government accused him of defrauding the people he was claiming to help." Prosecutors "say Schulman, who was indicted last week on federal fraud charges, exploited connections to the Somali government and pretended to officially represent the war-torn country's interests to enrich himself. His lawyers say that the Justice Department has it wrong and that Schulman was a trusted adviser and advocate of the Somali people." Schulman, 47, "made an initial appearance Monday before U.S. Magistrate Judge Gina L. Simms and through his lawyer pleaded not guilty to the charges."

### **US Charges Ohio Developer With Embezzlement.**

The [Akron \(OH\) Beacon Journal](#) (12/7, 198K) reports that an Aurora, Ohio man "is accused of embezzling money through a nonprofit and using more than \$1 million of it to gamble." Arthur Fayne, 58, "was indicted on wire fraud charges in federal court. The Cleveland-area real-estate developer is accused of using a subsidiary of a nonprofit to embezzle money for personal use. According to a press release from U.S. Attorney's Office in Cleveland, Fayne owned Business Development Concepts in Cleveland and was vice president of a subsidiary of an unnamed

nonprofit. Fayne is accused of entering into contracts on behalf of the nonprofit that allowed him to divert money to himself." The Beacon Journal adds, "According to the FBI, Fayne used that money for personal interests, including gambling. He's accused of using and losing more than \$1 million at a casino using the funds over three separate occasions."

The [Cleveland Plain Dealer](#) (12/7, Heisig, 895K) reports, "Prosecutors said Fayne stole more than \$885,000 intended for a construction management contractor and an audio-visual technology installation subcontractor, as his company was used as an intermediary for payments made by a nonprofit behind the project. At the same time, Fayne was using his company's money to gamble, losing large amounts between 2016 and 2018, according to the FBI."

### **Georgia Man Sentenced In Pennsylvania Check-Cashing Scam.**

The [Erie \(PA\) Times-News](#) (12/7, Palattella, 33K) reports, "A 34-year-old man from Atlanta was sentenced in federal court in Erie on Monday to four years in federal prison for his lead role in a nationwide check-cashing scheme that the U.S. Attorney's Office said exploited homeless people in Erie and elsewhere." Victor K. Lemmons "was arrested in Erie in 2018 on charges that he and his co-defendant, Jasmine L. Carter, 31, also of the Atlanta area, used homeless people to cash fraudulent checks created with stolen account information. Carter was sentenced in September to 3½ years in federal prison after she pleaded guilty in February to one count of conspiracy to commit bank fraud." Prosecutors "said Lemmons was the leader of the operation, which authorities alleged netted an estimated \$1.1 million nationwide between 2015 and 2018, according to court records."

### **Dish Network To Pay \$210M To Settle Allegations Of Telemarketing Violations.**

The [Wall Street Journal](#) (12/7, Sebastian, Subscription Publication, 7.57M) reports that in a settlement with the Justice Department and four states, a subsidiary of Dish Network Corp. will pay \$210 million stemming from alleged telemarketing violations. DOJ, along with the states of California, Illinois, North Carolina and Ohio, said the company made millions of unlawful telemarketing calls to consumers and was responsible for millions of additional calls made by retailers marketing its products and services.

### **FTC Warns Of Robocall Scammers Posing As Amazon, Apple.**

[NBC Nightly News](#)<sup>Vi</sup> (12/7, story 8, 1:20, 6.35M) reported the FTC has issued a warning about "robocall scams suggesting that your Apple iCloud account has been hacked" or "trying to trace a suspect Amazon purchase."

## **CYBER DIVISION**

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### **FBI Warns Of Hackers Finding Their Way Into School Zoom Classrooms.**

[WWL-TV](#) New Orleans (12/7, Farris, 67K) reports from New Orleans, "With more work meetings and school classrooms online, hackers are playing pranks by joining in uninvited, but the FBI says they are seeing an increase of a type of Zoom bombing that can send people to federal prison." WWL-TV adds, "A video from YouTube prankster 'Ben of the Week' has 7.7 million views. He's labeled on TikTok as a comedy skit creator. Some may think Zoom bombing, and disrupting children trying to go to school virtually, is funny, but to the FBI, a different type of Zoom hacking is no laughing matter. 'In some of the more extreme circumstances, we are seeing people that are putting child sexual abuse material up as kind of the, you know, the element used to upset the group and shock everybody and shut it down,' said Dan Genck, Assistant Special Agent in Charge for the New Orleans Field Office."

### **UK Man Who Hacked Webcams In 39 Countries Avoids Extradition To US.**

[The Guardian \(UK\)](#) (12/7, 4.19M) reports, "A 58-year-old man from Wigan who hacked into hundreds of webcams in dozens of countries has avoided extradition to the US after a judge ruled that it was not in the interests of justice." Christopher Taylor, "a full-time carer for his wife of 38 years, had faced up to 20 years in a US prison after he was charged with wire fraud and two counts of computer fraud in Georgia," but "on Monday a judge at Westminster magistrates court blocked the extradition, ruling that because of Taylor's strong family links in the UK, any prosecution for the offences should take place here." District judge Michael Fanning "also said that Taylor's extradition would breach both his and his wife's human rights, on the basis that disrupting his care for her would amount to a disproportionate interference with both of their Article 8 rights to a family life."

### **Canadian Police Officer Says He Was FBI's Point Of Contact During Huawei CFO Arrest.**

[Reuters](#) (12/7, Berman) reports, "A police officer stationed at Vancouver's airport on the day" Huawei CFO Meng Wanzhou "was arrested two years ago testified on Monday he found himself to be in a 'very uncomfortable position' as the point of contact" for the FBI. Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) Sergeant Ross Lundie testified, "At the end of the day, I'm not there to provide information and act on behalf of the FBI. I'm there working as an RCMP member." Lundie added, "Assisting the FBI, given my background – this is a very uncomfortable position to be in." In court, "Lundie testified that he was concerned about the appearance of collusion between the CBSA and the RCMP in the lead up to Meng's arrest. He told the court it was 'reasonable' for CBSA to secure Meng's electronic devices in Mylar bags – which block all signals – before the RCMP arrested her."

[Business In Vancouver \(CAN\)](#) (12/7, Chiang) reports that Lundie "said he has had contact with various law enforcement agencies throughout his career – and may have answered questions from the FBI on the Meng case's operations." However, he "emphasized that such contact was coincidental – that his main role was to serve the RCMP and assist in the operations of the police's central financial crimes unit." Defense lawyer Richard Peck "accused the RCMP sergeant of trying to cover up his role in having contact with the FBI throughout the case, noting the lack of the mentioning of the U.S. investigative agency in any of his written notes or legal Will Say." Peck also attacked "Lundie's lack of useful notes in the arrest process, to which the RCMP officer responded by admitting he should take better notes."

### **NSA Warns Russia-Backed Hackers Are Exploiting VMware Products.**

[Reuters](#) (12/7, Bing) reports that a new NSA cybersecurity alert "warns that Russian 'state-sponsored' hackers are actively exploiting a software vulnerability in multiple products made by cloud computing company VMware Inc." The agency "said organizations should apply 'as soon as possible' a software patch provided by the company on Saturday." Hackers would be able to "execute operating system commands remotely on the infected device, allowing for the theft or corruption of data." VMware separately warns "that the hackers would first need to gain access to a user's account through a stolen password to fully take advantage of the vulnerability."

[Bloomberg](#) (12/7, Sebenius, 4.73M) reports that the advisory warned "Russia was using the flaw to 'access protected data.'" The warning comes after a recent DHS alert "about Iranian hackers – saying that they are becoming more sophisticated and improving their offensive arsenal, leading to the possibility of 'cyber-enabled kinetic attacks' in the future." A December 3 CISA notice warned "Iranian actors are defacing web pages, taking sites offline by flooding them with traffic, stealing personal data and conducting influence operations on social media."

Also reporting are [CyberScoop](#) (12/7, Vavra), [Gov Info Security](#) (12/7, Olenick), and [NextGov](#) (12/7, Baksh).

### **Chinese Telecom Giants Scramble To Meet New Requirements Abroad.**

According to [CNET News](#) (12/7, Keane, 1.99M), "countries like the UK and Sweden have banned the use" of Huawei's "equipment as their 5G networks develop. The company's phones are also virtually invisible in the US, despite its massive presence around the world." CNET provides a timeline of regulatory news relating to Huawei "going back to 2018." Most recently, on December 7, Huawei was "reportedly willing to meet Sweden's requirements after its equipment was banned from the country's 5G network."

Meanwhile, [Sky News \(UK\)](#) (12/7) reports, Finland is "expected to introduce a new law which could see Chinese telecommunications equipment excluded from the nation's networks." Finland's transportation and communications minister, Timo Harakka, has stated "the country would not directly be banning Huawei equipment with the law." Though not named, Huawei and ZTE "are expected to be covered by legislation that prohibits including any equipment within the core of a network if it 'would endanger national security or defence.'"

### **Trump Signs Bill Requiring Minimum Cybersecurity Requirements For Feds.**

[Reuters](#) (12/7, Merken) reports that President Trump "has signed new legislation aimed at limiting the risks to government and incentivizing manufacturers to address [cyber] security gaps" through the Internet of Things Cybersecurity Improvement Act of 2020. The legislation "will require minimum security requirements for procurement and use of Internet of Things (IoT) devices by the federal government. Trump signed the bipartisan bill into law on Friday, the White House said."

### **Companies Attempting To Lure In Hackers With "Honey Pots."**

The [Wall Street Journal](#) (12/7, Mitchell, Subscription Publication, 7.57M) reports that some companies are attempting to "lure cybercriminals into thinking they're getting close" to valuable information, and then "they trap them." Land O'Lakes Chief uses DeceptionGrid, a tool that "deploys an array of decoys and booby traps throughout the Land O' Lakes network that mimic crucial information." The company aims to "convince hackers that they have gotten access to the company's crown jewels." Another technology, from Illusive "plants dozens of fake but believable data points into every company-issued laptop or cellphone."

### **Opinion: Public Schools Could Offer Practical Cybersecurity Aid.**

Heidi Boghosian, an attorney, writes in an op-ed in the [Philadelphia Inquirer](#) (12/7, Boghosian, 347K) reports that the day before Thanksgiving, attackers "inserted malicious software" in Baltimore County School District's systems – or ransomware – "then threatened to block access or publish data unless the district paid a ransom." The attack "closed County schools (surrounding the city of Baltimore, which has its own school system) for two days on Nov. 30 and Dec. 1." The Inquirer says school administrators "weren't equipped to guard against this threat." However, colleges "with advanced cybersecurity expertise" could "step up to help stop the epidemic of cyberattacks." Public school systems "could provide these university-level programs with a real-world clinic for practical learning."

### **Report: Global Losses From Cybercrime Expected To Be Just Under \$1T For 2020.**

The [Washington Post](#) (12/7, Riley, 14.2M) reports, "Estimated global losses from cybercrime are projected to hit just under a record \$1 trillion for 2020," according to a study from CSIS and McAfee. The \$945 billion in losses "is almost double the monetary loss from cybercrime than the \$500 billion in 2018." The pandemic "provided new opportunities for hackers to target consumers and businesses," as it "inspired an unprecedented number of online scams preying on the fears of both consumers and businesses – and a mass migration of employees to remote work created a perfect storm." McAfee Senior VP CTO Steve Grobman said, "When workers move to home environments, they are essentially becoming their own I.T. support. ... It's really about understanding that this is a different environment and building a security strategy to effectively defend it."

## LAW ENFORCEMENT SERVICES

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### **Child Sex Exploitation Prosecutions Triple In Frederick, Maryland Area.**

The [Frederick \(MD\) News-Post](#) (12/7, Keller, 74K) reports, "The prosecution of child sex exploitation cases has tripled locally, but with the number of tips increasing by more than one million nationally and a fear of underreporting on their minds, members of the Frederick County Cyber Crime Task Force expect they will need to devote even more resources to solving these crimes." The News-Post adds, "The FBI, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Maryland State Police, Frederick County State's Attorney's Office, Frederick County Sheriff's Office and Frederick Police Department on Monday revealed the results of the first 18 months of work by the cyber crimes task force. The task force, formed in May 2019 as a memorandum of understanding between the state's attorney's office, sheriff's office and city police, serves to investigate, apprehend and prosecute internet sexual predators who exploit children."

### **Five More Federal Inmates Set To Be Executed Before Inauguration Day.**

The [AP](#) (12/7, Tarm, Balsamo) reports that the Trump Administration is "ratcheting up the pace of federal executions despite a surge of coronavirus cases in prisons, announcing plans for five starting Thursday and concluding just days before" Inauguration Day. If the five "go off as planned, it will make 13 executions since July when the Republican administration resumed putting inmates to death after a 17-year hiatus."

### **FBI Agent Discusses Common Themes In Minnesota Bank Robberies, ATM Burglaries.**

[WCCO-AM](#) Minneapolis (12/7, 14K) reports from Minneapolis, "During the unrest that followed George Floyd's death, rioters set fires and looted stores. Vandals also burglarized ATMs, a crime that's up in Minnesota this year. A long-time FBI agent shared what drives thieves and bank robbers, and how the community helps solve these crimes." WCCO-AM adds, "Bank heists are glamorized in the movies with a coordinated crew of criminals like in 'Oceans 11,' or the 1991 film 'Point Break.' And while organized crews do exist, FBI Agent John Gainer says it's more common to see robbers working solo. 'We find people that are in a desperate situation is the typical type of person that gets involved in a bank robbery,' Gainer said." According to WCCO-AM, "Suspected bank robbers run the gamut in Minnesota, from a range of backgrounds. Although historically more are men than women. Gainer says they often find a gambling or substance addiction as the motivation."

## INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

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### **US Charges Man Living In Romania With Puppy Fraud Scheme.**

The [Pittsburgh Post-Gazette](#) (12/7, Ove, 616K) reports, "Last spring, a New Brighton woman wanted to buy a puppy for her mother. She found a website advertising mini-dachshunds for sale and inquired about one of them, 'Pansy.' On March 11, she received a text from 'Hector Cantu' indicating that Pansy was still available for \$600." The woman "ended up sending \$9,100 in wire payments through Western Union," and "the whole thing was a fraud perpetrated by a man living in Romania who pulled the same scam on hundreds of victims in the U.S, the FBI said." Desmond Fodje Bobga, 27, "a Cameroon citizen attending college in Romania, is in custody after his arrest last week by Romanian law officers. In a sealed complaint filed in August, the U.S. attorney's office in Pittsburgh accused Mr. Bobga of taking money for dogs and not delivering."

### **US Charged Head Of Canadian Police Agency's Intelligence Following Gambling Operation.**

[CBC \(CAN\)](#) (12/7, Anderson, Culbert, McKeown, 319K) reports that American gambler RJ Cipriani, an FBI informant, "played a key role in a series of events that eventually led the RCMP to charge their head of intelligence, Cameron Ortis, with leaking secrets." In 2017, the gambler "was asked to gamble money in Australia by former U.S. college football player Owen Hanson." However, "eventually fearing he was being drawn into criminal activity, he went to the FBI." Hanson was then "charged and convicted of drug trafficking." The FBI found in his possessions "six encrypted cellphones Hanson had purchased from Richmond, B.C.- based Phantom Secure, a company the RCMP had been investigating for allegedly supplying encrypted technology to organized crime. The FBI then joined with the RCMP and Australian police in an investigation of Phantom Secure."

## LAWFUL ACCESS

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### **UK Watchdog: Encrypted Messaging Puts Children At Risk Of Abuse.**

[The Guardian \(UK\)](#) (12/8, Bland, 4.19M) reports, "The children's commissioner for England has warned that end-to-end encryption is putting children at risk of abuse, as a survey finds that most eight-year-olds are using messaging apps supposedly restricted to those aged 13 or older." The Guardian adds, "In a report published on Tuesday, Anne Longfield said plans by social media firms to widen the use of encrypted messaging would make it impossible for platforms to monitor content. Longfield argued that such technology, which keeps messaging hidden from anyone who is not a participant in a conversation, could stop police from gathering crucial evidence of child sexual exploitation." The report, Access Denied: How End-to-end Encryption Threatens Children's Safety Online, "says: 'The privacy of direct messaging platforms can conceal some of the most heinous crimes against children, including grooming, exploitation and the sharing of child sexual abuse material.'"

## OTHER FBI NEWS

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### **Wray Taps Dugan As New Norfolk, Virginia SAC.**

The [Hampton Roads \(VA\) Virginian-Pilot](#) (12/7, Harper, 227K) reports, "A veteran FBI agent with more than 20 years of experience gathering intelligence and investigating a wide variety of crimes has been chosen to head the agency's Norfolk field office." Brian Dugan, 49, "was appointed to the position by FBI Director Christopher Wray, according to a news release. His tenure began Monday. Dugan replaces Martin Culbreth, who retired in October after leading the Norfolk office for four years."

[WAVY-TV](#) Norfolk, VA (12/7, 64K) reports, "Dugan joined the FBI as a special agent in 1998 and was first assigned to the San Diego Field Office to mostly work domestic terrorism cases. In 1999, he transferred to the San Francisco Field Office to conduct gang investigations. Most recently, Mr. Dugan served as section chief of the HUMINT Operations Section in the Directorate of Intelligence at FBI Headquarters in Washington, D.C."

## OTHER WASHINGTON NEWS

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### **US Expected To Surpass 200K New COVID Cases Per Day This Week.**

[CNBC](#) (12/7, Feuer, 3.62M) says on its website that the US "reported more than 175,600 new cases of the virus and more than 1,100 deaths caused by Covid-19 on Sunday, according to data compiled by Johns Hopkins University. But the data historically tends to come in lower at the end of the weekend and the beginning of the week." CNBC also reports the US recorded a "record-high" seven-day average "of more than 196,200 cases of the virus, up more than 20% compared with a week ago." CNBC adds, "If current trends hold, that figure will likely top

200,000 this week." On [ABC World News Tonight](#)<sup>Vi</sup> (12/7, story 2, 3:25, Muir, 7.46M), Matt Gutman said the US "topped a million cases in the first five days of December."

In the lead [CBS Evening News](#)<sup>Vi</sup> (12/7, lead story, 4:05, 4.74M) story, Norah O'Donnell reported the coronavirus is "now rocketing across the US so rapidly more than one million people have been infected in just the past five days and that is pushing the country past 14.9 million cases." O'Donnell added that NIAID Director Fauci is "telling CBS News the coming weeks will be even worse, with the US breaking records every day for new cases and deaths. And he says the country hasn't even seen the full brunt of infections from Thanksgiving." CBS' Carter Evans also said that in "a grim reality, every hour the US is seeing more than 8,000 new COVID cases and nearly 100 deaths."

[CNN](#) (12/7, Holcombe, 83.16M) reports on its website that as the US "nears an average of 200,000 Covid-19 cases a day, experts say 'behavior and cold weather' are behind the current surge gripping American communities." HHS Secretary Azar on Sunday said, "People are going indoors, they're not minding the three W's." Azar continued, "Our advice is always the same. Wash your hands, watch your distance, wear face coverings."

Meanwhile, [Reuters](#) (12/7, Canipe) highlights that the US "lost 15,000 people to COVID-19 last week, the deadliest seven days since April." The number of new cases also "rose 19% to 1.4 million in the week ended Dec. 6, after falling the previous week as many testing centers were closed for the Thanksgiving holiday, according to a Reuters analysis of state and county reports."

[Bloomberg](#) (12/7, Levin, 4.73M) says that the US "is now averaging about as many deaths per day from Covid-19 as it was in April when the pandemic ambushed the New York area." Bloomberg adds the seven-day average for fatalities "rose to 2,201 on Sunday, just one shy of the peak on April 18, according to Johns Hopkins University data," while the average number of daily deaths has been "predicted in the range of 1,643 to 1,886 through Dec. 26, according to a four-week forecast from the University of Massachusetts Amherst's Reich Lab."

On the [CBS Evening News](#)<sup>Vi</sup> (12/7, story 2, 2:25, 4.66M), O'Donnell reported doctors and nurses "tell CBS News this surge is the worst since the pandemic began, and they may not be able to care for future patients." David Begnaud highlighted Renown Health in Reno, Nevada, which "is in crisis mode. Look at what they have had to resort to. They're putting patients in their parking garage." Begnaud added that he "just spoke with one of the lead ICU doctors at the main hospital [in Las Vegas], and she said they are...extremely busy with some of the sickest COVID patients."

***Fauci Cautions That Christmas Is Likely To Cause Further Spike In Cases.*** The [Washington Post](#) (12/7, Armus, Cunningham, 14.2M) reports Fauci "warned Monday that Christmas celebrations could facilitate the spread of the virus even more than Thanksgiving, because Christmas gatherings often start several days before the holiday and continue through New Year's." [Bloomberg](#) (12/7, Clukey, 4.73M) reports that during a Monday news briefing with New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo (D), Fauci said, "Without substantial mitigation, the middle of January could be a really dark time for us."

On the [CBS Evening News](#)<sup>Vi</sup> (12/7, story 3, 2:20, 4.66M), O'Donnell reported Fauci in an interview "said stay at home orders are needed to prevent hospitals from being overrun. And should last long enough to ensure that everyone who needs lifesaving care can get it." Fauci: "We have a base line of infections that literally is breaking records every day number of hospitalizations and numbers of deaths. The numbers are really stunning." Asked why the Christmas holiday will be worse than Thanksgiving, Fauci explained, "When you look at Thanksgiving, that say very brief period of time, of travel and congregating. When you are talking about Christmas, you go through Christmas and Hanukkah, you go through the week between Christmas and New Year's, and then you have another celebration, on New Year. That extends that vulnerable period by two or three times what you do in Thanksgiving. That's the reason why the Christmas issue bothers me even more than Thanksgiving."

[Bloomberg](#) (12/7, Court, 4.73M) also reports Fauci "said he won't celebrate the holiday with his daughters for the first time in more than 30 years." Bloomberg adds Christmas Eve also marks "Fauci's 80th birthday, for which he and his wife plan a Zoom celebration with their children."

### **Azar Says Administration Ready To Distribute Vaccines.**

On [NBC Nightly News](#) (12/7, story 2, 3:25, 6.27M), Lester Holt reported the Administration "says it is ready to set the wheels in motion for the biggest mass vaccination program in the nation's history as soon as this week," and HHS Secretary Azar in an interview "played down concerns of potential vaccine shortages and described the first hours after the FDA approval of a vaccine." Asked about the distribution process, **Azar** stated, "Each week, we'll be able to vaccinate more and more people. Be thinking of our most vulnerable citizens, like our seniors in nursing homes or frontline healthcare workers, and as we move forward, we'll just see tens and tens of millions of more people getting vaccinated. Eventually, general vaccination programs that, by the second quarter of next year we believe we'll have enough vaccine across all of the manufacturers for every American who would like to be vaccinated."

In an interview with [Axios on HBO](#) (12/7), **Azar** said, "By January 20, we will have actually vaccinated many tens of millions of American individuals by that point, okay? That process will be running, and the individuals taking over at that point I hope will continue that process because I believe it'll be a success." **Azar** added, "Vaccine hesitancy will decrease, vaccine confidence will increase as time goes by."

**Gottlieb Criticizes US Vaccine Distribution Plans.** [USA Today](#) (12/7, Rodriguez, 10.31M) reports the Administration "hopes to have close to 40 million doses of COVID-19 vaccine" by the end of the year and "plans to distribute half of those in December and hold back the other half to give the same people their second dose of the two-shot regimen," but former FDA commissioner and Pfizer board member Scott Gottlieb "says that's a bad idea. Instead, Gottlieb says he would give out 35 million doses now, and presume the second doses will be available when people need them." In an interview, Gottlieb said, "We should get as many shots in our arms as possible right away." He added, "The idea that we need to cut [the doses] in half and give half of it now and hold onto it, so we have supply in January to get the second dose ... I just fundamentally disagree with that."

**Hospitals Working To Determine Which Healthcare Workers Will Receive COVID Vaccine First.** The [Wall Street Journal](#) (12/7, A1, Evans, Subscription Publication, 7.57M) reports hospitals are rushing to finalize plans to determine which healthcare workers will receive the COVID vaccine first, as initial supplies are widely expected to fall below what is needed to ensure all high-priority workers are vaccinated.

### **Giroir, Collins Defend FDA Vaccine Approval Process.**

Assistant HHS Secretary for Health Brett Giroir said on [Fox News' America's Newsroom](#) (12/7, 896K), "We're not skipping any steps in safety and effectiveness." Giroir continued, "All the data we've seen thus far of Pfizer and of Moderna have been very extraordinarily positive. But, this is an open, transparent process. The FDA will take its signal from the advisory committee and hopefully we'll see an authorization very soon after." Asked about skeptics of the vaccine, Giroir said, "Corners we've cut are only to take financial risks. Instead of doing things sequentially, the government has invested billions of dollars into manufacturing and into other steps. So instead of doing is sequentially, we did them in parallel. Remember, these vaccines have each been tested [in] well over 30,000 people. The effectiveness is over 90%, probably 94% to 95% and almost completely effective in preventing severe disease."

NIH Director Collins said on [MSNBC's MTP Daily](#) (12/7, 1.15M), "The FDA's process is considered to be the gold standard by almost everybody in the world. They look at every single patient record in this very large-scale Phase Three trial. So, that's 30,000 people, half of whom

got the vaccine, half of whom got a placebo. So, they want to make sure everything has been considered as far as safety and efficacy."

### **Pfizer, Moderna Will Not Attend White House Vaccine Summit Where Trump Will Sign "America First" Executive Order.**

[STAT](#) (12/7, Facher, 24K) reports both Pfizer and Moderna "rejected invitations from President Trump to appear at a White House 'Vaccine Summit' on Tuesday, according to two sources familiar with the event's planning." STAT adds that their absence "will be conspicuous" at an "event that drug industry figures and one Trump administration official largely viewed as a public relations stunt when STAT first reported the event last week."

[Bloomberg](#) (12/7, Jacobs, 4.73M) reports the summit is "intended to increase confidence in the new vaccines among the American public, according to a senior administration official." Bloomberg adds the President "will open the three-hour, indoor summit with remarks, followed by discussions of how the vaccines were developed and how they'll be regulated, distributed and administered," and he plans to sign an order for HHS "to give priority to people in the U.S. before helping other countries."

In an online exclusive, senior Administration officials told [Fox News](#) (12/7, Singman, 27.59M) that the President "will reemphasize to the American people that the 'priority has been an America First approach.'" An official "said that the executive order is 'clear and is directing that we prioritize access to the American people before working with partners and allies to provide access to the vaccine,'" and "added that the order will identify 'who will be working with the international aspect of this, the framework, guides and tools, for when we have an excess supply to meet those demands.'"

**Official Denies Report That Administration Did Not Lock In Millions Of Pfizer Vaccine Doses.** The [AP](#) (12/7, Miller, Lemire) reports the Administration "opted last summer not to lock in a chance to buy millions of additional doses of one of the leading coronavirus vaccine contenders, a decision that could delay the delivery of a second batch of doses until manufacturer Pfizer fulfills other international contracts." The AP adds the disclosure that the Administration "committed to buy an initial 100 million doses, with an option to purchase as many as five times more" but "opted not to lock in an additional 100 million doses for delivery in the second quarter of 2021," which was "confirmed Monday by people familiar with the matter, came a day before President Donald Trump aimed to take credit for the speedy development of forthcoming coronavirus vaccines at a White House summit Tuesday."

The [New York Times](#) (12/7, LaFraniere, Thomas, Weiland, 18.61M) reports the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine is "a two-dose treatment, meaning that 100 million doses is enough to vaccinate only 50 million Americans." In addition, the [Washington Post](#) (12/7, A1, McGinley, Abutaleb, Johnson, 14.2M) reports Pfizer "told the Trump administration it cannot provide substantial additional doses of its coronavirus vaccine until late June or July because other countries have rushed to buy up most of its supply, according to multiple individuals familiar with the situation."

While [The Hill](#) (12/7, Weixel, 2.98M) reports an Administration official "said nobody turned down additional Pfizer doses" and said the US "has contracts with five other companies for a combined guarantee of 3 billion doses, as well as the option for more," in the lead [ABC World News Tonight](#)<sup>Vi</sup> (12/7, lead story, 4:35, Muir, 7.46M) story, Jonathan Karl reported ABC has "confirmed that Pfizer offered to sell the US government additional doses of its COVID-19 vaccine late this summer, but the Trump Administration turned them down." Karl added that in contrast to the US, the EU "bought 200 million doses from Pfizer with an option to buy more." Karl also reported the White House "did not invite anybody from the Biden health team" to the summit. The [CBS Evening News](#)<sup>Vi</sup> (12/7, story 6, 0:45, O'Donnell, 4.74M) provided similar coverage in a brief report.

### **Giuliani Diagnosis Prompts Concern For Legislators With Whom He Interacted.**

The [AP](#) (12/7, Madhani, Lemire) reports that on Monday, President Trump said Rudy Giuliani is "doing very well," Giuliani is "hospitalized with the coronavirus as lawmakers in battleground states that Giuliani visited last week scrambled to make sure they did not contract the virus." The AP says Giuliani "had traveled extensively to battleground states to press Trump's quixotic effort to get legislators to overturn his election loss to Joe Biden and subvert the November vote." According to the AP, "On numerous occasions, Giuliani met with officials for hours at a time without wearing a mask, including hearings last week with state lawmakers in Arizona, Georgia and Michigan."

While [Reuters](#) (12/7) reports the Trump campaign on Sunday "said in a statement...that Giuliani 'tested negative twice immediately preceding his trip to Arizona, Michigan, and Georgia,'" [USA Today](#) (12/7, Cummings, 10.31M) reports his positive diagnosis "could mean dozens of people were exposed to coronavirus as...Trump's personal attorney spent much of last week crisscrossing the country as part of the campaign's effort to overturn the Nov. 3 election."

The [Washington Post](#) (12/7, Peiser, 14.2M) reports that "for more than 10 hours last Monday," Giuliani, "convened in a Phoenix hotel ballroom with more than a dozen current and future Arizona Republican lawmakers to hear testimony from people who supposedly witnessed election fraud." According to the Post, "Giuliani and other attendees were shown maskless and not social distancing, and the Arizona Republican Party tweeted an image of Giuliani and lawmakers flouting guidelines to restrict transmission of the novel coronavirus." On Sunday, "legislative staff in Arizona's Capitol abruptly announced a week-long closure of the state Senate and House starting on Monday." [Axios](#) (12/7, Rummler, 521K) provides similar coverage.

### **Johnson To Highlight Vaccine Skeptic, Mask Critic At Hearing.**

The [New York Times](#) (12/7, Edmondson, Fandos, 18.61M) reports Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Chairman Ron Johnson has "assembled a cast of witnesses" for a hearing on Tuesday who will "question much of the public health consensus about the virus. There is a prominent vaccine skeptic, an outspoken critic of masking and social distancing, and at least two doctors who have promoted the use of an anti-parasitic drug that government scientists have recommended against using to treat the coronavirus." The Times says that as Johnson has "embraced the role of the Senate's leading Covid contrarian," he has "set off something of a quiet mutiny on the panel, enraging Democrats who plan to essentially boycott the traditional cross-examination of witnesses and unsettling some Republicans who are planning to skip Tuesday's session lest their presence be seen as lending credence to the proceeding."

### **IBM, Clear Rolling Out New Vaccine Apps.**

On [NBC Nightly News](#)<sup>Vi</sup> (12/7, story 4, 1:50, Holt, 6.27M), Jo Ling Kent reported that with vaccines "on the horizon, new health apps are springing to life." According to Kent, "IBM and Clear, the tech company known for expediting security screenings at airports, are both creating new apps to take in real-time vaccination information. They could be used for admission to concerts and live sports." Kent added Ticketmaster "is exploring several options including a smartphone verification system for vaccination status and negative tests."

### **Physicians Working To Boost COVID Vaccine Confidence Among African Americans.**

The [Washington Post](#) (12/7, A1, Fadulu, 14.2M) reports "Black people are nearly three times more likely than Whites to die of covid-19"; however, "fewer than half of Black Americans say they would get a coronavirus vaccine," compared with 63% of Latinos and 61% of white people, "according to a December report from the Pew Research Center." The Post adds, "Many Black people say they do not trust the medical establishment because of glaring inequities in modern-day care and historical examples of mistreatment." Such "deep-seated skepticism has led to a

burst of confidence-building efforts across the country, some led by the nation's top Black doctors and scientists and funded by the U.S. government."

### **US Sees Increase In Underage Migrants Testing Positive For Coronavirus.**

The [Washington Post](#) (12/7, Sacchetti, 14.2M) reports the number of unaccompanied migrant children who have been "testing positive for the coronavirus has jumped more than 35 percent in recent weeks as federal officials prepare for the possibility of a new immigration surge at the U.S.-Mexico border." The Post adds, "A total of 1,061 minors in U.S. immigration custody have tested positive since March, up from 781 cases in mid-November, according to federal records." However, the Post reports none of the minors "have been hospitalized, and most have recovered and have been released," according to an Office of Refugee Resettlement spokesman.

### **Administration Officials Divided Over Wisdom Of California Lockdown.**

In the lead [NBC Nightly News](#)<sup>Vi</sup> (12/7, lead story, 2:25, Holt, 6.35M) story, Miguel Almaguer reported that "with more businesses closed in California recording a record 34,000 infections in a single day, leading authorities are relaying mixed messages over the state's lockdown." NIAID Director Fauci: "When you have a challenge to the healthcare system, you have got to do something like that." Assistant HHS Secretary for Health Adm. Brett Giroir: "I think we could be causing a lot more harm by causing overly restrictive recommendations."

Giroir said on [Fox News' America's Newsroom](#) (12/7, 896K), "What really breaks my heart is that I don't know of any data that says you need to shut down outdoor dining or outdoor bars. We really wanted to limit the indoor crowded places. So, I think we need to do what's necessary to turn the pandemic but not more that's not evidence-based that is going to be counterproductive." Giroir added, "We do, if you are in a surge place, need to limit indoor dining and indoor bars. You don't have to close schools. You don't have to close universities. You don't have to close your major industries. You do need to wear a mask. That's critically important when you are in public and can't physically distance, very, very important."

Surgeon General Adams said on [Fox News' The Story](#) (12/7), "We know that it is safe to keep schools open in general, when you take precautions. We know that outside is better than inside and that if you close down people's ability to congregate in an outdoor area, they are just going to run inside and the virus will spread. So, I think we need to be more intelligent, more strategic about some of these closures, and we are going to try to give states and health departments better advice. But to the people out there, I would say you still have to comply. You've still got to use common sense."

While [Politico](#) (12/7, Yamamura, 4.29M) reports California Gov. Gavin Newsom (D) has "framed the state's stay-at-home order as necessary to ensure hospitals can handle an expected surge in hospitalizations in coming weeks," the [AP](#) (12/7, Gecker, Pedroncelli) reports that "outside California's big cities, especially in conservative areas, the backlash against tough new restrictions is growing, and some sheriffs say they won't enforce health orders."

However, the [New York Times](#) (12/7, Fuller, Cowan, Tompkins, 18.61M) reports California "is averaging 21,000 new known cases a day, twice as many as the state was reporting at its worst point this summer and by far its highest levels of the pandemic." The Times says that for the state, "the overarching story throughout the pandemic has been of a state that by dint of its population has huge numbers of cases. On a per capita basis California has fewer cases than 40 other states, but its overall numbers are jarring: 1.3 million and counting." [Bloomberg](#) (12/7, 4.73M) says California "reported 24,735 new cases Monday, a day after shattering records with more than 30,000 daily infections."

The [Los Angeles Times](#) (12/7, 4.64M) reports hospitals in the state are "contending with an unprecedented wave of more than 10,000 COVID-19 patients, and the state is on the brink of recording its 20,000th death from the illness." The [San Francisco Chronicle](#) (12/7, 2.67M) reports Newsom announced Monday that intensive care availability at hospitals across the state "has dropped to 14%," with 2,360 patients in intensive care.

Meanwhile, [Reuters](#) (12/7, Dave) reports California on Monday “announced an app to help people track their exposure to the coronavirus, becoming the biggest U.S. state to take advantage of new technology from smartphone software makers Apple Inc and Alphabet Inc’s Google.” Reuters says the CA Notify App, which goes live on Thursday, “had been tested on state university campuses since September. The University of California San Diego will continue to oversee the system and staff a user support phone hotline.”

### **New York Orders Hospitals To Expand Capacity, May Slash Indoor Dining.**

The [AP](#) (12/7, Villeneuve) reports New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo (D) on Monday ordered hospitals “to add 25% more beds to handle growing numbers of coronavirus patients, and...Cuomo warned he would curtail indoor dining if hospitalizations keep rising.” The governor “said that the state isn’t yet at a ‘critical’ level of COVID-19 hospitalizations, but that the continued growth is worrying.” Cuomo also “said he’ll shut down schools, nonessential businesses and all restaurant table service in regions that are on track to hit 90% of hospital capacity within three weeks, based on a seven-day average.”

[CNBC](#) (12/7, Feuer, 3.62M) reports on its website that Cuomo “said...the state could close indoor dining in New York City and slash capacity elsewhere across the state if current hospitalization trends continue.” [Reuters](#) (12/7, Whitcomb, Caspani) also reports Cuomo “floated the possibility of a broad shut down of non-essential businesses across the state like one imposed in the spring if its hospitals become overwhelmed, though he said the current situation was not dire enough to warrant such a step.” According to [Politico](#) (12/7, Eisenberg, 4.29M), “The new plan is based on hospitalization rates rather than infection rates and will take a regional approach to reducing Covid-19 cases. The aim is to avoid mass hospitalizations such as what the city saw this past spring, when it was the national epicenter of the pandemic, health care systems were overwhelmed and field hospitals popped up across the five boroughs.”

The [New York Daily News](#) (12/7, Goldiner, 2.52M) reports that during a news briefing with NIAID Director Fauci, Cuomo “warned that the state has no choice but to reimpose harsh restrictions as health systems are near capacity with COVID-19 rates relentlessly rising.” However, the [New York Times](#) (12/7, Gold, 18.61M) reports restaurant owners “are warning that the industry, which employs thousands of low-income workers and is vital to the city’s culture, risks even further collapse without some form of aid.”

***New York City To Reopen Some Public Schools.*** The [New York Times](#) (12/7, Goodman, 18.61M) reports, “On Monday, New York City will reopen some of its public schools in the teeth of a worsening coronavirus outbreak.” The decision “reflects changing public health thinking around the importance of keeping schools operating, particularly for young students, and the real-world experience of over two months of in-person classes in the city’s school system, the nation’s largest.” However, “the whiplash many New York City students, parents and teachers felt – from a full shutdown before Thanksgiving to a partial reopening less than three weeks later – is not likely to abate as the fall turns to winter.”

On [ABC World News Tonight](#)<sup>Vi</sup> (12/7, story 5, 1:35, Muir, 7.46M), Rachel Scott reported “some” classrooms in the city are “open again under new guidelines, including random COVID testing every week.” On the [CBS Evening News](#)<sup>Vi</sup> (12/7, story 7, 1:50, O'Donnell, 4.74M), Janet Shamlian said the schools are reopening amid “a troubling trend. Remote learners struggling across the country.” Shamlian added, “The educational slide experts say impacting minority, low income, and rural children profoundly. Widening gaps that existed before the pandemic.”

### **Pritzker Says Illinois Facing “Most Crucial Month Of This Entire Pandemic.”**

The [Chicago Tribune](#) (12/7, Munks, 2.65M) reports Illinois Gov. J.B. Pritzker (D) said Monday that December could be “the most crucial month of this entire pandemic,” as while the state has “recently seen a slight decrease in the hospitalization rate for COVID-19, patients it’s still 14% higher than the spring peak during the initial surge of the pandemic.” Pritzker warned, “It’s

likely too early for us to have yet seen the bulk of Thanksgiving-related hospitalizations. We're now in our 11th day since Thanksgiving and we are four days out from Hanukkah and 18 days from Christmas, 19 days from Kwanzaa, 24 from New Year's Eve." He added, "These next four weeks may be the most crucial month of this entire pandemic. We quite literally have very limited leeway in our hospital systems to manage another surge."

### **DeWine To Extend Ohio Curfew.**

The [Cleveland Plain Dealer](#) (12/7, 895K) reports Ohio Gov. Mike DeWine (R) on Monday "said he will extend the overnight curfew, which will expire Thursday after three weeks," but "it remains to be seen whether more action will be taken to stem the spread of the coronavirus." However, the Plain Dealer adds Ohio Department of Health Medical Director Bruce Vanderhoff "appears to advocate more restrictions."

### **Whitmer Extends Michigan's COVID Restrictions For Another 12 Days.**

The [Detroit Free Press](#) (12/7, Boucher, Shamus, 1.52M) reports Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer (D) on Monday announced "restrictions on indoor dining and in-person classes will remain in effect for 12 more days followed by a 'cautious re-engagement.'" The Free Press adds the announcement "was met with fierce criticism from businesses and Republicans, but Whitmer and health officials said the move had to be made to save lives. The rules went into effect Nov. 18 and were due to expire at the end of the day Tuesday." According to the Free Press, "Michigan surpassed 400,000 confirmed coronavirus cases Monday, and the state's COVID-19 death toll is approaching 10,000."

### **Nevada Hospitalizations Up 230% Over Past Month.**

The [AP](#) (12/7, Price) says the Nevada Hospital Association on Monday "reported hospitalized coronavirus patients increased more than 230% from Nov. 6 to Dec. 6," with 1,617 patients currently hospitalized statewide. The AP adds hospital officials "reported that the number of patients needing ventilators grew 250% from early November." Meanwhile, [Fox News](#) (12/7, Farber, 27.59M) reports on its website that Nevada "shattered the record for the highest number of newly confirmed cases" over the weekend, when it "recorded nearly 3,200 new cases of COVID" on Saturday, "the highest amount of newly confirmed cases recorded in the state in a single day, per official estimates."

### **Staffing Shortages Especially Afflicting Rural Hospitals.**

The [AP](#) (12/7, Hollingsworth) highlights how a staffing shortage at Rush County Memorial Hospital in La Crosse, Kansas, "illustrates the depths of the COVID-19 crisis in rural America at a time when the virus is killing more than 2,000 people a day and inundating hospitals." The AP adds the pandemic is "sidelining nurses, doctors and medical staff nationwide, but the problem is particularly dire in rural communities like La Crosse because they don't have much of a bullpen – or many places to send patients with regional hospitals full."

### **Florida State Police Raid Home Of Data Scientist Behind COVID Dashboard.**

The [Tallahassee \(FL\) Democrat](#) (12/7, Schweers, 180K) reports Florida state police "brandishing firearms Monday raided the Tallahassee home of Rebekah Jones, the former Department of Health data scientist who built the state's much-praised COVID-19 dashboard before being fired over what she said was refusing to 'manipulate data.'" The Democrat adds Jones "said the agents knocked on her door around 8:30 a.m. that morning, took all her 'hardware and tech' after showing her a warrant based on a complaint filed by the Florida Department of Health." The [South Florida Sun Sentinel](#) (12/7, Swisher, Goodman, Ariza, 545K) reports that since she was fired, Jones "has become an outspoken and vocal critic of the DeSantis administration's coronavirus response, regularly taking to social media and prime-time cable television."

## **South Dakota's Noem Lauds Her Response To Coronavirus.**

In a [Wall Street Journal](#) (12/7, Subscription Publication, 7.57M) op-ed, South Dakota Gov. Kristi Noem (R) argues that compared to other governors, her approach to the coronavirus is better because she is not imposing lockdowns or mask mandates.

## **Liability Protections, State And Local Aid Stall COVID Relief Negotiations.**

The [Wall Street Journal](#) (12/7, Peterson, Duehren, Subscription Publication, 7.57M) says a growing bipartisan group of lawmakers from both chambers has been working out the details of a \$908 billion COVID relief bill announced last week. Over the weekend, they came to agreement on a number of points, but they remain stalled on providing liability protections to businesses, which has been a priority for Republicans, and Democrats' demands for funding for state and local governments. The [AP](#) (12/7) says it is "clear that [Senate Majority Leader] McConnell's Republican majority is demanding the liability protection in exchange for the Democrats' push for additional money for states and cities battling the COVID-19 crisis."

But [Reuters](#) (12/7, Cornwell) reports McConnell, who favors a "targeted" measure, "said lawmakers agree on three points – extending unemployment benefits, helping small businesses and funding vaccines." Speaking on the senate floor, McConnell said lawmakers should "make law in the many places where we have common ground" and give up other demands. The [New York Post](#) (12/7, Nelson, 4.57M) reports McConnell "said he expects there to be a stop-gap one-week government funding bill that passes before Friday – pushing off for at least another week any potential COVID-19 relief bill. ... His remarks appear to dash a Senate Republican colleague's prediction that McConnell would get behind a \$908 billion bipartisan proposal that President Trump reportedly indicated he would sign."

[Roll Call](#) (12/7, McPherson, Lerman, 154K) reports NEC Director Kudlow told a Washington Post Live event, "I believe it is likely [the President] will" sign a version of the bipartisan package, but, "It depends importantly on some of the policy details inside."

**Hawley Urges Trump To Veto Stimulus Bill Lacking Direct Payments.** [Politico](#) (12/7, Everett, 4.29M) reports that Sen. Josh Hawley (R-MO) is "not happy that the leading coronavirus proposals lack another round of direct payments...and he's taking his case straight to" Trump. According to Politico, Hawley "lobbied Trump to veto any coronavirus aid bill that does not contain a second tranche of checks to Americans in a phone call on Saturday. And Hawley said the president listened intently." Hawley is quoted as saying, "I said, 'I think it's vital that any relief include direct payments, and I'm not gonna vote for it if it doesn't.' And I also urged him to veto any bill that did not have direct payments in it." Politico says Hawley "argues that it is 'wild' that a Senate GOP proposal and a bipartisan \$908 billion plan offers aid but doesn't include more checks like those \$1,200 payments in March's massive CARES Act package. And he said Trump seemed receptive to the argument."

**Massachusetts Governor Calls On Trump, Lawmakers To Approve Another Relief Bill.** In an op-ed for the [Wall Street Journal](#) (12/7, Subscription Publication, 7.57M), Massachusetts Gov. Charlie Baker (R) urges Congress and the President to approve another relief bill.

**Some Unemployed DC Residents To Receive \$1,200 Stimulus Payments.** The [Washington Post](#) (12/7, Brice-Saddler, Flynn, 14.2M) reports District of Columbia Mayor Muriel Bowser (D) announced Monday that some unemployed residents of the city will receive \$1,200 stimulus payments. Bowser "said during a news conference that the city will offer a single \$1,200 stimulus payment to residents who are receiving Pandemic Unemployment Assistance, which she said will provide temporary, immediate relief as federal benefits are set to expire at the end of the month."

## **Lawmakers To Vote On Short-Term Spending Bill As Dual Negotiations Continue.**

[CNBC](#) (12/7, Pramuk, 3.62M) reports on its website that Congress "aims to extend government funding for an additional week while lawmakers try to scrape together spending and

coronavirus relief packages." The [AP](#) (12/7) says with the one-week stopgap measure, lawmakers "are giving themselves more time to sort through their end-of-session business on government spending and COVID-19 relief." [Reuters](#) (12/7) reports House Majority Leader Hoyer [tweeted](#), "I am disappointed that we have not yet reached agreement on government funding. The House will vote on Wednesday on a one-week CR to keep government open while negotiations continue."

[USA Today](#) (12/7, Wu, Hayes, 10.31M) reports Senate Majority Leader McConnell said Monday that his chamber will also vote on the one-week extension this week. USA Today also describes what would occur if lawmakers fail to reach agreement and the government shuts down.

The [Washington Post](#) (12/7, DeBonis, Stein, Kim, 14.2M) says "negotiations over the government funding bill have stalled with lawmakers torn on at least a dozen policy issues, particularly related to immigration." The "most divisive issues...concern funding for President Trump's border wall with Mexico and detention facilities" run by Immigration and Customs Enforcement. [The Hill](#) (12/7, Marcos, 2.98M) provides similar coverage.

### **Axios Report: Trump Discussing Pardons "Like Christmas Gifts."**

[Axios](#) (12/7, Swan, 521K) reports, "President Trump isn't just accepting pardon requests but blindly discussing them 'like Christmas gifts' to people who haven't even asked, sources with direct knowledge of the conversations told Axios." Trump "recently told one adviser he was going to pardon 'every person who ever talked to me,' suggesting an even larger pardon blitz to come. As with most Trump conversations, the adviser wasn't sure how seriously to take the president – although Trump gave no indication he was joking."

***AP Examines Question Of Presidential Self-Pardon.*** The [AP](#) (12/7, Tucker) carries a feature titled "Does Trump Have Power To Pardon Himself? It's Complicated." The AP says "no president has attempted to pardon himself while in office, so if Trump tries to do so in the next six weeks, he will be venturing into legally untested territory without clear guidance from the Constitution or from judges." Legal experts "are divided on an inherently ambiguous question that was left vague by the Founding Fathers and has never had to be definitively resolved in court." Some say the "broad power the Constitution affords a president" regarding pardons would permit such a move, while others "say a self-pardon collides with other provisions of the Constitution or even fundamental principles of law."

### **DHS Says It Has Fully Restored DACA For Now.**

The [AP](#) (12/7, Merchant, Spagat) reports DHS said Monday that it has fully restored the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program, "complying with a federal judge's order." DHS "posted on its website that it is accepting new applications, petitions for two-year renewals and requests for permission to temporarily leave" the US. However, the department "said it 'may seek relief from the order,' signaling that its concession to the court order may be short-lived if its legal efforts succeed."

### **TPS Extended For Nine Months.**

The [Miami Herald](#) (12/7, Charles, 1.09M) reports DHS has extended Temporary Protected Status benefits, "which were set to expire early next month for an estimated 400,000 immigrants from Haiti, Nepal and Central America," for nine months. The extension "means that the TPS beneficiaries, including nationals of Sudan as well as Honduras, Nicaragua and El Salvador, can continue to legally live and work in the United States for the next nine months and – for now – avoid being placed in deportation proceedings."

### **Border Wall Contractors Accused Of "Smuggling Armed Mexican Security Teams" Into US.**

The [New York Times](#) (12/7, Kanno-Youngs, 18.61M) reports, "Two whistle-blowers have accused contractors building President Trump's border wall of smuggling armed Mexican security teams into the United States to guard construction sites, even building an illegal dirt road to speed the operation." In court documents unsealed Friday, the "two employees, who were both contracted to provide security at the sites, accused the company, Sullivan Land Services Co., or S.L.S. – as well as a subcontractor, Ultimate Concrete of El Paso – of hiring workers who were not vetted by the United States government, overcharging for construction costs and making false statements about those actions."

### **Office Of Special Counsel Says Navarro Repeatedly Violated Hatch Act.**

The [AP](#) (12/7, Freking) reports the Office of Special Counsel said in a [Monday report](#) that Director of Trade and Manufacturing Policy Navarro "repeatedly violated" the Hatch Act "during the campaign season with his criticisms of Joe Biden." The [Wall Street Journal](#) (12/7, Restuccia, Subscription Publication, 7.57M) says the report identifies six media interviews over a course of five months in which Navarro, appearing in his official capacity, criticized Biden or Sen. Kamala Harris (D-CA). The report also says Navarro criticized Biden and Harris through his official Twitter account. [Reuters](#) (12/7, Shalal), [Politico](#) (12/7, Palmer, 4.29M), and [The Hill](#) (12/7, Lane, 2.98M) also have reports.

### **NYTimes Analysis: Scrutiny Of Spending At Trump Properties Did Not Result In Limits.**

The [New York Times](#) (12/7, Lipton, 18.61M) reports that "more than 200 companies, special-interest groups and foreign governments patronized [President] Trump's properties during his presidency while reaping benefits from him and his administration. Sixty of them spent \$12 million at his properties during the first two years he was in office." In addition, according to the Times, the Trump Organization "has received millions of dollars in payments by the Secret Service, the State Department and the United States military to Trump properties." Moreover, Trump "and his affiliated political committees spent more than \$6.5 million in campaign funds at his hotels and other businesses since 2017." The Times adds, that despite "all the attention focused on the issue, Mr. Trump is set to leave office without a clear resolution of what limits there should be on a president's ability to profit from his public role."

### **McConnell Says Senate Will Take Up And Pass NDAA.**

[The Hill](#) (12/7, Carney, 2.98M) reports Senate Majority Leader McConnell said Monday that the Senate "will take up and pass a mammoth defense bill despite a looming veto showdown with President Trump." McConnell included the National Defense Authorization Act on a list of "items left on Congress's year-end to-do list as lawmakers prepare to leave Washington for the year as soon as next week." [Roll Call](#) (12/7, Donnelly, 154K) reports House Majority Leader Hoyer said Monday that if Trump does veto the bill, Congress would likely take a shorter holiday break to return to attempt to override the veto.

### **Supreme Court Declines To Take Up Appeal On Transgender Student's Rights.**

The [AP](#) (12/7) reports the Supreme Court "declined Monday to take up an appeal from parents in Oregon who want to prevent transgender students from using locker rooms and bathrooms of the gender with which they identify, rather than their sex assigned at birth." [Reuters](#) (12/7) and [Politico](#) (12/7, Quilantan, 4.29M) also have reports.

### **Supreme Court Considers US Role In Holocaust Survivors' Cases Against Germany And Hungary.**

The [New York Times](#) (12/7, Liptak, 18.61M) reports the Supreme Court on Monday heard arguments "over whether American courts have a role in deciding whether Hungary and Germany must pay for property said to have been stolen from Jews before and during World

War II." The Trump Administration has filed brief and presented arguments "supporting efforts to limit review in American courts."

### **Biden Has Reportedly Decided On Austin For Defense Secretary.**

Multiple sources reported Monday evening that Joe Biden will nominate retired Army Gen. Lloyd Austin to be defense secretary. [USA Today](#) (12/7, Behrmann, Brook, 10.31M) says Austin "rose to the military's loftiest ranks and kept one of its lowest profiles. He was the Army's vice chief of staff and also led the military's most consequential command, Central Command, which oversees military operations in Iraq, Syria and Afghanistan." The [New York Times](#) (12/7, Cooper, 18.61M) reports that if confirmed, Austin "would make history as the first African-American to lead the country's 1.3 million active-duty troops and the enormous bureaucracy that backs them up." However, the [Washington Post](#) (12/7, Kim, 14.2M) says, "Austin's selection could run into strong opposition from lawmakers who want to ensure civilian control of the military. As a recently retired military officer, he would have to gain a waiver from a law that states that any service member must be out of uniform for seven years before becoming defense secretary."

The [AP](#) (12/7, Burns, Balsamo, Lemire, Miller) reports Biden "selected Austin over the longtime front-runner candidate, Michele Flournoy, a former senior Pentagon official and Biden supporter who would have been the first woman to serve as defense secretary. Biden also had considered Jeh Johnson, a former Pentagon general counsel and former secretary of homeland defense." The [Wall Street Journal](#) (12/7, Glazer, Youssef, Subscription Publication, 7.57M), [Politico](#) (12/7, Seligman, Pager, O'Brien, 4.29M), and [The Hill](#) (12/7, Kheel, 2.98M) are among the other sources covering the expected choice. [ABC World News Tonight](#)<sup>Vi</sup> (12/7, story 6, 0:30, Muir, 7.76M) and the [CBS Evening News](#)<sup>Vi</sup> (12/7, story 4, 1:50, O'Donnell, 4.66M) had updates on Biden's Cabinet selection process.

**Biden Reportedly "Leaning Toward" Vilsack For Second Stint At USDA.** [Politico](#) (12/7, Cassella, Crampton, Pager, 4.29M) reports Biden is "leaning toward picking former Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack to return as head of the USDA...turning to a longtime ally over several other more diverse candidates who have been jockeying for the role." However, [Bloomberg](#) (12/7, Jacobs, Dorning, 4.73M) reports that "while Vilsack was favored," Biden "has not yet made a decision," and is also considering Rep. Marcia Fudge (D-OH) and ex-Gov. Jennifer Granholm (D-MI). Bloomberg says Biden had also considered ex-Sen. Heidi Heitkamp (D-ND) but, "a coalition of progressive groups wrote a public letter to Biden criticizing her as being too close to corporate agriculture interests."

**Harris' Sister Has Reportedly Promoted Her Husband For AG.** [Politico](#) (12/7, Pager, 4.29M) reports Maya Harris, sister of Sen. Kamala Harris (D-CA), "has participated in conversations with allies aimed at boosting her husband's candidacy for attorney general, according to people familiar with the calls." Tony West is "the chief legal officer at Uber and former U.S. associate attorney general in the Obama administration."

**Republicans Raise "Red Flags" Over Becerra HHS Nomination.** The [Los Angeles Times](#) (12/7, Haberkorn, 4.64M) reports, "Senate Republicans raised red flags" Monday over Biden's plan to nominate California Attorney General Xavier Becerra (D) for HHS secretary. At least three Republicans "objected to Becerra's endorsement of Medicare for All, a proposal for a government-run healthcare system, and his support for abortion rights and access."

**Kudlow: Yellen At Treasury A "Good Idea."** [Politico](#) (12/7, Warmbrodt, 4.29M) reports NEC Director Kudlow on Monday "applauded [Biden's] nomination of Janet Yellen to lead the Treasury Department. ... Kudlow said Yellen's nomination to lead Treasury was a 'good idea.' He said she 'knows the ropes' and did a 'decent job' when she chaired the Federal Reserve. He also doubts she would support raising taxes next year."

**Politico Analysis: Kerry's Role In Biden Administration Has Potential To Create Confusion.** [Politico](#) (12/7, Bertrand, Toosi, 4.29M) says former Secretary of State John Kerry is "reporting for duty as Joe Biden's climate envoy," but "the exact parameters of his new role

remain undefined, raising concerns that he might create confusion and complicate the Biden administration's diplomatic lines of effort." Politico says it is "not clear how Kerry's job will mesh with the activities of his former deputy, incoming Secretary of State Antony Blinken...and what role he'll play on the National Security Council."

***Asian American Lawmakers Express Concerns Over Composition Of Cabinet.*** The [Washington Post](#) (12/7, Wang, 14.2M) reports, "Members of the Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus met virtually" with members of Biden's "transition team Monday to express their growing concern that there will be insufficient Asian American representation in top-tier spots in Biden's administration. About a dozen lawmakers from the bipartisan group told Biden's team in a video call they felt hurt that even though Asian American and Pacific Islander voters came out strongly for [Biden], there may ultimately be no AAPI representation in senior levels of the Cabinet."

***Biden Expected To Rely On Coons To Reach Out To Senate Republicans.*** [Politico](#) (12/7, Everett, 4.29M) reports that Sen. Chris Coons (D-DE) was "in the final two" for Biden's secretary of state pick, but Biden "told his Delaware ally" that he needs him to stay in the Senate as an envoy to the GOP. According to Politico, Coons "may actually be the most critical individual Democrat on Capitol Hill – Biden truly needs his help to have any chance at accomplishment in a narrowly divided Congress."

## INTERNATIONAL NEWS

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### **Britain Beginning Vaccination Campaign.**

The [New York Times](#) (12/7, Castle, Santora, 18.61M) reports, "Preparing to take a first step in what could prove to be one of the most daunting logistical challenges undertaken during peacetime, hospitals across Britain readied for the start of the largest mass vaccination effort in the nation's history, part of a global campaign without precedent." According to the Times, "An army of health care workers – assisted by tens of thousands of volunteers and the military – will begin rolling out inoculations of a Covid-19 vaccine on Tuesday morning, aiming to vaccinate more than 20 million citizens in just a few months time." The Times adds, "With virtually the whole world still at grave risk from the pandemic, other nations will watch closely as the U.K. becomes the first Western nation to begin its mass vaccination campaign." On [ABC World News Tonight](#)<sup>Vi</sup> (12/7, story 3, 2:10, Muir, 7.46M), James Longman stated that the UK's priority groups consist of "those over 80, nursing home residents, and front line healthcare workers."

Meanwhile, the [New York Times](#) (12/7, Castle, 18.61M) says that as logistics experts and health officials "grapple with" the challenges of distributing the vaccine, "law enforcement officers and cyber-sleuths face an equally pressing challenge in the potential security threats surrounding a product in such high demand." In addition, Richard Engel reported on [NBC Nightly News](#)<sup>Vi</sup> (12/7, story 3, 1:40, Holt, 6.35M) that Interpol "worries the doses could be stolen or counterfeited for the black market."

### **Canada Prepares To Begin Distributing Pfizer Vaccine This Month.**

[The Hill](#) (12/7, Choi, 2.98M) reports the Canadian government "announced on Tuesday it would be receiving a quarter of a million doses of the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine next week," and Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau "said...immunizations could begin as early as next week." The Hill adds the disclosure "comes two weeks after...Trudeau said that Canadians would likely have to wait until 2021 to receive the first doses of a vaccine, citing the fact that most manufacturers are located outside of Canada and would want to give the first round of doses to the countries they operate in."

### **NYTimes Profiles Scandal-Plagued Executive For Chinese Vaccine Manufacturer.**

In a 2,900-word profile of Du Weimin, the Chairman of Shenzhen Kangtai Biological Products, the [New York Times](#) (12/7, Wee, Hernández, 18.61M) highlights a 2016 bribery scandal linked to Du, whose company "will be the exclusive manufacturer in mainland China for the vaccine made by the British-Swedish pharmaceutical giant AstraZeneca, and the companies could work together on deals for other countries. The Chinese company is also in early trials for its own candidate." The Times adds that as the Chinese government "has pushed to develop vaccine companies of global renown, the state has fostered and protected an industry plagued by corruption and controversy."

### **US Economic Sanctions On Iran Could Impede Access To Coronavirus Vaccines, Analysts Say.**

The [Washington Post](#) (12/7, Berger, 14.2M) reports US economic sanctions on Iran "could impede its access to coronavirus vaccines, business and financial analysts say, imperiling efforts to contain the largest outbreak in the Middle East and risking continued spread of the virus throughout the region." The Covax global vaccine program "said Iran has received a U.S. government exemption to procure vaccines," but "financial sanctions hamstringing Iran's efforts to participate in the program and to make related medical purchases."

### **Lack Of Trust Said To Be Impacting Russia's COVID Vaccine Rollout.**

The [New York Times](#) (12/7, Troianovski, 18.61M) reports, "Russia made its coronavirus vaccine available for free in recent days to teachers, medical workers and social-service employees younger than 61 in Moscow." But, the Times says, "even more than in the West, a lack of trust is hobbling Russia's rollout of a vaccine: the country's scientists may well have made great strides in battling the pandemic, but many Russians are not ready to believe it."

### **São Paulo Governor Mandates Residents Get COVID Vaccine.**

The [Washington Post](#) (12/7, McCoy, 14.2M) reports that São Paulo Governor João Doria told reporters that he has "guaranteed that the 45 million Brazilians...in São Paulo will be vaccinated, and the vaccine will be obligatory."

### **Iran Says Nuclear Official Was Killed By "Satellite-Controlled Smart System."**

[Reuters](#) (12/7) reports Ali Fadavi, the deputy commander of Iran's Revolutionary Guards, indicated Sunday that "the killing of Iran's top nuclear scientist last month was carried out remotely with artificial intelligence and a machine gun equipped with a 'satellite-controlled smart system.'" Reuters says Iran has "blamed Israel for the assassination of Mohsen Fakhrizadeh, who was seen by Western intelligence services as the mastermind of a covert Iranian programme to develop nuclear weapons capability." Fadavi said Fakhrizadeh was "driving when a weapon, using an advanced camera, zoomed in on him. ... The machine gun was placed on a pick-up truck and was controlled by a satellite."

### **Duckworth Calls On State Department To Prioritize Return Of US Contractor Taken In Afghanistan.**

The [AP](#) (12/7, Tucker) reports Sen. Tammy Duckworth (D-IL) "is calling on the State Department to prioritize the return of Mark Frerichs, an American contractor believed to have been taken by a Taliban-linked militant network in Afghanistan earlier this year." In a letter to Secretary of State Pompeo which was also sent to the White House, "Duckworth complained that the family has not had any recent, direct communication with U.S. peace envoy Zalmay Khalilzad." Duckworth requested a call with Khalilzad before December 23 to "discuss the latest developments in Mr. Frerichs' case and how his release is being factored into negotiations."

### **With Brexit Talks At An Impasse, Johnson To Travel To Brussels This Week.**

The [AP](#) (12/7, Casert) reports, "More than four years after helping set Britain's course out of the European Union, Prime Minister Boris Johnson is headed to EU headquarters to try to finish the job." [Reuters](#) (12/7, Baczynska, Chalmers, Piper) reports UK and EU leaders "will meet face-to-face to try to seal a post-Brexit trade deal after failing again to narrow their differences on Monday, increasing the chance of a disorderly parting of ways at the end of the month."

The [Washington Post](#) (12/7, Booth, Birnbaum, 14.2M) reports Johnson and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen "said 'significant differences' remained after a conversation between them on Monday evening. But a Downing Street spokesman confirmed that Johnson would travel in-person" to Brussels later this week "to try to close a deal. If they fail, Britain and Europe could soon see new customs duties, tariffs, border checks and quotas on goods – and an ignominious end to decades of the free, frictionless trade." The [New York Times](#) (12/7, Landler, Castle, 18.61M) says "analysts welcomed Mr. Johnson's readiness to jump in, which came after days of intensive negotiations that had failed to narrow the gaps."

### **Maduro Alliance Claims Victory In Venezuelan Congressional Elections.**

The [AP](#) (12/7, Smith) reports, "Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro's political alliance claimed a sweeping victory Monday in congressional elections boycotted by the most influential opposition politicians and widely criticized internationally as being fraudulent." Maduro's United Socialist Party of Venezuela and allied parties "captured 67% of seats in the National Assembly in Sunday's election" in which just 31% of voters turned out. The win "gives Maduro control of the last major branch of government outside his grasp."

### **Romanian Prime Minister Resigns Following Unexpected Election Defeat.**

The [New York Times](#) (12/7, Gillet, 18.61M) reports Romanian Prime Minister Ludovic Orban resigned Monday evening after a surprise defeat in Sunday's parliamentary elections. Amid "record low turnout," the opposition center-left Social Democratic Party outpaced Orban's National Liberal Party, "which had been expected to comfortably form a governing coalition with another center-right party." While the coalition is still expected to form a government, Orban will not be at its head.

### **NYTimes Analysis: Abortion Protests Shifting Gender Balance Of Power In Poland.**

The [New York Times](#) (12/7, Taub, 18.61M) says that the ongoing protests over a court decision banning almost all abortions in Poland has altered the power dynamic in the country, with women claiming political power that has been held "almost exclusively among men. ... Such disruptions have been seen globally in the wake of the #MeToo movement, which has toppled many powerful men, but none have gone to the heart of politics as directly as in Poland. Gender equality would disrupt a political arrangement in the country that has been set for decades: a symbiotic relationship in which the Catholic Church lends its authority to politicians in exchange for the government's enforcing ecclesiastical morality, including by restricting abortion."

### **Ghanaians Go To Polls In Presidential Election.**

The [AP](#) (12/7, Kokutse) reports, "Voters in Ghana cast their ballots Monday for presidential and legislative elections likely to test the West African nation's credentials as one of the continent's most politically stable countries." President Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo and former President John Dramani Mahama are seen as the frontrunners in a field of 12. If no candidate wins a majority, a second round will take place in about three weeks.

### **Researchers Say Last Month Was Hottest November On Record.**

The [New York Times](#) (12/7, Fountain, 18.61M) reports researchers with the Copernicus Climate Change Service said Monday that last month "was the hottest November on record...as the relentlessly warming climate proved too much even for any possible effects of cooler ocean temperatures in the tropical Pacific Ocean." Scientists said global temperatures in November

"were 0.1 degree Celsius (about 0.2 degree Fahrenheit) above the previous record-holders, in 2016 and 2019. November 2020 was 0.8 degree Celsius (or 1.5 degrees Fahrenheit) higher than the average from 1981 to 2010."

## THE BIG PICTURE

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### Headlines From Today's Front Pages.

#### **Wall Street Journal:**

[Biden Expected To Name Lloyd Austin As Defense Secretary](#)  
[Who Gets Covid-19 Vaccine First? Hospitals Assess How To Divvy Up Shots](#)  
[From Pilot To Truck Driver – Airline Careers Grounded By Pandemic](#)  
[Some Small Hedge Funds Reap Big Gains In Tough Times](#)  
[Some Office Workers Return And Find Joy In Their Cubicles: 'Ooh, A Binder Clip!'](#)

#### **Washington Post:**

[Pfizer: Quick Restock Unlikely](#)  
[Bridging The Vaccine's Trust Gap](#)  
[Trump Expands Efforts To Undo Loss](#)  
[Legal Group Challenging Vote Has Tie To Trump Team](#)  
[Gains By Women Reflect A GOP Shift](#)  
[Biden To Name Retired General As Defense Chief](#)

#### **Financial Times:**

[Universal Music Buys Bob Dylan's Music Catalogue In '9-Figure Deal'](#)  
[Uber Abandons Effort To Develop Own Self-Driving Vehicle](#)  
[Angela Merkel Faces Final Challenge At EU Summit](#)  
[China Curtails Overseas Lending In Face Of Geopolitical Backlash](#)

#### **Story Lineup From Last Night's Network News:**

**ABC:** Pfizer Vaccine; COVID Surge; UK-Pfizer Vaccine; Georgia-Senate Runoff; COVID-Schools; Biden-Cabinet; Virginia-Removal of Confederate Statue; Bob Dylan-Song Catalog Sold; Remembering Pearl Harbor.

**CBS:** COVID Surge; COVID-Hospital Systems; Fauci-Holidays; Biden-Cabinet; Trump-Election Results; Pfizer Vaccine; COVID-Schools; Nor'Easter; Bob Dylan-Song Catalog Sold; Time Magazine's Kid of the Year.

**NBC:** COVID Surge; Alex Azar-Vaccines; UK-Pfizer Vaccine; Vaccines-Health Apps; Trump-Election Results; Ohio-Man Shot By Sheriff's Deputy; CIA-Havana Syndrome; FTC-Robocalls; Bob Dylan-Song Catalog Sold; Remembering Pearl Harbor.

#### **Network TV At A Glance:**

COVID Surge – 9 minutes, 55 seconds  
Pfizer Vaccine – 7 minutes, 0 seconds

#### **Story Lineup From This Morning's Radio News Broadcasts:**

**ABC:** Biden-Cabinet; White House-COVID Vaccination Summit; COVID Surge; Congress-Relief Bill; California-Santa Ana's.

**CBS:** Biden-Cabinet; Trump-Pennsylvania Results; COVID-California Lockdown; Virginia-No Knock Warrants Ban; Death of Baseball Star; Ford-Layoffs.

**FOX:** COVID-Michigan Restrictions; COVID-California Lockdown; Test Pilot's Death; Virginia-No Knock Warrants Ban.

## WASHINGTON'S SCHEDULE

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### Today's Events In Washington.

#### **White House:**

- President Trump — Delivers remarks at an Operation Warp Speed Vaccine Summit.
- Vice President Pence — No public schedule released.

#### **US Senate:**

- Acting Assistant Secretary of State Reeker briefs Helsinki Commission – Helsinki Commission online hearing on 'U.S. Priorities for Engagement at the OSCE', with Acting Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs Philip Reeker briefing following the recent (3-4 Dec) OSCE Ministerial Council meeting; **10:00 AM**
- Senate Governmental Affairs Committee second hybrid hearing on outpatient coronavirus treatment – Hybrid hearing on 'Early Outpatient Treatment: An Essential Part of a COVID-19 Solution, Part II', with testimony from Association of American Physicians and Surgeons Executive Director Jane Orient; St. Luke's Aurora Medical Center Associate Professor of Medicine Pierre Kory; Broward Health Medical Center pulmonologist Jean-Jacques Rajter; and Sibley Memorial Hospital Vice President of Medical Staff / Foxhall Cardiology CEO Ramin Oskoui \* Held via videoconference and in Rm 342, Dirksen Senate Office Building; **10:00 AM**
- Senate Transportation subcommittee hearing on the USCG and the Arctic – Security Subcommittee hearing on 'U.S. Coast Guard Capabilities for Safeguarding National Interests and Promoting Economic Security in the Arctic', with testimony from U.S. Coast Guard Vice Commandant Adm. Charles Ray; Woodwell Climate Research Center Senior Scientist Dr Jennifer Francis; Arctic Domain Awareness Center Executive Director Maj. Gen. (Ret.) Randy Kee; and At-sea Processors Association Executive Director Stephanie Madsen \* Rescheduled from 22 Sep

*Location: Rm 253, Russell Senate Office Building, Washington, DC; 2:30 PM*

#### **US House:**

- House Appropriations subcommittee virtual hearing on women denied an abortion because of an inability to pay – Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies Subcommittee virtual hearing on 'The Impact on Women Seeking an Abortion but are Denied Because of an Inability to Pay', held via Cisco Webex, with testimony from Guttmacher Institute President and CEO Dr Herminia Palacio; Physicians for Reproductive Health President and CEO Dr Jamila Perritt; and Lilith Fund Executive Director Amanda Beatriz Williams; **10:00 AM**
- Acting Assistant Secretary of State Reeker briefs Helsinki Commission – Helsinki Commission online hearing on 'U.S. Priorities for Engagement at the OSCE', with Acting Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs Philip Reeker briefing following the recent (3-4 Dec) OSCE Ministerial Council meeting; **10:00 AM**
- House Oversight Committee hearing on Purdue Pharma, the Sackler family, and the opioid epidemic – House Committee on Oversight and Reform hearing on 'the role of Purdue Pharma and members of the Sackler family in fueling the nation's opioid epidemic', with Purdue Pharma President and CEO Craig Landau and Sackler family members Dr Richard Sackler, David Sackler, Dr Kathe Sackler, and Mortimer Sackler having been invited to testify \* The company and some members of the family have faced lawsuits over their role in encouraging the medical industry to over-prescribe addictive opioids including OxyContin; **10:00 AM**

- House Veterans Affairs subcommittee hearing on Congressional and administration priorities for the next Congress (virtual) – Economic Opportunity Subcommittee remote hearing on 'Identifying Congressional and Administration Priorities for the Next Congress: How we can support our Veterans through and after COVID-19'; 10:00 AM
- Former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright testifies to House Foreign Affairs Committee on the Balkans – Hybrid hearing on 'The Balkans: Policy Recommendations for the Next Administration', with testimony from former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright; SAIS Director of American Foreign Policy and Director of Conflict Management Dr Daniel Serwer; and The Jamestown Foundation Senior Fellow Janusz Bugajski \* Held via Cisco Webex and in Rm 2172, Rayburn House Office Building; 10:00 AM
- House discusses conference committee-passed FY'21 NDAA – House of Representatives meets for legislative business, with agenda including Conference Report to Accompany 'H.R. 6395 – William M. (Mac) Thornberry National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2021' plus consideration of 'S. 1811 – Water Resources Development Act of 2020', as amended, 'S. 1014 – Route 66 Centennial Commission Act', 'S. 4902 – To designate the United States courthouse located at 351 South West Temple in Salt Lake City, Utah, as the 'Orrin G. Hatch United States Courthouse'', 'S. 578 – ALS Disability Insurance Access Act of 2019', 'H.R. 8161 – The One Stop Shop Community Reentry Program Act of 2020', as amended, 'S. 2258 – Criminal Antitrust Anti-Retaliation Act of 2019', 'H.R. 683 – PPRADA', 'S. 134 – Combat Online Predators Act', 'H.R. 8354 – Servicemembers and Veterans Initiative Act of 2020', as amended, 'S. 3989 – United States Semiquincentennial Commission Amendments Act of 2020', as amended, 'H.R. 8235 – Open Courts Act of 2020' under suspension of the rules

*Location: U.S. Capitol, Washington, DC; 12:00 PM*

#### **Cabinet Officers:**

- No public schedules released.

#### **Visitors:**

- No visitors scheduled.

#### **This Town:**

- Milken Institute Future of Health virtual summit continues – Milken Institute Future of Health Summit, virtual event for leaders from business, govt, science, education, philanthropy, and technology to address health challenges facing the U.S. and the world. Day two speakers include former Food and Drug Administration Commissioners Robert Califf, Margaret Hamburg and Mark McClellan, Democratic Reps. Diana DeGette and Tim Ryan, Republican Rep. Fred Upton, World Health Organization COVID-19 Vaccine Development co-leader Andrew Witty, and American Heart Association CEO Nancy Brown; 8:00 AM
- Quarterly Financial Report – Industry – Quarterly Financial Report – Manufacturing, Mining, Wholesale Trade, and Selected Service Industries; 10:00 AM
- USIP online event on UNSCR 2250 five years later – 'Five Years Later: UNSCR 2250 on Youth, Peace, and Security: Reflecting on Progress and Barriers to the Youth, Peace, and Security Agenda' U.S. Institute of Peace online event, marking five years since the United Nations Security Council unanimously passed the resolution. Speakers include U.N. Population Fund Secretariat on Youth, Peace and Security Head Cecile Mazzacurati and USIP Advisory Council members Mridul Upadhyay and Lorena Gomez Ramirez; 10:00 AM
- U.S. Supreme Court hearings – U.S. Supreme Court hearings: 'Facebook Inc. v. Duguid' (Whether the definition of an automatic telephone dialing system in the Telephone Consumer Protection Act encompasses any device that can store and automatically dial telephone numbers, even if the device does not use a random or sequential number generator?) \* 'Henry Schein, Inc. v. Archer and White Sales, Inc.' (Whether a provision in an

arbitration agreement that exempts certain claims from arbitration negates an otherwise clear and unmistakable delegation of questions of arbitrability to an arbitrator?)

*Location: Supreme Court of the United States, Washington, DC; 10:00 AM*

- Melania Trump participates in U.S. Marine Corps Reserve Toys for Tots Campaign – First Lady Melania Trump participates in annual Marine Toys for Tots Drive hosted by the U.S. Marine Corps Reserve, delivering brief remarks before helping U.S. Marines and children sort toys and make Christmas cards to be included with each gift

*Location: Joint Base Anacostia-Bolling, Washington, DC; 12:00 PM*

- Dem Rep. Adam Smith discusses nuclear modernization on CSIS event – Center for Strategic and International Studies hosts online conversation with Democratic Rep. Adam Smith, who discusses nuclear modernization and arms control in 2021; 12:00 PM
- President-elect Biden introduces members of his health team – President-elect Joe Biden and Vice President-elect Kamala Harris introduce their nominees and appointees to key health posts, following announcement yesterday, including Xavier Becerra to be secretary of health and human services, Dr Vivek Murthy to be surgeon general, Dr Rochelle Walensky to be CDC director, Dr Marcella Nunez-Smith to be COVID-19 Equity Task Force chair, Dr Anthony Fauci to be President's Chief Medical Adviser on COVID-19 (while remaining as NIH National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases director), Jeff Zients to be COVID-19 response coordinator, and Natalie Quillian to be deputy COVID-19 response coordinator \* Time tentative

*Location: Wilmington, DE; 1:40 PM*

- Dem Georgia senatorial candidates Raphael Warnock and Jon Ossoff on virtual campaign trail – Dem Georgia senatorial candidates Raphael Warnock and Jon Ossoff on virtual campaign trail, attending a Jewish Democratic Council of America moderated by former U.S. ambassador to Israel Dan Shapiro; 3:00 PM
- Jewish Council for Public Affairs virtual benefit, with bipartisan Members of Congress – Jewish Council for Public Affairs virtual benefit, with this year's honorees including Democratic Rep. Nita Lowey and community advocate Harvey Reiter. Other attendees include Dem Rep. Ted Deutch and Republican Rep. Lee Zeldin; 7:00 PM
- Solutions Summit continues – Bipartisan Policy Center hosts 2020 Solutions Summit: Blueprint to Restore Economic Security for Working Families continues, featuring daily events with national, state, and local leaders to discuss 'a pragmatic agenda to move the country forward and restore faith in the ability to govern a divided nation'. Day two session on 'Children and Families' with former Sen. Rick Santorum, George Washington University School of Public Health Visiting Professor of Health Policy and Management Leana Wen, Yale University Child Study Center Professor of Child Psychiatry and Psychology Walter Gilliam, Grade Level Reading Campaign Managing Director Ralph Smith, University of Chicago Medical Center Professor Dana Suskind, and BPC Early Childhood Initiative Director Linda Smith

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