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 FBI News Briefing

**TO: THE DIRECTOR AND SENIOR STAFF**

**DATE: FRIDAY, MAY 21, 2021 6:30 AM EDT**

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## LEADING THE NEWS

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## **Psaki Calls GOP Opposition To Capitol Riot Commission "Incredibly Disappointing."**

[The Hill](#) (5/20, Samuels, 5.69M) reports a day after the House passed a bill to establish a commission to investigate the Jan. 6 attack on the Capitol with limited support from Republicans, White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki called GOP opposition to the measure "incredibly disappointing." Psaki said at a press briefing, "The attack on the Capitol on Jan. 6 was an unprecedented assault on our democracy. ... It demands a full and independent investigation into what happened. This is not a political issue in the President's view, this is a question of how we secure our democracy and the rule of law. So it's incredibly disappointing to see how many representatives have opted to turn this into a political issue instead of doing what's right." Psaki would not comment "on whether the White House would support moving forward on some type of investigation with only Democratic support."

[Reuters](#) (5/20) says 35 House Republicans "joined the 219 majority Democrats" in voting to create a commission. Reuters says the vote "would appear to weaken" House Minority Leader McCarthy, "who hopes to become speaker of the 435-member House if his party can assemble a majority with just five more seats in the November 2022 congressional election." But McCarthy "denied any loss to his leadership. ... He told reporters that he had expected a larger number of Republicans to break ranks." The [Wall Street Journal](#) (5/20, Peterson, Wise, Subscription Publication, 8.41M) reports on McCarthy's efforts to restore unity within the GOP caucus. The Journal says if Republicans win back the majority in 2022, McCarthy will need the support of the caucus' conservative and moderate factions if he is to become speaker.

The [Boston Globe](#) (5/20, 1.04M) reports the level of Republican support for the measure in the House "raises the prospect that the measure could pass the Senate as well. At the moment that appears unlikely, but it also cannot be ruled out altogether. Yes, there is a chance." Since January, "there has not yet been a case where 10 Republican votes have broken a filibuster on a controversial bill. So this might be an uphill battle, but if you really squint, you can almost make out a path." However, the [New York Times](#) (5/20, Russonello, 20.6M) says "it appears unlikely to pass the Senate, where it would need 60 votes to override the threat of a filibuster. It's the latest sign, and possibly the clearest yet, that Trump retains an iron grip on the party's direction."

**McCarthy Says He Would Be Willing To Testify Before Commission.** [Politico](#) (5/20, Forgey, 6.73M) reports McCarthy "said on Thursday that he would be willing to testify before an independent commission investigating the Jan. 6 insurrection about his conversation with then-President Donald Trump as the attack on the Capitol unfolded." McCarthy told reporters, "Sure, next question." The [Washington Post](#) (5/20, 10.52M) says McCarthy is one of several Republicans opposed to creating a commission who "are potential witnesses to what former president Donald Trump and his aides were saying and doing as the mob laid siege." In an exchange with reporters, "McCarthy declined to say whether he thinks lawmakers issued a subpoena to testify before the commission should comply." He said, "That's a hypothetical. Talk to me if it goes through," and then he "remained silent when asked whether anyone who spoke with Trump on Jan. 6 should testify."

**Trump Blasts "Wayward" House Republicans Who Voted For Commission.** [The Hill](#) (5/20, Oshin, 5.69M) reports Trump on Thursday "took aim" at the 35 House Republicans who voted to establish the commission. Trump said in a statement, "See, 35 wayward Republicans – they just can't help themselves. We have much better policy and are much better for the Country, but the Democrats stick together, the Republicans don't. They don't have the Romney's, Little Ben Sasse's, and Cheney's of the world. ... Unfortunately, we do. Sometimes there are consequences to being ineffective and weak. The voters understand!"

**Brennan Discusses House Vote On January 6 Commission.** [MSNBC](#) (5/20, 8.1M) interviews former CIA director John Brennan and Rep. Sean Patrick Maloney (D-NY) to "discuss how although the bill to establish an independent January 6th commission passed the House, 175 GOP members still voted against it."

## **Biden Signs Anti-Asian-American Hate Crimes Bill Into Law.**

On [ABC World News Tonight](#)<sup>Vi</sup> (5/20, story 4, 2:35, 5.47M), David Muir said President Biden took "historic action to protect Asian Americans in this country amid that dramatic rise in attacks" on Thursday, "signing into law an anti-Asian hate crimes bill [that] was overwhelmingly approved by Congress." Kristen Welker said on [NBC Nightly News](#)<sup>Vi</sup> (5/20, story 5, 0:45, Holt, 5.2M), "There are few bipartisan moments in Washington, but this was one of them. ... The bill improves hate crime tracking and bolsters support for state and local officials. The President called hatred and racism 'the ugly poison that has long haunted our nation.' It's worth noting this was one of the first large indoor gatherings of the Biden Administration, [with] almost everyone without a mask."

The [AP](#) (5/20, Superville) reports Biden "lavished praise on Democrats and Republicans for approving the bill by lopsided margins and sending it to the White House for his signature. Several dozen lawmakers attended the bill signing ceremony, one of the largest groups to visit the Biden White House during the pandemic. The House approved the bill 364-62 this week, following the Senate's 94-1 vote in April." The [Washington Post](#) (5/20, 10.52M) says Biden "praised [the] rare congressional bipartisanship" that led to the bill's passage. The Post notes that Biden thanked Senate Minority Leader McConnell, saying, "We simply haven't seen this kind of bipartisanship for much too long in Washington. You're showing that our democracy can work and deliver for the American people just days after the mass shooting in Atlanta area."

On its website, [NPR](#) (5/20, Sprunt, 3.69M) reports that Vice President Harris "introduced Biden ahead of the signing and reflected on the increase in violence against Asian Americans." The [New York Times](#) (5/20, Edmondson, Tankersley, 20.6M) reports Harris "thanked Democratic and Republican lawmakers for joining together to pass the legislation. 'This bill brings us one step closer to stopping hate, not just against Asian-Americans, but for all Americans,' Ms. Harris said." Biden said, "We are committed to stopping the hatred and the bias." [Axios](#) (5/20, Gonzalez, 1.26M) quotes Harris as saying, "History will remember this day and this moment when our nation took action to combat hate. ... This bill brings us one step closer to stopping hate, not only for Asian Americans, but for all Americans."

[USA Today](#) (5/20, Collins, 12.7M) reports, "More than 6,600 anti-Asian hate incidents have been reported in the year since the pandemic arrived in the U.S., according to Stop AAPI Hate, a nonprofit group that tracks incidents of hate and discrimination against Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders in the United States." The [Los Angeles Times](#) (5/20, 3.37M) reports Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus Chair Rep. Judy Chu (D-CA), who attended the signing event, "said people of Asian descent had been experiencing 'fear, anxiety and terror' over the last year, and that she expects the new law will increase law enforcement's focus on hate crimes."

[Axios](#) (5/20, King, 1.26M) reports that Biden, Harris, "and other White House officials" also met Thursday with members of the Asian American Foundation, "a newly formed philanthropic group aimed at fighting racism against Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders."

Rep. Stephanie Murphy (D-FL), who was born in Vietnam, writes in [USA Today](#) (5/20, 12.7M), "I grew up in a trailer park in rural Virginia, virtually the only Asian family in a mostly white community. Like any child who is different, I was teased. But more often, I was treated with kindness. ... I have faith that, for every American who would curse Asian Americans to our face, there are far more Americans of every political stripe who've got our back – a welcome reminder of President Bill Clinton's adage that 'there is nothing wrong with America that cannot be cured by what is right with America.'"

[Reuters](#) (5/20), [Politico](#) (5/20, Niedzwiadek, 6.73M), [The Hill](#) (5/20, 5.69M), and the [CNN](#) (5/20, Vazquez, 89.21M) website also report. The [CBS Evening News](#)<sup>Vi</sup> (5/20, story 3, 0:20, O'Donnell, 4.11M) had a brief item on the signing.

## **Biden Sees "Genuine Opportunity" For Peace As Israel-Hamas Ceasefire Takes Effect.**

A ceasefire between Israel and Hamas took effect early Friday morning after 11 days of conflict. The ceasefire, which was announced shortly before the three broadcast network newscasts aired, led all three of those programs. On [ABC World News Tonight](#)<sup>Vi</sup> (5/20, lead story, 4:50, 5.47M), David Muir said President Biden spoke with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu before the announcement, and later appeared "before the cameras, saying he supported Israel's right to defend itself, but also saying Israelis and Palestinians equally deserve to live safely and securely." ABC's Matt Gutman: "There has been a notable deescalation over the past couple of days. ... But for the first time in 11 days, right now, there is absolute quiet here and about 15 million Palestinians and Israelis living in this small patch of land hope that it stays this way and that this tenuous ceasefire holds."

On the [CBS Evening News](#)<sup>Vi</sup> (5/20, lead story, 3:30, 4.11M), Norah O'Donnell reported that Biden "said the US would provide rapid humanitarian assistance, and that Israelis and Palestinians equally deserve to live safely and securely. The truce follows last-minute negotiations led by Egypt after days of what the White House has called 'quiet intensive diplomacy,' but tonight Gaza is largely without power and water, and Israel is still reeling from 11 days in the crosshairs of an estimated 4,000 Hamas rockets. All of which is to say that tonight's truce is fragile at best."

Lester Holt said on [NBC Nightly News](#)<sup>Vi</sup> (5/20, lead story, 2:30, 5.2M) that Biden "applaud[ed] the truce and calling it an opportunity, as the world holds its breath that the peace can take hold." NBC's Richard Engel: "After more than 4,000 Hamas rockets fired indiscriminately at Israeli cities, killing at least 13 Israelis, and Israeli airstrikes on Gaza in retaliation, killing more than 230, including at least 65 children, tonight a ceasefire. Israel's security cabinet said it unanimously approved an Egyptian initiative for Israel and Hamas to simultaneously stop their attacks." Biden: "My conversation with President Netanyahu, I commended him for the decision to bring the current hostilities to a close."

The [AP](#) (5/20) reports Biden "hailed the cease-fire in the fighting between Israel and Hamas, saying he sees a 'genuine opportunity' toward the larger goal of building a lasting peace in the Middle East." The President "credited the Egyptian government with playing a crucial role in brokering the cease-fire and said he and top White House aides were intensely involved in an 'hour by hour' effort to stop the bloodletting." Netanyahu's office "said Israel accepted the Egyptian proposal after a late-night meeting of his Security Cabinet. Hamas quickly followed suit and said it would honor the deal."

[Bloomberg](#) (5/20, Ramadan, Hodali, 3.57M) reports, "As cries of 'Allah Akbar,' or 'God is the greatest,' blasted from loudspeakers of mosques all over the Gaza Strip, tens of thousands of people took to the streets to celebrate" the announcement. However, [Reuters](#) (5/20, al-Mughrabi, Williams) reports that in the lead-up to the 2:00 a.m. IDT start of the ceasefire, "the sides traded blows again. ... Sirens warned of incoming rockets in Israeli border communities, and a Reuters reporter heard an air strike in Gaza." The [Times Of Israel](#) (5/20, 53K) says the "tenuous nature" of the agreement was "highlighted with violence and threats continuing until minutes before the deadline." The [Washington Post](#) (5/20, Hendrix, Morris, Rubin, Balousha, Miller, 10.52M) also reports that "the two sides continued to launch rockets and air strikes against each other even as the agreement was announced."

The [New York Times](#) (5/20, Kingsley, 20.6M) reports under the headline "Israel And Hamas Agree To End A Brief War That Reverberated Worldwide" that "after more than 10 days of fighting that has taken hundreds of lives and inspired protests and diplomatic efforts around the world, Israel and Hamas agreed" to the ceasefire. The agreement "is expected to conclude an intensive exchange in which Hamas, the militant group that controls Gaza, fired rockets into Israel and Israel bombed targets in Gaza." [USA Today](#) (5/20, Shesgreen, 12.7M) says the ceasefire "followed growing U.S. and international pressure on Israel to call off [its] military operation."

The [Wall Street Journal](#) (5/20, Schwartz, Subscription Publication, 8.41M) reports Israelis officials told Egyptian negotiators on Thursday that Israel was willing to stop attacks but would

not discuss any deal linking the Gaza violence to events in Jerusalem. The [Los Angeles Times](#) (5/20, 3.37M) reports under the headline "Under Growing Pressure, Israeli Cabinet Approves Cease-Fire With Hamas" that Israeli Defense Minister Benny Gantz "said Israel had achieved its goal of drastically degrading the militants' military capabilities." Andrea Mitchell said on [NBC Nightly News](#)<sup>Vi</sup> (5/20, story 2, 0:40, Holt, 5.2M), "The President significantly escalated his pressure on Prime Minister Netanyahu [Wednesday] after some fellow Democrats said he should be more forceful. ... Netanyahu is pointedly calling the ceasefire an Egyptian initiative, not crediting US diplomacy."

Nahal Toosi of [Politico](#) (5/20, 6.73M) writes, "As Biden administration officials sought to end the latest Israeli-Palestinian fighting, they kept two numbers in mind: 2012 and 2014," when "the last two major conflagrations between Israel and Hamas militants" took place. Biden aides "knew they couldn't stop Israel from retaliating when Hamas began firing rockets at Israeli cities on May 10. They decided instead to try to make sure the fighting was as short and with few casualties as possible – in other words, more like 2012 than 2014."

The [New York Post](#) (5/20, Lapin, 7.45M) reports United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres "told the General Assembly on Thursday that 'the fighting must stop immediately,' calling the continued hostilities between Israeli forces and Palestinian groups 'unacceptable.'" On Wednesday, Biden "had urged for a 'significant de-escalation' – which Netanyahu publicly rebuffed, vowing to forge ahead with military operations."

The [Jerusalem Post](#) (5/20, 58K) reports, "The security cabinet unanimously agreed to a 'mutual and unconditional' cessation of hostilities, according to a statement from the Prime Minister's Office." [Axios](#) (5/20, Ravid, Lawler, 1.26M) and the [CNN](#) (5/20, Tal, 89.21M) and [Fox News](#) (5/20, Ruiz, 23.99M) websites also report, while in an editorial, the [Wall Street Journal](#) (5/20, Subscription Publication, 8.41M) says that while the ceasefire is good news, Biden shifted from solid support for Israel at the start of the crisis to a softer position after criticism from progressives. The Journal says the US must reaffirm its commitment to its allies in the region, and to containing radical militants.

Fareed Zakaria writes in the [Washington Post](#) (5/20, 10.52M) that violence between the Israelis and Palestinians "can only be resolved through moral persuasion." Zakaria describes "a seismic shift that has taken place over the past few decades," which has left Israel as "the superpower of the Middle East." While "Israel is powerful compared to its neighbors," it is "close to invulnerable compared to the Palestinians," so it "doesn't have any practical reasons to make a deal with the Palestinians. ... What is left is morality."

***White House Sees Ceasefire As Indicator Of Success Of Biden's Approach.*** Mary Bruce said on [ABC World News Tonight](#)<sup>Vi</sup> (5/20, story 2, 1:10, Muir, 5.47M), "This was the first big foreign policy test for this President, and Biden walked a fine line throughout. He was facing growing pressure from his own party to take a tougher stance on Israel, and you seemed to see the President nod to that tonight in his remarks, saying, quote, 'I believe the Palestinians and Israelis deserve to enjoy equal measures of freedom, prosperity, and democracy.' White House sources I've talked to feel that this all shows Biden's approach to diplomacy working." Ed O'Keefe said on the [CBS Evening News](#)<sup>Vi</sup> (5/20, story 2, 1:05, O'Donnell, 4.11M), "The White House has focused in recent days on what it calls 'quiet intensive diplomacy' behind the scenes." Biden: "I believe we have a genuine opportunity to make progress, and I am committed to working for it."

The [Wall Street Journal](#) (5/20, Salama, Siddiqui, Subscription Publication, 8.41M) looks at the long history between Biden and Netanyahu, particularly on Biden's role in smoothing over tensions between the Obama Administration and Israel during Biden's time as vice president. [Politico](#) (5/20, Leonard, 6.73M) reports Biden on Thursday "commended [Netanyahu] for drawing 'the current hostilities' to an end."

***Sanders Resolution Calls For Blocking Sale Of US Weapons To Israel.*** [Axios](#) (5/20, Allassan, 1.26M) reports that on Thursday, Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-VT) introduced a resolution "opposing the U.S. sale of \$735 million in precision-guided weapons to the Israeli

government." Similar House legislation was introduced on Wednesday. The [Washington Post](#) (5/20, 10.52M) reports that Sanders' resolution "aims to halt the planned sale to Israel by the Biden administration of JDAMs, or Joint Direct Attack Munitions, and Small Diameter Bombs, as the worst hostilities in years continue between Israel and Hamas." [Reuters](#) (5/20) reports that Senate Foreign Relations Chair Bob Menendez "said he would oppose the Sanders resolution."

***WPost Examines Tlaib's Newfound "Political Relevance" In Mideast Debate.*** The [Washington Post](#) (5/20, 10.52M) examines the increasing stature of Rep. Rashida Tlaib (D-MI), "the lone Palestinian American member of Congress," after she this week "stood face to face with the president of the United States on an airport tarmac and, for eight minutes, engaged in an animated conversation about the U.S. response to the latest outbreak of violence between Israel and Palestinians. Equally notable was the decision by President Biden later that day to praise Tlaib during an appearance in her hometown of Detroit." The Post says Tlaib has "suddenly gained political relevance in a fast-changing U.S. political debate about the Middle East."

***Biden Reportedly Leaning Toward Nides For Ambassador To Israel.*** Barak Ravid of [Axios](#) (5/20, 1.26M) reports that Biden is "closing in on his pick for ambassador to Israel, with Thomas Nides, a former deputy secretary of state, most likely to be the pick." Nides, "currently a Morgan Stanley executive, served as deputy secretary of state for management and resources under Barack Obama," and is close to Chief of Staff Klain. Ex-Rep. Robert Wexler (D-FL) "was seen as the other primary contender."

## CAPITOL VIOLENCE NEWS

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### **Affidavit Contradicts FBI Testimony That Capitol Rioters Had No Guns.**

The [Washington Times](#) (5/20, Scarborough, 626K) reports, "FBI Senate testimony that no Jan. 6 rioter carried a firearm inside U.S. Capitol restricted area is belied by a May 14 indictment accusing a Maryland man of 'unlawful possession of a firearm on Capitol grounds.'" The Times adds, "The federal indictment of Christopher M. Alberts also accuses him of carrying a pistol without a license and possessing a large capacity 'ammunition-feeding device.' The indictment, based on D.C. Metropolitan Police Department court affidavit dated Jan. 9, told of officers confronting Mr. Alberts on Capitol grounds as they tried to disperse the crowd." At a March 3 hearing, Sen. Ron Johnson (R-WI) "asked Jill Sanborn, then the FBI's counter-terrorism chief, 'how many firearms were confiscated in the Capitol or on Capitol grounds during that day?'" Sanborn "answered that 'to my knowledge, we have not recovered any on that day from any other arrests at the scene at this point, but I don't want to speak on behalf of Metro and Capitol Police. But, to my knowledge, none.'"

### **Three More Associates Of Right-Wing Groups Arrested In Connection To Capitol Riot.**

The [Washington Post](#) (5/20, 10.52M) reports "three more alleged associates of two right-wing groups" have been arrested in connection with the Jan. 6 attack on the Capitol. The Post says, Daniel Lyons Scott "faces charges of assault on a federal officer, engaging in physical violence on Capitol grounds and other counts." He "was arrested Thursday and had an initial court appearance in Tampa., Fla., according to the Justice Department and court records. ... Also arrested Thursday was James Breheny, 61, an alleged Bergen County, N.J., coordinator for the Oath Keepers. ... Separately, Arizona man Micajah Joel Jackson, 25, was arrested Tuesday after turning himself in to the FBI in Phoenix on charges of trespassing and disorderly conduct at the Capitol."

### **House Passes Capitol Security Bill By One Vote.**

The [AP](#) (5/20) reports in a 213-212 vote Thursday, the House "approved \$1.9 billion to fortify the Capitol after the Jan. 6 insurrection, as Democrats pushed past Republican opposition to try

to harden the complex with retractable fencing and a quick-response force following the most violent domestic attack on Congress in history." The [New York Times](#) (5/20, Broadwater, 20.6M) says "progressive Democrats" joined every Republican in opposing the measure. The Times says "top Democrats cited" the lack of Republican support "as further evidence that the party is trying to rewrite the history of the mob violence that unfolded on Jan. 6 by downplaying or outright denying crucial facts and opposing efforts to investigate it."

The [Washington Post](#) (5/20, 10.52M) says the "slim and fraught victory in the House presages a difficult road ahead for the spending bill as written as it goes to the Senate," and [CNN](#) (5/20, Grayer, Foran, Wilson, Diaz, 89.21M) says on its website that the "narrow vote underscores how House Democratic leadership has little room for error in passing legislative priorities given the size of its current majority."

[Politico](#) (5/20, Ferris, Wu, 6.73M) says the "tight" vote "came after an eleventh-hour scramble on the floor," with House Speaker Pelosi "and her top leadership huddling with their members to resolve issues from the caucus' far left. The group of liberal lawmakers, known as 'the squad,' had objected to spending millions more dollars on the Capitol Police budget without more knowledge about whether some officers were indirectly complicit in the Jan. 6 riot." Politico adds that "after intense conversations with Democratic leaders on the floor, three progressives registered their discontent by voting present," while "three voted no."

The [Minneapolis Star Tribune](#) (5/20, 855K) reports the three lawmakers who voted no – Reps. Cori Bush (D-MO), Ilhan Omar (D-MN), and Ayanna Pressley (D-MA) – said in a statement, "A bill that pours \$1.9 billion into increased police surveillance and force without addressing the underlying threats of organized and violent white supremacy, radicalization, and disinformation that led to this attack will not prevent it from happening again." Omar "said she didn't feel Democratic leaders sufficiently explained how it would increase security."

[Forbes](#) (5/20, Solender, 10.33M) says Republicans "all voted against the bill," with Rep. Jaime Herrera Beutler (R-WA) "alleging in a floor speech Democrats abruptly halted bipartisan negotiations and drew up the bill on their own." [The Hill](#) (5/20, Lillis, Marcos, 5.69M) says, "Ironically, Democrats were given cover on Thursday by Republicans, who voted unanimously against the emergency security funding, which left them essentially powerless to go after members of the squad for doing the same." [USA Today](#) (5/20, Jansen, 12.7M) and [Axios](#) (5/20, 1.26M) provide similar coverage.

[Bloomberg](#) (5/20, Litvan, House, 3.57M) reports that there are "concerns among some Republicans that the commission would create additional political peril. The House legislation establishing the 10-member panel requires a final report by Dec. 31, of this year, almost guaranteeing that it would resonate into 2022." Sen. John Cornyn (R-TX), "who is undecided on the commission, said he considered the Dec. 31 deadline in the bill 'aspirational' and that it was likely to get extended into the election year. 'That would be the Democrats' dream,' he said."

The [Washington Post](#) (5/20, 10.52M) reports that Sen. Richard Burr (R-NC), "a surprise vote to convict Trump of inciting the Jan. 6 attack on the Capitol, announced Thursday that he opposes the establishment of an independent, bipartisan commission to investigate the deadly assault. ... 'The Justice Department is currently conducting one of the largest federal criminal investigations in history and has already made hundreds of arrests. Congress has also been conducting multiple ongoing investigations,' Burr, who is retiring at the end of his term in 2022, said in a statement." Burr added, "I don't believe establishing a new commission is necessary or wise."

Perry Bacon Jr. writes in the [Washington Post](#) (5/20, 10.52M) that the nation's "biggest problem" is the Republican Party, which when given "a clear chance to move on from Trumpism after the Jan. 6 attack on the Capitol," has "instead continued its drift toward anti-democratic action and white grievance." The GOP "appears unlikely to suffer an electoral backlash because of our second, huge problem: America appears intractably polarized into Team Blue and Team Red." The country "could at least prepare for an anti-democratic GOP, but the past four months suggest our third huge problem: Our institutions aren't up to it. ... Nonpartisan institutions,

faced with a choice of maintaining neutrality or upholding their core values, are often choosing the former.”

Michael Gerson writes in the [Washington Post](#) (5/20, 10.52M) that if Trump “has a political philosophy, one of its main tenets is toxic masculinity – the use of menace and swagger to cover his mental and moral impotence.” Those who “resist Trump’s will know they will be singled out by name. They will be exposed to political jeopardy and physical peril, particularly from activists who view the right to bear arms as the right to make armed threats.”

## COUNTER-TERRORISM

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### **DHS To Track Domestic Extremists On Social Media.**

The [AP](#) (5/20, Merchant) reports the Department of Homeland Security plans to increase social media monitoring “as part of an enhanced focus on domestic violent extremism.” The department “is exploring partnerships with tech companies, universities, and nonprofit groups to access publicly available data.” DHS Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas “has insisted that officials from the department’s civil rights and civil liberties section be included in all discussions about the new programs,” according to officials, and “the effort will not use artificial intelligence, nor will it track specific individuals.” Rep. Chris Stewart (R-UT) said, “I support those efforts so long as (they) do not breach the wall between using intelligence assets that are supposed to be focused on foreign threats. ... You can’t backdoor that by saying, ‘We won’t, but we’ll pay Google to do that for us.’” Civil rights advocates also are “closely following the plan.”

## COUNTER-INTELLIGENCE

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### **Prosecutors Say 18 Electronic Devices Seized From Giuliani And Firm.**

The [AP](#) (5/20, Neumeister) reports from New York, “Eighteen electronic devices taken during raids last month on Rudy Giuliani’s home and his law firm in a probe of his dealings in Ukraine belong to Giuliani and employees of his firm, Manhattan prosecutors revealed Thursday. The previously redacted facts were disclosed when prosecutors re-filed an April 29 letter on the public record in Manhattan federal court. The raids occurred April 28.” Prosecutors “disclosed that 18 electronic devices were seized in the search of locations belonging to the former New York mayor and private lawyer to ex-President Donald Trump and his firm, Giuliani Partners LLC. Prosecutors said the devices belonged to Giuliani and ‘certain employees’ of Giuliani Partners. The letter had sought the appointment of a ‘special master’ to ensure nothing subject to attorney-client privilege was revealed to the government.”

The [New York Post](#) (5/20, Feuerherd, 7.45M) reports, “In a filing last week, Giuliani’s attorney criticized the covert warrant the feds executed against him in 2019, arguing they treated the former mayor like a ‘terrorist’ or drug trafficker – and may have violated attorney-client privilege with the search. ‘The [Southern District of New York] simply chose to treat a distinguished lawyer as if he was the head of a drug cartel or a terrorist, in order to create maximum prejudicial coverage of both Giuliani, and his most well-known client – the former President of the United States,’ wrote his attorney, Robert Costello, referencing President Donald Trump.” The Post adds, “The feds are investigating whether Giuliani failed to register as a foreign agent while working on behalf of Ukrainians in the lead-up to the 2020 presidential election.”

The [Washington Post](#) (5/20, Jacobs, 10.52M) reports that Giuliani “cannot claim his profession should have shielded him from the search warrant for electronics executed at his home and office last month, federal prosecutors argued in a filing unsealed Thursday evening.” Giuliani, “through his attorneys, has argued that because of the extensive business-related communications authorities are likely to find on his phones and computers, it is impossible for the Justice Department to sort through his data without infringing on the rights of his clients.”

The Post adds, "In late April, FBI agents acting on a warrant obtained by the U.S. attorney's office in Manhattan seized 18 electronic devices from Giuliani's New York home and office, including some belonging to employees of Giuliani Partners. A phone belonging to D.C.-area attorney Victoria Toensing also was recovered. Prosecutors argued in the letter motion that 'the mere fact that Giuliani and Toensing are lawyers does not mean that they are above the law or immune to criminal investigation.'"

The [Independent \(UK\)](#) (5/20, 1.19M) reports, "Details of the raid were made public when the previously redacted letter to US District Judge Paul Oetken was unsealed on Thursday." Attorneys "argued in a court filing last week that prosecutors could not review the materials seized during the April raid until the defence received more information on Mr Giuliani's iCloud records seized in November 2019. Robert Costello wrote that much of the information is covered by attorney-client privilege, saying prosecutors were treating Mr Giuliani like a terrorist or head of a drug cartel. 'Given the complexity of Mr Giuliani's personal and professional relationships and the related communications, it is a near-impossible task to accurately list all individuals with whom Mr Giuliani had a privileged relationship or communications,' Mr Costello wrote." [Forbes](#) (5/20, Durkee, 10.33M) also reports.

### **Asked About COVID Lab Leak Theory, Psaki Maintains Call For Independent Investigation.**

[Fox News](#) (5/20, Phillips, 23.99M) reports House Intelligence Republicans claim to have "significant circumstantial evidence" that Covid-19 "originated in a lab, but White House press secretary Jen Psaki refused to say whether the White House had seen evidence that would disprove the Republicans' point." In response to a question from Fox News' Peter Doocy, Psaki responded, that "disproving a negative...is never the responsible approach in our view, when it comes to getting to the bottom of the root causes of a pandemic that has killed hundreds of thousands of people in the United States," and that "our view continues to be that there needs to be an independent, transparent investigation and that needs to happen with the cooperation and data provided from the Chinese government."

### **Congress To Hold Joint Hearings On Key Air Force, Pentagon Leaders Next Week.**

[Defense News](#) (5/20, Cohen, 73K) reports the Senate Armed Services Committee plans to "hold a joint confirmation hearing May 25 to vet President Joe Biden's nominees for Air Force secretary and two other key Pentagon posts." Frank Kendall, the Pentagon's former acquisition head "who also spent time in industry, is up for the secretary job overseeing the Air Force and Space Force." Heidi Shyu, previously the Army's "top acquisition official and a Raytheon alum, is under consideration to become undersecretary of defense for research and engineering. And Susanna Blume, who ran the Center for a New American Security's defense program, is nominated to direct the Cost Assessment and Program Evaluation office."

### **Senate May Increase DARPA Budget By Billions.**

The [Washington Times](#) (5/20, Lovelace, 626K) reports DARPA is "poised to receive" billions of dollars in funding "originally intended for other agencies developing tech to counter China – without asking for it" as the Senate is considering amendments "to Democratic Majority Leader Charles E. Schumer's bill to fund tech innovation to outcompete China." Sen. Marco Rubio (R-FL) "floated the idea of giving" \$100 billion originally proposed for the National Science Foundation (NSF) "to DARPA instead and Sen. Ben Sasse, Nebraska Republican, offered an amendment this week to double DARPA's budget to \$7 billion."

### **Military Times Interviews SOCOM Commander On "The Future Of SOF."**

In an interview Wednesday at the annual Special Operations Forces Industry Conference, The [Military Times](#) (5/20, Altman, 845K) "sat down with Army Gen. Richard Clarke, commander of U.S. Special Operations Command and talked about the future of SOCOM and SOF." Clarke

talked about the “state of the special operators in the ranks – op-tempo, the threat of extremism, mental health during the COVID-era, and high-profile incidents of misconduct. He also talked about SOF’s role in a potential conflict with Russia and China and, possibly, in Afghanistan after the troop withdrawal later this year.” Clarke says that access and the “ability to influence because of that access and placement of ours is critical,” adding that because “we have great allies and partners that we work with, that’s providing us influence, and so that’s our asymmetric advantage.”

### **Canadian Infectious Disease Specialists Collaborated With China.**

The [Globe and Mail \(CAN\)](#) (5/20, 1.09M) reports scientists working at Canada’s “highest-security infectious-disease laboratory have been collaborating with Chinese military researchers to study and conduct experiments on deadly pathogens.” Seven scientists in the “special pathogens unit at the National Microbiology Laboratory (NML) in Winnipeg and Chinese military researchers have conducted experiments and co-authored six studies on infectious diseases such as Ebola, Lassa fever and Rift Valley fever.” The publication dates of “the studies range from early 2016 to early 2020.” The Globe and Mail “has also learned that one of the Chinese researchers, Feihu Yan, from the People’s Liberation Army’s (PLA) Academy of Military Medical Sciences, worked for a period of time at the Winnipeg lab, a Level 4 facility equipped to handle some of the world’s deadliest diseases.”

## **CRIMINAL INVESTIGATIONS**

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### **FBI Probing Colorado Asian-American Teen’s 2017 Death As Possible Hate Crime.**

[NBC News](#) (5/20, 4.91M) reports from Denver, “The FBI has revealed that it is investigating the 2017 death of an Asian American teenager in Colorado as a possible hate crime, a grisly case in which local authorities said she was purposefully set on fire and burned alive in her family’s mountain community home.” The FBI “said in a statement Monday to Denver news station KCNC-TV that it was looking into the death of 17-year-old Maggie Long as a ‘hate crime matter.’” NBC News adds, “Long’s death was ruled a homicide, and authorities later released composite sketches of at least three men they believed were involved in her death. No arrests have been made. The FBI did not provide any information about why agents are looking at the possibility of a hate crime and did not immediately respond to telephone and email messages from The Associated Press on Tuesday.”

[ABC News](#) (5/20, 2.44M) reports that Denver SAC Michael Schneider said in a statement to ABC News, “The FBI is committed to combating hate crimes and condemns violence directed toward any individual or group. We are grateful for the community’s support of Maggie’s family and their patience with the ongoing investigation. The FBI continues to work with the Park County Sheriff’s Office and the Colorado Bureau of Investigation, and we ask anyone who has information about this murder to contact the FBI immediately.”

[CBS News](#) (5/20, 5.39M) reports, “While the FBI declined to elaborate on its reasoning for now viewing the case as a potential hate crime, the agency reiterated its interest in hearing from anyone who may know something about what happened. ‘Helpful information could include descriptions of individuals or vehicles seen in/around the vicinity of the property, individuals with demonstrated knowledge of what happened at the Long residence on the day of Maggie’s murder, etc.’ the FBI wrote.” CBS News adds, “Long’s body was found inside her family’s home in December 2017 in Bailey, a mountain community about 45 miles southwest of Denver. A fire had broken out following a report of a disturbance. Investigators believe there was altercation between Long and her attackers before the fire started. Park County Sheriff Tom McGraw has said that Long was ‘purposely set on fire and burned alive.’” [CNN](#) (5/20, 89.21M) posts a video report on its website.

### **Rochester Mayor’s Husband Pleads Not Guilty To Drug And Weapons Charges.**

The [AP](#) (5/20, Thompson) reports that Timothy Granison, the husband of Rochester, New York, Mayor Lovely Warren (D), "pleaded not guilty Thursday to criminal drug and weapons charges, following a seven-month investigation that authorities said involved wiretaps and a police search of the home Granison shares with Warren." Monroe County District Attorney Sandra Doorley said Granison "is among seven people charged so far with being part of 'a midlevel drug organization that was infecting the city of Rochester.'"

The [New York Times](#) (5/20, Nir, Closson, 20.6M) reports Warren "was not charged with a crime, and prosecutors have not suggested she was a target of the investigation. ... But Mr. Granison's arrest, and the discovery of 31 grams of powder in his possession that the police believe is cocaine – as well as a semiautomatic rifle and an unregistered handgun in Ms. Warren's home – threatened to once again upend Ms. Warren's re-election campaign." Warren said Thursday that she "was the victim of a vast conspiracy to discredit her just a month before the city's Democratic primary election."

The [Rochester \(NY\) Democrat & Chronicle](#) (5/20, Sharp, 410K) reports Warren, "who was first elected as mayor in 2013 and is seeking her third four-year term as mayor, is facing a criminal trial later this year on allegations of campaign finance fraud. She has also faced intense criticism in the aftermath of the March 2020 death of Daniel Prude, a Black man whose death was linked to asphyxiation while in police control."

### **Nooses Discovered At Construction Site Of Amazon Facility In Connecticut.**

[Newsweek](#) (5/20, 2.67M) reports work has halted at the construction site of an Amazon facility in Windsor, CT "after workers discovered seven nooses on-site." Workers, investigators, and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) "are discussing the significance of the nooses," which historically have been seen as implied threats to African-Americans. Other nooses – or lengths of rope tied and hung in ways reminiscent of nooses – were discovered on several other occasions, both in late April. The Connecticut NAACP State Conference and Greater Hartford NAACP "expressed outrage about the noose" and "have asked for Amazon to do more to ensure worker safety." In a joint statement, both groups said, "These forms of hate crimes have had a detrimental stain on the current state of America's reality and for them to hit so close to home and with such consistency, shows a robust disrespect for the not only human decency but also for our ancestors who lost their lives due to the hate represented within the knots in those ropes."

[USA Today](#) (5/20, Aspegren, 12.7M) reports Amazon "is closing the site while security measures are put in place." At a news conference on Thursday, Amazon spokesman Brian Griggs decried the incident and reiterated his company's support of the right of all workers to feel safe. He said, "We continue to be deeply disturbed by the incidents at this construction site." He added that Amazon was working with authorities "to find and hold accountable the perpetrators of these incidents." He continued, "Hate, racism or discrimination have no place in our society and are certainly not tolerated in any Amazon workplace – whether it be under construction like this one, or fully operational." Amazon has increased its reward for information leading to the apprehension of the perpetrators to \$100,000.

[NBC News](#) (5/21, Hesel, Madani, 4.91M) reports, "The FBI is involved in the investigation, David Sundberg, special agent in charge of the bureau's New Haven field office, said, and lending its resources to Windsor police."

[ABC News](#) (5/20, Deliso, 2.44M) reports, "Connecticut State Police and FBI agents were on-site Thursday, as the agency continues to lend resources to the Windsor Police Department's ongoing investigation. 'The implications of a hanging noose anywhere are unacceptable and will always generate the appropriate investigative response,'" Sunberg said in a statement.

Also reporting are The [New York Daily News](#) (5/21, Wilkinson, 2.51M), and the [Hartford \(CT\) Courant](#) (5/20, Leavenworth, 438K).

### **FBI Digs Up Human Remains In Florida.**

The [Miami Herald](#) (5/20, 647K) reports, "The Broward Sheriff's Office and FBI have been hard at work digging up something over the past several days in Oakland Park and information has been scarce – until now. On Thursday, authorities said they discovered human remains buried more than six years ago." The Herald adds, "The excavation began May 12 in the 4200 block of North Dixie Highway in Oakland Park. At the time, BSO said an active and ongoing criminal investigation was taking place. FBI spokesman Michael Leverock had said, 'The FBI is in vicinity of that location conducting court authorized law enforcement activity.' Investigators unearthed the human remains during the search and are working on making a positive identification, BSO said. Additionally, an autopsy is underway to determine the person's cause of death."

### **FBI Still Probing Drone Flight Near CBP Helicopter In Arizona.**

The [AP](#) (5/21) reports from Tucson, Arizona, "The FBI is seeking to identify whoever is responsible for illegally flying a drone near a U.S. Customs and Border Protection helicopter about three months ago." The AP adds, "On the night of Feb. 9, Border Protection employees told Tucson police that a drone was flying dangerously close to their helicopter. Over the next few hours, multiple law enforcement agencies worked to find the drone's operator but were unsuccessful." The FBI "said the drone appeared to launch from an area about 5 miles (8.05 kilometers) south of Tucson and flew across Tucson and north over Marana."

### **FBI Brought In To Search For Missing Nebraska Boy.**

The [Omaha \(NE\) World-Herald](#) (5/20, Cole, Gaarder, 509K) reports that police in La Vista, Nebraska "have enlisted the help of the FBI, the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children and a private consultant in the search for an 11-year-old boy who has been missing for four days." Ryan Larsen, "who has autism, was seen about noon Monday walking out of La Vista West Elementary School near 78th Street and Terry Drive. A business between Ryan's school and his home recorded the boy on a security camera about 1:30 p.m. Monday. Officers have gone door to door at Ryan's apartment complex near 84th and Harrison Streets. The Police Department has also used its dogs, trained in tracking, to search any potential direction Ryan might have headed. A team from the FBI is in La Vista and is assisting in the search."

### **WPost: Brown's Death Must Be Fully Investigated.**

The [Washington Post](#) (5/20, 10.52M) condemns North Carolina's decision to end the inquiry into the death of Andrew Brown Jr., who "was shot while fleeing from officers serving drug-related search and arrest warrants." The prosecutor's decision that the shooting "was justified" is a problem because it "doesn't answer all the questions about this troubling incident." The Post calls on federal investigators to "continue with their civil rights investigation."

### **Arkansas Teacher's Assistant Arrested On Child Pornography Charges.**

[KTHV-TV](#) Little Rock, AR (5/20, 125K) reports from Little Rock, Arkansas, "According to FBI Little Rock, officials are seeking to identify potential victims in a child pornography case." KTHV-TV adds, "A teacher's assistant has been arrested and charged with production of child pornography. Augustus 'Gus' Shenker, 21, was charged in a criminal complaint on Wednesday, May 19. He was arrested Thursday, May 20 and will be arraigned this week before United States Magistrate Judge J. Thomas Ray." On May 18, FBI agents arrested Shenker "on a criminal complaint alleging transportation of child pornography and possession of child pornography. Through the course of the investigation, law enforcement learned that Shenker has been employed as a teacher's assistant at Miss Selma's School in Little Rock since 2017." The FBI "is seeking to identify potential victims in this case."

### **Texas Businessman Indicted For Child Sex Crimes.**

The [Wichita Falls \(TX\) Times Record News](#) (5/20, Choate, 64K) reports that Anthony Patterson, a "well-known businessman" who formerly served as President of the Patterson Auto Group in

Wichita Falls, Texas, was arrested Thursday after a grand jury indicted him "on six charges related to allegations of human trafficking and child sex crimes." Patterson is "suspected of human trafficking and indecency with a child involving two Vernon girls, 8 and 10 years old." [KFDX-TV](#) Wichita Falls, TX (5/20) notes that, during the investigation of the case against Patterson, the FBI participated in interviews of Jandreani Dashimella Bell, a woman Patterson paid for sex and who gave him access to the minors. Bell was also arrested and faces charges of human trafficking.

### **Former School Nurse Faces Child Porn Charges In Tennessee.**

The [Tennessean](#) (5/20, Hineman, 645K) reports Leon Burnett Hensley "is in custody after a federal investigation revealed he was in possession of hundreds of images of minor girls, some of whom are believed to be students at Northeast High School, where he worked" as a nurse. "Others victims may have visited Tennova Hospital in Clarksville, where he also worked." [WREG-TV](#) Memphis, TN (5/20, Illers, 187K) notes that the FBI is participating in the ongoing investigation of the case, alongside Homeland Security Investigations, the US Secret Service, and Clarksville Police Department.

### **FBI Raids Home In San Diego.**

[KGTV-TV](#) San Diego (5/20, Saunders, 131K) reports that early on Thursday, FBI agents raided a residence in the Mira Mesa neighborhood of San Diego. KGTV quotes the FBI's San Diego field office as saying, "We can confirm the FBI is present on Londonderry Avenue in San Diego conducting court-authorized law enforcement activity. However, we can't provide further information at this time." [KSWB-TV](#) San Diego (5/20, 214K) says three men were detained at the scene and adds the "raid appeared to involve computer hard drives that agents were seen removing from the home and garage area."

### **FBI Assistance In Search For Missing Nebraska Boy Noted.**

In an article about ongoing law enforcement efforts to find Ryan Larsen – an 11-year-old Nebraska boy with autism who has been missing since Monday – [KOLN-TV](#) Lincoln, NE (5/20, 152K) notes that local police "have said they are continuing to work with officials in the FBI and experts on missing children and autism to help them understand what Ryan's mindset might be like right now."

### **Alabama Man Gets 6.5 Years For Child Porn.**

[WBRC-TV](#) Birmingham, AL (5/20, Reynolds, 57K) reports that in Alabama on Thursday, a federal judge sentenced James Curtis Brasher "to 78 months in prison followed by 15 years of supervised release for possession of child pornography." According to court filings, Brasher "accessed the Darknet through the use of the Tor application to view and obtain child pornography." A forensic examination showed the man had "over 58,000 images of child pornography, including images of children under the age of 12 years old, and child erotica." WBRC notes that the FBI Birmingham's Child Exploitation Human Trafficking Task Force (CEHTTF) "investigated the case, with the assistance of the Alabama Law Enforcement Agency and Warrior Police Department."

### **Man Charged With Murder In 40-Year-Old Texas Cold Case.**

The [Houston Chronicle](#) (5/20, Gonzalez, 982K) reports Thomas Elvin Darnell "is charged with capital murder in the 1983 death of Laurie Marie Purchase, a missing woman from Houston." Local investigators in Texas linked Darnell to the case in October 2019 after they sent "collected DNA for genealogy testing." Darnell's DNA matched that of an "unknown male on Purchase's remains." The Chronicle notes the FBI identified Purchase's remains in 1986 about three years after they were discovered.

### **Minnesota Man Faces Murder Charge 11 Years After Wife's Death.**

[ABC News](#) (5/20, Deliso, Katz, 2.44M) reports that on Wednesday, Nicholas James Firkus "was arrested...and charged with second-degree intentional murder" in the 2010 shooting death of his wife, Heidi Firkus. Around the time of the shooting, the Saint Paul resident "told police that an intruder broke into their home, grabbed his shotgun and shot them both." However, local police have "been investigating the homicide ever since" and, during a press briefing on Thursday, a prosecutor "credited the involvement of the FBI, a new homicide investigator...and the enhancement of a 911 call from the morning of the murder in leading" to the arrest. ABC quotes Michael Krause, Special Agent in Charge of the FBI's Minneapolis field office, as saying, "This is like putting together a giant puzzle, and sometimes it just takes a lot of time to bring in different pieces, and to look at that and to be able to have somebody new try to find the right piece."

### **Four Face Illegal Gambling Charges After FBI Raid In Kentucky.**

The [Lexington \(KY\) Herald-Leader](#) (5/20, Chisenhall, 205K) reports that Sheila Johns, Terese Burdine, Carolyn Jasper-Ramsey, and Barron Henderson all face charges of "conspiracy to promote gambling" after the FBI and local police "found 22 gambling machines plus \$10,000 in cash" while executing search warrants at two businesses in Nicholasville, Kentucky. The Herald-Leader quoted a social media post by police as saying, "Illegal gambling machines such as these are designed for the person not to win.' ... 'They usually pay out small amounts in an effort to have you continue to return and play the games. The serious effects of gambling include loss of jobs, depression and anxiety as well as severe debt.'"

### **FBI Arrests New Hampshire Man In String Of Gas Station Robberies.**

The [Natick \(MA\) Patch](#) (5/20, 1.44M) reports that on Wednesday in Framingham, New Hampshire, FBI agents arrested Hector Rivera Ayala for allegedly robbing four gas stations in Manchester during December 2019. The Patch says, "Police were able to identify Ayala as a suspect, according to court records, after extracting a DNA sample from a shawl left at the scene of one of the robberies."

### **Secret Informants Played Significant Role In Cincinnati Corruption Probe.**

In a 2,700-word article, [WCPO-TV Cincinnati](#) (5/20, Monk, Murphy, 185K) "examines...the biggest corruption probe in Cincinnati history," which concluded last year when the FBI "charged three sitting Cincinnati City Council members with bribery and described a 'culture of corruption' at City Hall."

### **Allegedly Unruly Plane Passenger Charged With Cocaine Possession.**

An online [KSTP-TV Minneapolis-St.Paul, MN](#) (5/20, 244K) report says Mark Anthony Scerbo, whose allegedly "unruly behavior forced" a commercial plane that was bound for San Francisco to divert to Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport on Sunday, "has been charged with cocaine possession." The report adds, "The FBI is investigating" this case. This story is also covered by the [Minneapolis Star Tribune](#) (5/20, Chhith, 855K), the [St. Paul \(MN\) Pioneer Press](#) (5/20, Ferraro, 324K), and the [KARE-TV Minneapolis](#) (5/20, 342K) website.

### **Honolulu Police Department Seizing Drugs During Illegal Gambling Crackdown.**

The [Honolulu Star-Advertiser](#) (5/20, 409K) reports the Honolulu Police Department (HPD) is "shutting down illegal gambling houses at the fastest pace in four years, seizing firearms, drugs, and digital gaming machines in neighborhoods from Waikiki to Waimanalo." This comes nearly two years after charges were filed against 15 people in connection with an investigation that was conducted by the HPD, the FBI, "the Hawaii High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area program," and other law enforcement organizations. Those "charges included conducting an

illegal gambling business, robberies involving the use of firearms and methamphetamine trafficking.”

## FINANCIAL CRIME & CORPORATE SCANDALS

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### **Politico Analysis: New York AG Is “All In” On Manhattan Criminal Probe Of Trump Organization.**

Renato Mariotti writes in [Politico](#) (5/20, 6.73M), “The announcement by New York Attorney General Letitia James that her office is ‘actively investigating the Trump Organization in a criminal capacity’ was greeted with a wave of nearly unanimous snap analysis that this spelled big trouble for former President Donald Trump and his company. But behind the scenes, many lawyers, including experienced prosecutors in New York, expressed confusion about what the move actually signified.” James’ spokesperson “noted that the AG was investigating ‘along with the Manhattan D.A.’” That “represents a serious commitment by James to go all in on the DA’s criminal investigation. James is a politician who holds elective office, and her high-profile announcement ensures that she will share in the credit or the blame for the outcome of this investigation.”

**Weisselberg Under Criminal Investigation By New York AG.** [CNBC](#) (5/20, Mangan, 7.34M) reports on its website that longtime Trump Organization CFO Allen Weisselberg “is under criminal investigation” by James’ office. The news “comes two days after...James’ spokesman said her office was investigating the Trump Organization in ‘a criminal capacity.’”

**Prosecutors Seized 18 Electronic Devices During Giuliani Raid.** [CNN](#) (5/20, Scannell, 89.21M) reports on its website, “Federal prosecutors seized 18 electronic devices belonging to Rudy Giuliani and more than one of his employees when they raided his home and office last month,” according to a court filing dated April 29.

### **New Jersey Congressman Made Money On Stock Sales Amid Pandemic.**

The [AP](#) (5/21, Slodysko) reports, “In the early days of the pandemic, New Jersey Rep. Tom Malinowski scolded those looking to capitalize on the once-in-a-century health crisis. ‘This is not the time for anybody to be profiting off of selling ventilators, vaccines, drugs, treatments, PPE, anywhere in the world,’ the two-term Democrat and former assistant secretary of state told MSNBC in April 2020. He did not heed his own admonition.” The AP adds, “Since early 2020, Malinowski has bought or sold as much as \$1 million of stock in medical and tech companies that had a stake in the virus response, according to an analysis of records by The Associated Press. The trades were just one slice of a stock buying and selling spree by the congressman in 2020, worth as much as \$3.2 million, that he did not properly disclose.”

## CYBER DIVISION

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### **Colonial Pipeline CEO To Appear Before House Homeland Security Committee.**

The [AP](#) (5/20) reports Colonial Pipeline CEO Joseph Blount “is scheduled to appear before the House Homeland Security on June 9, when lawmakers will question him” about the May 7 ransomware attack that closed down the pipeline. The company confirmed this week that it paid \$4.4 million to the hackers behind the attack.

[CNN](#) (5/20, Duffy, 89.21M) reports House Committee on Homeland Security Chairman Bennie Thompson said in a statement Thursday, “Congress must have a complete understanding of what happened on Colonial Pipeline’s networks, how it made decisions related to network operations and ransom payments, and how it leveraged support from the Federal government and private sector.”

### **CNA Financial Paid \$40M To Hackers In March.**

[Bloomberg](#) (5/20, Mehrotra, Turton, 3.57M) reports CNA Financial insurance company "paid \$40 million in late March to regain control of its network after a ransomware attack," citing "people with knowledge of the attack." Hackers originally demanded \$60 million, but CNA entered into negotiations with them after a week. CNA spokesperson Cara McCall said, "CNA followed all laws, regulations, and published guidance, including OFAC's 2020 ransomware guidance, in its handling of this matter."

The [Washington Examiner](#) (5/20, Krishan, 888K) also reports.

### **Regulators Looking At Cryptocurrency Oversight, Transaction Reporting.**

[Reuters](#) (5/20, Lawder, Schneider) reports Federal Reserve Chairman Jerome Powell said in a video message Thursday that the must give attention to "the appropriate regulatory and oversight framework" for financial technology, which "includes paying attention to private-sector payments innovators who are currently not within the traditional regulatory arrangements applied to banks, investment firms, and other financial intermediaries." Powell also "said the Fed would release a discussion paper this summer...with a focus on the benefits and risks of establishing a central bank digital currency."

[Reuters](#) (5/20, Lawder) reports the Treasury Department released a report Thursday "detailing the Biden Administration's proposal to invest some \$80 billion into the U.S. tax agency through 2031." The report said, "As with cash transactions, businesses that receive cryptoassets with a fair market value of more than \$10,000 would also be reported on."

### **Biden Order On Software Security Gets Favorable Reception From Experts.**

The [Washington Post](#) (5/20, Riley, 10.52M) reports in The Cybersecurity 202 column that "the Biden administration's recent executive order mandating new software security requirements for companies that contract with the federal government" is getting "cautiously welcoming" reviews from experts. Cohn Reznick National Cybersecurity Director Bhavesh Vadhani said, "I think overall the private sector and federal agencies will benefit from having a standardized framework." Accenture Global Cybersecurity Lead Kelly Bissell said, "In my view this is the first time the government has been extremely eager and ready and so is the private sector at the same juncture. So the stars are aligned."

### **Tulsa City Administration Did Not Engage Hacker.**

The [AP](#) (5/20) reports Tulsa Mayor G.T. Bynum said the identity of the hacker responsible for the attack on the Tulsa, OK computer system is known and "we never engaged them." Tulsa Chief Information Officer Michael Dellinger said the attack was similar to the ransomware attack on Colonial Pipeline. The computer system remains shut down, but there is no indication of a data breach. The police and fire departments are continuing to respond to calls.

### **Researchers Uncover Leak 100M Users From 23 Android Apps.**

[TechRadar](#) (5/20, 438K) reports cyber threat intelligence vendor Check Point Research (CPR) found from a study of 23 Android apps that the data of over 100 million users was leaked "after developers failed to properly configure their third party cloud services." CPR researchers also "found keys for push notifications...embedded inside a number of Android apps themselves" that could allow attackers to "send malevolent content via notifications to users of the app."

### **Science Policy Nominee Passes Senate Commerce Committee Vote.**

[The Hill](#) (5/20, Klar, 5.69M) reports the Senate Commerce Committee voted Thursday to advance the nomination of Eric Lander, President Biden's nominee to lead the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy. Committee Chairwoman Maria Cantwell said, "Dr. Lander and I have come to a focus and an understanding that the very first task he should focus on is helping all of us add diversity of women and minorities in the science field. So he and I will be working aggressively on that." Five Republicans voted against Lander's nomination.

## **Arizona Secretary of State Advises Replacement Of Voting Equipment.**

The [Washington Post](#) (5/20, 10.52M) reports Arizona Secretary of State Katie Hobbs (D) advised Maricopa County in a letter Thursday to replace all voting machines that had been "placed in the custody of Florida-based company Cyber Ninjas at the Arizona Veterans Memorial Coliseum for the review in late April" for a ballot recount. Hobbs wrote, "We cannot be certain who accessed the voting equipment and what might have been done to them." Equipment seized for the recount includes "nine tabulating machines used at a central counting facility and 385 precinct-based tabulators."

## **Indonesia Investigating Potential Leak Of Social Security Data.**

[Bloomberg](#) (5/20, Aditya, Rahadiana, 3.57M) reports Indonesia has begun an investigation "into a possible leak of social security data involving its more than 270 million population." The government is "probing whether the data held by its Healthcare and Social Security Agency, known as BPJS, has been leaked, Communications Minister Johnny Gerard Plate said in a text message to Bloomberg." BPJS Kesehatan, which "manages the country's universal healthcare program, is investigating whether it was involved in the leak."

## **LABORATORY**

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### **Director Of DC Crime Lab Resigns After Audit Report.**

The [Washington Post](#) (5/19, Duggan, Alexander, 10.52M) reports, "The head of the District's troubled Department of Forensic Sciences has resigned after reports of technical errors and management lapses at the crime lab caused its accreditation to be suspended, officials said Wednesday." Jenifer Smith, "a chemist and former FBI agent, was appointed DFS director in July 2015 by D.C. Mayor Muriel E. Bowser (D). In announcing Smith's resignation, Chris Geldart, the acting deputy mayor for public safety, made no mention of the problems at the lab. 'We thank Dr. Smith for her service and appreciate the job she has done in progressing the agency during her tenure,' Geldart said in a brief statement. The statement said her last day would be May 26." The Post adds, "The lab's accreditation was suspended in early April after an independent panel of forensic experts concluded that the DFS had made an error in testing ballistics evidence in two homicide cases and refused to acknowledge the mistake."

## **LAW ENFORCEMENT SERVICES**

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### **Warren And Moulton Seeks Answers On Walsh's Role In Police Commissioner Controversy.**

[The Hill](#) (5/20, Gangitano, 5.69M) reports Sen. Elizabeth Warren (D-MA) and Rep. Seth Moulton (D-MA) "are looking for answers" about if Labor Secretary Walsh "knew about domestic violence allegations against Boston police commissioner Dennis White," who Walsh appointed in his final days as mayor of Boston. White "said in court on Wednesday that Walsh was aware of the domestic violence allegations against White when he appointed him."

### **US Park Police Officers In San Francisco To Wear Body Cameras.**

The [Washington Post](#) (5/20, Jackman, 10.52M) reports the US Park Police announced on Thursday that its San Francisco-based officers will begin wearing body cameras. With that change, the US Park Police will become "one of the few federal police" organizations that use body cameras. The US Department of Justice, which has "more than 43,000 sworn agents in the FBI, Drug Enforcement Administration, Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, and Marshals Service, does not use body-worn or in-car cameras."

## INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

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### **López Obrador Comments On Investigation Involving Governor Of Mexican State.**

The [AP](#) (5/20, Stevenson) reports Mexican President Andrés Manuel López Obrador claimed on Thursday that Francisco Garcia Cabeza de Vaca, the governor of the Mexican state of Tamaulipas, is corrupt. In support of his claim, López Obrador showed a copy of a recent letter that was "sent by the US Embassy's legal attaché." The letter requests "information on Garcia Cabeza de Vaca as part of a US money laundering investigation." In the past, López Obrador has "accused the US Drug Enforcement Administration of fabricating...accusations and displaying a lack of professionalism in their investigation" of a case against a former Mexican defense secretary.

[Reuters](#) (5/20) reports Garcia Cabeza de Vaca is under FBI investigation for alleged money laundering, according to López Obrador. The FBI "did not immediately respond to requests for comment" on this matter.

## LAWFUL ACCESS

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### **MI5 Head Criticizes Facebook's Encryption Plan.**

The [Telegraph \(UK\)](#) (5/20, 249K) reports that Ken McCallum, head of Britain's MI5, "has accused Facebook of giving terrorists and other dangerous criminals a 'free pass' by allowing stronger encryption on its network." McCallum "said hundreds of counterterrorism investigations by the security service would be thwarted by the social media giant's plans to install end-to-end encryption, which means messages will only be visible to the sender and receiver." [The Times \(UK\)](#) (5/21, Hamilton, Subscription Publication, 141K) reports that McCallum told Times Radio, "Decisions taken in California boardrooms are every bit as relevant to our ability to do our jobs as decisions taken in Afghanistan or Syria."

## OTHER FBI NEWS

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### **Politico: Trump Sought To Oust Wray Last Spring.**

[Politico](#) (5/20, Lippman, 6.73M) reports, "Then-President Donald Trump sought to oust" FBI Director Wray "last spring and replace him with counterintelligence head William Evanina, according to three former Trump officials familiar with the episode." Politico adds, "Under the plan, the former officials said, Kash Patel – a former aide to Rep. Devin Nunes (R-Calif.) and a fierce critic of the Russia probe – would have become the bureau's deputy director." According to Politico, "Previously unreported details of the proposal reveal just how seriously the former president took his grievances against the intelligence and law enforcement establishment. It shows Trump at his mercurial peak, ordering up the removal of his own appointee in a fit of rage, only to back down when then-Attorney General Bill Barr threatened to resign if he followed through with the maneuver."

### **Trump DOJ Secretly Obtained CNN Reporter's Phone, Email Records.**

[CNN](#) (5/20, Herb, Schneider, 89.21M) reports, "The Trump administration secretly sought and obtained the 2017 phone and email records of a CNN correspondent, the latest instance where federal prosecutors have taken aggressive steps targeting journalists in leak investigations." The Justice Department "informed CNN Pentagon correspondent Barbara Starr, in a May 13 letter, that prosecutors had obtained her phone and email records covering two months, between June 1, 2017 to July 31, 2017. The letter listed phone numbers for Starr's Pentagon extension, the CNN Pentagon booth phone number and her home and cell phones, as well as Starr's work and personal email accounts. It is unclear when the investigation was opened,

whether it happened under Attorney General Jeff Sessions or Attorney General William Barr, and what the Trump administration was looking for in Starr's records. The Justice Department confirmed the records were sought through the courts last year but provided no further explanation or context."

The [Washington Post](#) (5/20, 10.52M) reports, "In that time frame, according to CNN, Starr reported on options the military had prepared to present to Trump on North Korea, U.S. action on a possible planned chemical attack in Syria and a military policy change to suspend the public release of information about American combat deaths in Afghanistan." CNN "reported that a May 13 letter from the Justice Department disclosing the move 'listed phone numbers for Starr's Pentagon extension, the CNN Pentagon booth phone number and her home and cellphones, as well as Starr's work and personal email accounts.' The letter said investigators had obtained what are known as phone 'toll records,' which include calls made to and from the targeted phone and their duration, and "non-content information" from email accounts, according to CNN."

[Politico](#) (5/20, Leonard, 6.73M) reports, "A Justice Department spokesperson, Anthony Coley, confirmed to POLITICO on Thursday night that the legal process to get the records was approved last year, but he did not explain why the records were sought." Politico adds, "The news comes less than two weeks after The Washington Post reported that Trump's Justice Department secretly got three Post reporters' phone records and tried to get their email logs. The move was in an apparent bid to uncover the sources for a story in 2017 on a federal investigation into alleged links between Russia and the then-president's campaign."

The [Washington Examiner](#) (5/20, Chaitin, 888K) reports, "Justice Department leaders plan to meet with reporters to discuss a recent flurry of notices about secret records seizures during the Trump administration that has prompted alarm in the media industry." The department "has indicated the intrusions into the activities of journalists took place last year and are related to leak investigations, and the reporters themselves are not the targets, but information about what exactly was sought after remains unclear. The notifications are trickling in four months after President Joe Biden took office. 'Department leadership will soon meet with reporters to hear their concerns about recent notices and further convey Attorney General Garland's staunch support of and commitment to a free and independent press,' Anthony Coley, the DOJ director of public affairs and a senior adviser to Attorney General Merrick Garland, said in a statement to the Washington Examiner on Thursday." [The Hill](#) (5/20, Choi, 5.69M) also reports.

### **Wray Taps Merrill As New Hawaii SAC.**

[Honolulu Civil Beat \(HI\)](#) (5/19) reports, "The FBI field office in Hawaii has a new special agent in charge." On May 10, FBI Director Wray "announced Steven Merrill would take the helm in Honolulu where he will lead the agency's investigations into federal crimes." Merrill "began his career at the FBI as a forensic scientist in 1991 and later moved to San Francisco, where, as an agent, he helped in the investigation and prosecution of Theodore Kaczynski, otherwise known as the Unabomber. Merrill has worked both inside and outside the U.S. According to the FBI, he was the first agency agent to respond to the 2008 Mumbai terror attacks that killed more than 170 people. He has supervised investigations into public corruption, civil rights violations and antitrust."

The [Honolulu Star-Advertiser](#) (5/20, 409K) reports, "Prior to arriving in Hawaii, Merrill most recently served as a financial crimes section chief in the Criminal Investigative Division at FBI Headquarters in Washington, D.C. where he led the FBI's efforts to combat fraud related to COVID-19, including pandemic-related scams, vaccine fraud and other offenses."

### **FBI Agent Says Chinese Communist Party Is Greatest Threat In US.**

[Utah Public Radio](#) (5/20, Hewitt) reports that FBI Special Agent David Fitzgibbons "said he believes the 'greatest long term threat in the United States...is the Chinese Communist Party.'" Fitzgibbons also "said it's almost guaranteed China has all of the personal information of every

American adult” and added that the country’s “goal is to steal our trade secrets and replicate our economy so they can ‘eventually replace us in the global market.’”

## OTHER WASHINGTON NEWS

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### **New COVID Cases Fall Below 30K.**

[ABC World News Tonight](#)<sup>Vi</sup> (5/20, story 3, 3:00, Muir, 5.47M) reported that the Biden Administration is lauding new COVID data, showing that new infections are “dropping below 30,000 a day for the first time since last June,” and 160 million Americans, representing 57% of Americans ages 12 and older, are partially vaccinated. The [CBS Evening News](#)<sup>Vi</sup> (5/20, story 4, 2:05, O'Donnell, 4.11M) reported that the new data also show an estimated 40% of Americans are now fully vaccinated against COVID.

[NBC Nightly News](#)<sup>Vi</sup> (5/20, story 3, 1:15, Holt, 5.2M) reported that while the latest data is encouraging, new data also shows that Americans may need a booster shot against COVID in the future. Pfizer Chair/CEO Albert Bourla said in remarks on Wednesday, “There will be a need for a booster somewhere between eight and twelve months.”

***COVID Caused US Mortality Rate To Surge In 2020.*** The [Wall Street Journal](#) (5/20, Kamp, Abbott, Dapena, Subscription Publication, 8.41M) reports US COVID deaths have caused an extraordinary jump in the nation’s death rate, to a level no seen in nearly two decades. Provisional data from the CDC show US age-adjusted mortality rate in 2020 increased by nearly 16% from 2019.

### **Fauci, Pfizer, And Moderna CEOs: Booster Shots Will Be Needed Within A Year Of Being Vaccinated.**

[Axios](#) (5/20, Owens, 1.26M) reports that according to the CEOs of Pfizer and Moderna, “the first Americans to be vaccinated against the coronavirus could require a third ‘booster’ shot as early as September. ... ‘The data that I see coming, they are supporting the notion that likely there will be a need for a booster somewhere between 8 and 12 months,’ Pfizer CEO Albert Bourla said [Wednesday] during an Axios event. That means some Americans could need a booster as soon as September or October, he added.” At the same event, NIAID Director Fauci said, “I think we will almost certainly require a booster sometime within a year or so after getting the primary [shot] because the durability of protection against coronaviruses is generally not lifelong.”

Asked on [CNN](#)<sup>Vi</sup> (5/20, 636K) about the fully vaccinated will need a booster with a year, Surgeon General Murthy said, “I think it’s possible we may, but we don’t know that yet. We have to see how long the protection lasts. We know it lasts at least six months. We’ll have to see when infections tick up. ... It’s very possible, and people should be prepared for the fact that we may need a booster within a year.”

NIAID Director Fauci said on [CNBC](#)<sup>Vi</sup> (5/20, 186K), “We don’t know. There’s been a lot of talk and maybe some misrepresentation that we absolutely will need booster shots at this time. We don’t know. We don’t know what the durability of protection is. We’re following it very closely.”

***Moderna Joins Pfizer In Exporting US-Manufactured Vaccine Doses.*** [Bloomberg](#) (5/20, Wingrove, Langreth, 3.57M) reports that Moderna “has begun exporting U.S.-produced Covid-19 vaccines to other countries, a key step as U.S. vaccine supply begins to be shipped abroad.” Bloomberg says Moderna’s “early U.S. production had been gobbled up by a single buyer – the federal government – as the country, under the administrations of Donald Trump and then Joe Biden, used wartime powers to prioritize its orders and make sure it was the front of the line for vaccine supply for Americans.”

### **Public Health Experts Express New Concern Over Vaccination Gaps Across US.**

The [AP](#) (5/20, Binkley, Reeves, Seewer) reports that public health experts are drawing new attention to a new emerging vaccination pattern, which is that the highest vaccination rates "are concentrated in the Northeast, while the lowest ones are mostly in the South." New England and other Northeastern states "account for eight of the top 10 in vaccination rates, with Vermont No. 1," but eight Southern states "are in the bottom 10, all of which are under 40%." Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security senior scholar Tara Kirk Sell said of the danger, "Low vaccination rates will leave room for the virus to circulate, reemerge and possibly form new variant." She added, "High vaccination rates are critical to keeping the disease under control, especially when we get back to the fall and winter."

Marc Thiessen writes in the [Washington Post](#) (5/20, 10.52M) that the Administration's "vaccination effort is faltering. ... We've now reached the point where everyone eager to get their shot has gotten it. The challenge has shifted from ensuring supply meets demand to creating demand by convincing vaccine-hesitant Americans to get their shots." Gerson says elected leaders are "failing miserably" at addressing the concerns of the vaccine-hesitant. The Administration, he argues, "did a good job of accelerating delivery of the vaccines, but it is doing an awful job selling them."

### **Vaccine Data Highlight Growing Disparity In Access For Black Americans.**

[CNN](#) (5/20, Recht, Pradhan, Weber, 89.21M) reports on its website that Black Americans' vaccination rates "are still lagging months into the nation's campaign, while Hispanics are closing the gap and Native Americans show the highest rates overall." The data, which was "provided by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention," provides a "sweeping national look at the race and ethnicity of vaccinated people on a state-by-state basis," and it "shows that only 22% of Black Americans have gotten a shot, and Black rates still trail those of Whites in almost every state."

### **WPost Analysis: Biden Failed To "Follow The Science" Through Latest CDC Update.**

The [Washington Post](#) (5/20, 10.52M) examines President Biden's focus on science as a central part of his Administration, and how the Administration "left out nearly everyone else – local and state health departments, labor unions, governors and numerous other public officials, many of whom were caught off guard by one of the most significant developments of the coronavirus pandemic" last week, when the CDC announced the end of the mask mandate for vaccinated Americans. The unexpected guidance has public health experts warning that the Administration "may have inadvertently encouraged millions of unvaccinated Americans to stop wearing masks."

Asked on [CNNVi](#) (5/20, 636K) about criticism of earlier CDC guidance that recommended vaccinated individuals continue wearing masks, Surgeon General Murthy said, "We have to make sure we have the science to back up our decisions. In the case of the mask guidance, you'll notice that's what the CDC is doing. Take for example, the decision last week, the change to guidance where they said fully vaccinated people can be indoors or outdoors without a mask. The reason they said that is they have received even more evidence."

### **Republicans Continue To Challenge Pelosi Over Mask Usage.**

[USA Today](#) (5/20, Behrmann, 12.7M) reports that following the CDC's mask guidance update, Republican lawmakers "refuse to confirm they have been vaccinated while bucking mask rules in the House chamber." 10 Republicans "took off their masks during a series of votes Tuesday," and they "congregated at the front of the chamber, smiling, laughing and posing for pictures."

[CBS News](#) (5/20, 5.39M) reports on its website that House Speaker Pelosi spoke about the growing challenges to the mask rules, and she "explained that mask mandates would not be relaxed until all members are vaccinated." Pelosi said, "We have to wait for them to be vaccinated because they are selfishly an endangerment to other people include staff people here."

[The Hill](#) (5/20, Choi, 5.69M) reports that the Office of the Attending Physician “has said that the current House rule is in accordance with the CDC’s new guidance because the House chambers are ‘the only location where the entire Membership gathers periodically throughout the day in an interior space.’”

### **Maryland Announces Vaccine Lottery.**

The [Washington Post](#) (5/20, Wiggins, 10.52M) reports Maryland Gov. Larry Hogan (R) “is launching a \$2 million lottery that will hand out dozens of \$40,000 cash prizes to state residents who have received coronavirus vaccinations – along with a grand prize of \$400,000.” He “said daily drawings for a \$40,000 prize will be held from Tuesday to July 3,” and the final \$400,000 prize will “be awarded via a random drawing” on July 4. All vaccinated residents over the age of 18 will be eligible, regardless of their vaccination date.

The [Baltimore Sun](#) (5/20, Stole, 629K) reports that the Maryland Department of Health will “contact winners directly and won’t share names or any other information about people who have been vaccinated with the Maryland Lottery or other agencies.”

### **Seattle’s Vaccination Campaign Lauded.**

[NBC Nightly News](#) (5/20, story 4, 1:45, Holt, 5.2M) examined Seattle’s COVID vaccination campaign, which has resulted in 75% of its residents becoming at least partially vaccinated. Seattle Mayor Jenny Durkan (D) told NBC, “No one can overstate how stunning it was for us. And we were one of the first cities in. We had no road map. But you know, I think when history’s written, they’ll say that Seattle got it right. We are a city that believes in science. We believed in masking and vaccination and testing.”

### **US Depending On “Honor System” For Summer Travelers.**

[NBC Nightly News](#) (5/20, story 8, 1:25, Holt, 5.2M) reported that the forthcoming summer travel season will be challenging because of a lack of any federal or state-level vaccine passport system, and it means that the “honor system” will prevail in the short-term. Brown University emergency physician Megan Ranney is quoted as saying, “If your whole family is fully vaccinated, now is the time that you can start to move back toward normal.” She added, “While kids under 12 probably won’t be vaccinated, experts say their risk is low. If you’re visiting a national park, you can remove your mask if you’re fully vaccinated. Keep it on if you’re not vaccinated or you’re indoors.”

### **Republicans Have Not Moved From Initial Offer In Infrastructure Talks.**

The [AP](#) (5/20) reports Senate Republicans have not moved “off their initial \$568 billion infrastructure proposal despite overtures from the White House to work toward a compromise as President Joe Biden tries to strike a bipartisan agreement on his sweeping \$2.3 trillion infrastructure plan.” A “person granted anonymity to discuss the private negotiations” said there was “not a significantly changed offer” from Republicans during their meeting with the Administration this week. The AP says the “lack of any sizable movement” or “other notable changes to narrow the gap with Biden is certain to spark fresh worries from Democrats that time is slipping for a deal.”

A [Wall Street Journal](#) (5/20, Subscription Publication, 8.41M) editorial questions the wisdom of Republicans negotiating with the White House on infrastructure. The Journal argues Biden has said he will get what he can on talks with Republicans and then pass the remaining proposals with Democratic votes via budget reconciliation.

### **Treasury Has Distributed \$105.3B In COVID Aid To State And Local Governments.**

[Bloomberg](#) (5/20, Albright, 3.57M) reports the Treasury Department has distributed “\$105.3 billion of aid to state and local governments from President Joe Biden’s \$350 billion relief package for them under the American Rescue Plan legislation.” According to a statement from

the Department, "the federal government has handed out about 30% of the Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds to more than 1,500 entities since it was launched on May 10." Treasury Secretary Yellen said in a statement, "This state and local aid program is going to provide transformative funding to communities across the country, and our Treasury team is focused on getting relief to these communities as quickly as possible."

### **Lenders "Overwhelmed," Borrowers "Panicking" As PPP Winds Down.**

The [New York Times](#) (5/20, Cowley, 20.6M) reports as the Paycheck Protection Program comes to an end, "millions of applicants are seeking money from the scant handful of lenders still making the government-backed loans," and "hundreds of thousands of people are stuck in limbo, waiting to find out if their approved loans...will be funded. Lenders are overwhelmed, and borrowers are panicking." While the program "had been scheduled to keep taking applications until May 31," two weeks ago, the SBA "announced that the program's \$292 billion in financing for forgivable loans this year had nearly run out and that it would immediately stop processing most new applications."

### **Restaurant Revitalization Fund Seeing High Demand.**

[NBC Nightly News](#) (5/20, story 9, 2:40, Holt, 5.2M) reported on the efforts of restaurants in Washington State to recover after being "devastated by the pandemic." NBC's Mark Wright added, "During the first six months of the pandemic, more than 2,300 restaurants in Washington State closed permanently. ... Of those that stayed open doing takeout only, losses averaged \$20,000 a month." NBC reported the Restaurant Revitalization Fund "is allocating more than \$28 billion to restaurant relief. But demand is incredible. They've already received applications for more than 69 billion. Restaurants have until this coming Monday to apply."

### **House Democrats Propose Changes To Biden's Inheritance Tax Proposal.**

[Bloomberg](#) (5/20, Davison, 3.57M) reports that President Biden's "proposal to dramatically expand the inheritance tax bill for wealthy Americans is running into some headwinds with Democrats on Capitol Hill, showcasing nervousness about the scope and size of elements of the White House's ambitious tax plans." Bloomberg adds, "Instead of hitting heirs with a hefty tax payment at the time of the death of their benefactor, staff for House Ways and Means Chair Richard Neal have floated allowing the beneficiaries to defer the bill as long as they hang on to the asset." According to Bloomberg, "That possibility was presented on a Tuesday call with progressive groups and tax policy experts."

### **Administration Proposes Lower-Than-Expected 15% Global Minimum Corporate Tax Rate.**

The [New York Times](#) (5/20, Rappeport, 20.6M) reports Treasury Department officials said Thursday that the Administration "proposed a global tax on multinational corporations of at least 15 percent in the latest round of international tax negotiations." The Times says the rate "was a lower-than-expected proposal from the United States, and the Treasury Department hailed its positive reception among other countries as a breakthrough in the negotiations."

[Bloomberg](#) (5/20, Mohsin, Davison, 3.57M) says the proposal "moves the U.S. position closer to the 12.5% rate that had been discussed at the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development prior to the U.S. re-engaging in the negotiations following Joe Biden's election as president. The American move could help provide additional momentum to reach a deal in the summer, as the OECD has been aiming for." The [Wall Street Journal](#) (5/20, Rubin, Subscription Publication, 8.41M) provides similar coverage.

### **Politico Analysis: Biden Has Moved Leftward On Taxes And Spending.**

[Politico](#) (5/20, Barron-Lopez, 6.73M) reports that "moderate Democrats who worked alongside Joe Biden for decades say the new president's economic policies don't square with the Senator

Biden they knew." As a senator in the 1980s, "Biden voted for the Reagan tax cuts, significantly reducing the tax rate for high-income earners. In the 1990s, he promoted legislation that would have dramatically restricted deficit spending and backed Clinton-era welfare reform." As Vice President, "he negotiated major deals with Republicans that included the extension of the Bush-era tax cuts and domestic spending reductions." Politico says, "The new Joe Biden is pushing historic spending packages as president that could – if passed – usher in the biggest expansion of the social safety net in 80-odd years."

### **Biden Order Directs Agencies To Mitigate Financial Risk Of Climate Change.**

[Politico](#) (5/20, Woellert, 6.73M) reports that "a sweeping executive order" that President Biden was expected to sign Thursday night will "direct agencies to mitigate the financial risk of climate change to homeowners, consumers, federal workers, businesses and the government itself." Politico says, "As wildfires, storms, flooding and intense heat become the norm, one of the administration's overarching goals is to coax trillions of dollars in capital away from high-risk industries and places and into investments such as renewable energy and green construction."

### **Treasury Details Plan To Raise \$700B Through New Tax Compliance Measures.**

The [Washington Post](#) (5/20, Stein, 10.52M) reports the Treasury Department has "announced a plan to raise an additional \$700 billion through new tax compliance measures, a potentially key source of revenue for the Biden administration's multitrillion-dollar spending proposals." A 22-page report from Treasury officials "identified a number of policies to increase enforcement aimed at closing the 'tax gap' between what taxpayers owe to the federal government and what they actually pay. These include increased reporting requirements, new tools for auditors, massively increasing the Internal Revenue Service's budget, and new rules on cryptocurrency, among other measures."

[Politico](#) (5/20, Faler, 6.73M) says the President wants to "double the size of the IRS, by hiring nearly 87,000 new workers over the next decade, as part of a sweeping plan to chase down tax cheats." The new hires, "part of a bid to increase IRS funding by \$80 billion, would be phased in to give the department time to adjust," the Treasury Department report said. Politico reports the Administration also "wants to require financial institutions and other businesses to report a lot more information about the money coursing through their customers' accounts – a proposal designed to put the fear of the IRS in the hearts of tax scofflaws."

The [New York Times](#) (5/20, Rappeport, 20.6M) says the Administration "has faced questions from Republican lawmakers" such as Sen. Mike Crapo (R-ID) "to justify its claims that giving the I.R.S. so much money will yield such robust returns. Conservative political groups have criticized the Biden administration plan hire an army of I.R.S. agents, saying it's a way to hike taxes. The Treasury report attempted to rebut such claims, noting that increased audits would be focused on the rich."

### **Senate Panel Approves OSTP Nominee Lander.**

[Politico](#) (5/20, Arciga, Din, 6.73M) reports that on Thursday, the Senate Commerce Committee "approved Biden Cabinet nominee Eric Lander to lead the Office of Science and Technology Policy...in a bipartisan voice vote." Politico says Lander, "a top geneticist and director of the Broad Institute of MIT and Harvard, is the last of President Joe Biden's Cabinet awaiting confirmation." According to Politico, some lawmakers "had expressed concern over Lander's selection, especially related to two meetings he had with late financier and sex offender Jeffrey Epstein in the spring of 2012."

[Politico](#) (5/20, Arciga, Din, 6.73M) reports Biden "tapped Lander to lead the office in early January, following his stint as co-chair of the Presidential Council of Advisors on Science and Technology during the Obama administration – where he briefed both then-Vice President Biden and President Barack Obama on science-related issues." The [AP](#) (5/20, Daly) reports Senate

Commerce Chair Maria Cantwell "said she wished Biden had named a woman for the job, but said Lander has pledged to work to elevate women and minorities in science."

### **ICE Will No Longer Detain Immigrants In Two Jails Facing Federal Probes.**

The [Washington Post](#) (5/20, Sacchetti, 10.52M) reports that the Biden Administration "has decided to stop detaining immigrants in a pair of county jails facing federal probes in Georgia and Massachusetts, calling the decision an 'important first step' in a broader review of the nation's sprawling network of immigration jails." DHS Secretary Mayorkas ordered ICE "to immediately terminate its contract with the Bristol County Sheriff's Office in Massachusetts and to transfer the few remaining detainees elsewhere." Mayorkas "also directed ICE to 'as soon as possible' sever its contracts with the Irwin County Detention Center in rural Georgia, a more complicated endeavor because the facility is county-owned but run by a private contractor."

[Politico](#) (5/20, Niedzwiadek, 6.73M) quotes Mayorkas as saying, "We have an obligation to make lasting improvements to our civil immigration detention system. This marks an important first step to realizing that goal. DHS detention facilities and the treatment of individuals in those facilities will be held to our health and safety standards. Where we discover they fall short, we will continue to take action as we are doing today."

[USA Today](#) (5/20, Morin, 12.7M) reports that the investigation began into the Bristol County Sheriff's Office began in December 2020, when the Massachusetts Civil Rights Division "issued a report saying that the Bristol County Sheriff's Office used 'excessive and disproportionate' force in response to a disturbance in May 2020 with some immigrant detainees at the Carreiro Immigration Detention Center." The report "said employees used weapons such as a flash bang grenade, pepper spray and pepper-spray balls, anti-riot shields and canines."

The [Los Angeles Times](#) (5/20, O'Toole, 3.37M) reports that lawyers and activists "welcomed the directive, but called for greater accountability, noting that several of the women who alleged abuse at Irwin, while released into the United States, still face final orders of removal and remain at risk of deportation." Lawyers "have filed several lawsuits seeking temporary restraining orders against the removals, arguing that the then-Trump administration was violating the women's 1st Amendment and due-process rights, as well as longtime policies protecting those cooperating in criminal investigations."

The [AP](#) (5/20, Fox, Brumback) and the [CNN](#) (5/20, Alvarez, 89.21M) website provide additional coverage of the DHS announcement.

### **Administration Releases Wildfire Strategy.**

The [New York Times](#) (5/20, Flavelle, 20.6M) reports the Administration said in a strategy document released Thursday that the government needs to do more to reduce the intensity of wildfires. The Agriculture Department, which oversees the US Forest Service, "said it must double or even quadruple the amount of vegetation it removes from its forests each year. That leaves less fuel for fires that do ignite, making them easier to contain." The USDA wrote that the current amount of vegetation being removed each year "is not enough to keep pace with the scale and scope of the wildfire problem."

### **Four House Democrats Urge Leaders To Push Through Voting Rights Bills.**

The [New York Times](#) (5/20, Herndon, 20.6M) reports "four House Democrats emailed the party caucus on Thursday pushing for their colleagues to muscle through" the For the People Act and the John Lewis Voting Rights Act, "two election bills now being considered on Capitol Hill, arguing that 'democracy is on the line.'" The email from Reps. Colin Allred (D-TX), Val Demings (D-FL), Mondaire Jones (D-NY), and Nikema Williams (D-GA) argues that passing the more narrow John Lewis Act alone would not be sufficient in response to voting restrictions enacted by Republicans around the country.

## **WPost Analysis: Roberts No Longer A Swing Vote After Barrett's Confirmation To SCOTUS.**

The [Washington Post](#) (5/20, 10.52M) reports in an analysis that the confirmation of Supreme Court Justice Amy Coney Barrett "didn't just give conservatives on the court a 6-3 majority; it also means Chief Justice John G. Roberts Jr. is no longer as likely to be a swing vote on the court – marking a sudden change to the amount of power Roberts has to steer the direction of the court." On Monday, the Court announced "it will review a restrictive Mississippi abortion law that would ban almost all abortions after 15 weeks of pregnancy." The Post says, "It has been suggested that Roberts aimed to make the court appear less political by avoiding those sensitive issues," but "his supposed efforts to depoliticize the court were blunted by Barrett's appointment."

## **Chris Cuomo Was Involved In Strategy Calls About Sexual Harassment Allegations Against Brother.**

The [AP](#) (5/20) reports, "CNN said Thursday it was 'inappropriate' for anchor Chris Cuomo to have been involved in phone calls with the staff of his brother," New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo (D), where strategies on "how the governor should respond to sexual harassment allegations were allegedly discussed. ... CNN said in a statement that Chris Cuomo has not been involved in the network's coverage of the allegations, either on the air or behind the scenes, because he could not be objective and often serves as a 'sounding board' for his older brother."

The [Washington Post](#) (5/20, 10.52M) reports Chris Cuomo, "one of the network's top stars, joined a series of conference calls that included the Democratic governor's top aide, his communications team, lawyers and a number of outside advisers, according to the people familiar with the conversations. ... The calls occurred earlier this year, when a growing number of claims that Andrew Cuomo made inappropriate comments or touched women without their permission had escalated into a political crisis." The Post says Chris Cuomo "encouraged his brother to take a defiant position and not to resign from the governor's office," sources said. At one point, "he used the phrase 'cancel culture' as a reason to hold firm in the face of the allegations, two people present on one call said."

The [New York Times](#) (5/20, Grynbaum, 20.6M) writes, "The episode has – once again – raised questions about Chris Cuomo's ability to host a flagship cable news program while his brother is a key figure in several major political stories. Besides the harassment allegations from several women who worked on his staff," Gov. Cuomo has faced criticism "for obscuring the number of coronavirus deaths in New York State nursing homes." The [Wall Street Journal](#) (5/20, Mullin, Vielkind, Subscription Publication, 8.41M), the [New York Post](#) (5/20, Fonrouge, 7.45M), and the [New York Daily News](#) (5/20, Shahrighian, 2.51M) also report.

## **WPost: Postal Reform Measure Is Good, But Insufficient.**

A [Washington Post](#) (5/20, 10.52M) editorial says a "bipartisan coalition of senators has just signed on to a bipartisan House bill" to help the US Postal Service "repair its balance sheet." The Post says while the bill may be necessary "to aiding the agency's solvency, it is hardly sufficient. Even if it had been in force during fiscal 2020, the Postal Service still would have lost \$3.8 billion." Lawmakers, the Post argues, "have converged on the bare minimum needed to tidy up the Postal Service's finances, without imposing any onerous new obligations on the agency in the process. All things considered, that's progress, and worthy of support, doubly so since the proposal shows that Republicans and Democrats can still work together once in a while."

## **INTERNATIONAL NEWS**

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### **WTO Head: Developing World Should Be Producing Vaccines.**

The [AP](#) (5/20, Casert) reports that World Trade Organization Director-General Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala "said Thursday it is of paramount importance to diversify vaccine manufacturing and to have more production taking place in Africa and Latin America to contain the pandemic." Okonjo-Iweala "told European Union legislators that normal market forces for exports and imports couldn't apply when it comes to the life-or-death issue of COVID-19 vaccines, as many of the world's wealthiest nations were hoarding the shots for their own population when the crisis hit their home turf."

### **NYTimes Analysis: Global Vaccination Effort Suffers Repeated Setbacks.**

The [New York Times](#) (5/20, Pietsch, 20.6M) examines the COVAX vaccination campaign, and the recent setbacks involving India's Serum Institute and the US' Emergent BioSolutions, which are both behind schedule on the production of their respective vaccines. Serum "has diverted all its manufacturing powers to domestic needs, falling behind on commitments to the COVAX partnership as well as on bilateral commercial deals with many countries," and Emergent BioSolutions' CEO "revealed that more than 100 million doses of Johnson & Johnson's vaccine were now on hold as regulators checked them for possible contamination."

### **China Says It Is Providing Vaccines To Almost 40 African Nations.**

The [AP](#) (5/20) reports that on Thursday, China's Foreign Ministry "said...it is providing COVID-19 vaccines to nearly 40 African countries, describing its actions as purely altruistic in an apparent intensification of what has been described as 'vaccine diplomacy.' The vaccines were donated or sold at 'favorable prices,' Foreign Ministry official Wu Peng told reporters." The AP says Wu "compared China's outreach to the actions of 'some countries that have said they have to wait for their own people to finish the vaccination before they could supply the vaccines to foreign countries,' in an apparent dig at the United States."

### **WHO: New Cases In Europe Down 60% In A Month.**

The [New York Times](#) (5/20, Cumming-Bruce, Slotnik, 20.6M) says the World Health Organization reported on Thursday that Europe "has recorded a 60 percent drop in new coronavirus infections over the past month." The Times adds, "The W.H.O.'s announcement of declining cases is welcome for the soon-reopening bloc, as tourists and other nonessential travelers who have been mostly barred for more than a year will be able to return and could invigorate the struggling tourism and hospitality sectors of many countries. The number of new cases reported weekly across Europe dropped from 1.7 million in mid-April to close to 685,000 last week, reported Dr. Hans Kluge, the W.H.O.'s European director."

The [Wall Street Journal](#) (5/20, Benoit, Bisserbe, Legorano, Subscription Publication, 8.41M) reports that the drop in new cases comes as Europe's vaccination campaign strengthens. The number of partially vaccinated EU residents has doubled over the past month, reaching 33%.

### **EU Announces Updated Rules Ahead Of Summer Travel Season.**

The [AP](#) (5/20) reports that EU legislators and member countries "found a compromise Thursday for launching COVID-19 certificates before the height of the summer holiday season, a move aimed at boosting travel and tourism following the restrictions of the coronavirus pandemic." The announcement means that EU citizens "can start packing for summer vacations...without having to worry about quarantines." European Parliament rapporteur Juan Fernando Lopez Aguilar said, "This agreement is the first step to get the Schengen Area back on track."

The [Washington Post](#) (5/20, Birnbaum, 10.52M) reports that the agreement "seeks to eliminate quarantine requirements for people who can prove they are at low risk of having covid-19 because they are vaccinated, have recently tested negative for the coronavirus, or have already recovered from the disease." The new plan will "set up a digital certificate system that policymakers hope will make it easy for travelers to prove their status," and it will "go into

effect July 1, although E.U. countries will have another six weeks to implement it if they are not ready by then."

#### ***Italy Preparing New Vaccination Campaign Ahead Of Summer Travel Season.***

The [New York Times](#) (5/20, 20.6M) reports that Italy's vaccination program "is speeding up, but it is heading smack into the holiday period, prompting fears among officials that some would rather get away than get a shot." Millions of Italians "face the prospect of getting their second shots in the middle of July or worse, in the riptide that is the Italian August, which pulls people out of cities and into swelling seaside towns," and regional governments are preparing to meet them when they arrive.

#### **Brazilian Company Completes First Locally Produced Batch Of Sputnik V.**

[Reuters](#) (5/20) reports that Brazilian pharmaceutical company União Química "completed production of its first batch of the Sputnik V coronavirus vaccine with active ingredients and technology supplied by Russia." Russia's Gamaleya Institute "said it had seen to quality control of the vaccine ingredients, which were put into vials and packaged for shipping – a process known as fill and finish – at the União Química plant in Guarulhos, just outside the city of São Paulo."

#### **Lancet Study Finds Africans Are More Likely To Die From COVID.**

The [New York Times](#) (5/20, Grady, 20.6M) reports that according to a new article in The Lancet, COVID-positive Africans "are more likely to die than patients in other parts of the world." The report cited data from 64 hospitals across 10 counties, and the increase risk of death "applies only to those who become severely ill, not to everyone who catches the disease." The study reviewed 3,077 critically ill patients, and 48.2% of these patients died within 30 days, as opposed to global average of 31.5%.

#### **European Parliament Declines To Ratify Pact With China Over Human Rights Abuses.**

The [New York Times](#) (5/20, Ewing, 20.6M) reports that on Thursday, the European Parliament "halted progress...on a landmark commercial agreement with China, citing the 'totalitarian threat' from Beijing because of its record on human rights and its sanctions against Europeans who have been critical of the Chinese government." The Times says that "by an overwhelming majority, members of Parliament passed a resolution refusing to ratify the so-called Comprehensive Agreement on Investment until China lifts sanctions on prominent European critics of Beijing. The members of Parliament also warned that they could refuse to endorse the agreement because of China's treatment of Muslim minorities and its suppression of democracy in Hong Kong."

#### **Russian Ambassador To UK Says G7 Pushing Russia And China Together.**

[Reuters](#) (5/20) reports that on Thursday, Russian Ambassador to the UK Andrei Kelin warned that the Group of Seven is "playing a 'dangerous game' by making aggressive and baseless criticism of the Kremlin because it pushes Russia closer to China." According to Reuters, "G7 foreign ministers this month scolded both China and Russia, casting the Kremlin as malicious and Beijing as a bully, but beyond words there were few concrete steps aside from expressing support for Taiwan and Ukraine." Nevertheless, Kelin "said the G7's critique was biased, confrontational, lacked substance and was stoking anti-Western feelings among Russians, while its aggressive attitude towards Russia and China was pushing the two powers together."

#### **South Korea's Moon To Discuss Climate With Biden Friday.**

The [New York Times](#) (5/20, Friedman, 20.6M) reports that the US calls for South Korea to set more ambitious CO2 emissions reduction goals, a topic to be discussed when President Moon Jae-in meets with President Biden Friday. Last month, climate envoy John Kerry suggested to

South Korea's government that the country take "corresponding efforts" to the US in reducing carbon emissions, nearly doubling South Korea's current target of 24.4% below 2017 levels.

### **NYTimes Analysis: North Korean Nuclear Program Here To Stay.**

The [New York Times](#) (5/20, Sanger, Broad, Sang-Hun, 20.6M) reports that North Korea's nuclear arsenal has doubled in the past four years, and is likely to stay as Pakistan's, another nuclear armed state the US sought to disarm. In private, US officials doubt North Korea will ever give up its nuclear program, though President Biden continues to not officially acknowledge North Korea as a nuclear state. If North Korea is officially designated a nuclear state, then there is a real concern that Japan, South Korea, or other East Asian nations will intensify nuclear programs of their own.

### **Kremlin: Lavrov-Blinken Meeting A "Positive Signal" Ahead Of Potential Biden-Putin Summit.**

[Reuters](#) (5/20) reports that on Thursday, the Kremlin "said...that President Vladimir Putin had yet to decide on whether a summit with his U.S. counterpart Joe Biden would go ahead, but hailed talks between the two countries' top diplomats as a positive signal." Reuters adds that Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov and Secretary of State Blinken's "talks in Iceland on Wednesday were their first in-person meeting." Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov "said the talks would help Moscow decide on the summit option. 'Without a doubt, this is a positive signal,' he told reporters."

**US And Russia Clash Over Arctic.** The [AP](#) (5/20, Lee) reports that the US is leading a campaign against Russian attempts to control Arctic shipping. Russia assumed the rotating chairmanship of the Arctic Council on Thursday, sparking opposition to Russia's plans to set maritime rules in the Northern Sea Route and wish to resume high-level military talks among the council – talks which were suspended after Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

**Russia Trying To Freeze Radio Free Europe's Bank Accounts Over Unpaid Fines.** The [New York Times](#) (5/20, Verma, 20.6M) reports that Radio Free Europe, "which is funded by the U.S. government, has entered a standoff with the Russian government. The battle revolves around a Russian law requiring that the organization label itself a 'foreign agent.'" The Times says Russian officials "have initiated legal action against the outlet and frozen its bank accounts until it pays roughly \$67,000 of \$2.4 million in estimated total fines for not complying with the law."

### **Merkel Welcomes Biden's Nord Stream Sanctions Waiver.**

The [AP](#) (5/20) reports that on Thursday, German Chancellor Angela Merkel "said...that Germany will discuss 'necessary common ground' with the U.S. on relations with Russia after President Joe Biden opted not to punish the company overseeing a Russia-Germany pipeline project that Washington opposes." Merkel said, "President Biden has now taken a step toward us in connection with the Nord Stream 2 conflict, where we have different views but where we will now talk further about what the necessary common ground is in the relationship with Russia."

**Ukraine's Zelenskyy: Completion Of Nord Stream Would Be A "Serious Geopolitical Victory" For Russia.** The [AP](#) (5/20) reports that on Thursday, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy "voiced fear...that the U.S. could strike a deal with Russia behind his country's back, and rebuked France and Germany for a perceived softening of their stance in talks with Moscow." The AP says Zelenskyy "specifically warned Washington that its failure to block the construction of a Russian-built natural gas pipeline to Germany would be a grave political error. 'It would be a loss for the United States, and I believe it would be President Biden's personal loss,' Zelenskyy said at a news conference." Zelenskyy added, "It would mark a serious geopolitical victory for the Russian Federation and a new redistribution of spheres of influence."

### **Blinken Says US Not Seeking To Purchase Greenland.**

[Reuters](#) (5/20) reports that Secretary of State Blinken confirmed at a news conference Thursday that the US does not seek to purchase Greenland. Then-President Donald Trump had discussed the possibility of buying Greenland in 2019. The [Washington Post](#) (5/20, 10.52M) reports Blinken visited Greenland to offer a message of solidarity between Americans, Danes, and Greenlanders.

### **Rouhani: Biden Has Agreed To Lift Sanctions On Iran Imposed By Trump.**

[Reuters](#) (5/20) reports that Iranian President Hassan Rouhani indicated on Thursday that the Biden Administration is "ready to lift sanctions on his country's oil, banking and shipping sectors that were reimposed" after then-President Donald Trump exited the 2015 nuclear deal. Rouhani is quoted as saying, "The talks in Vienna are about minor issues. They have accepted to lift sanctions on Iran's oil and shipping sectors as well as sanctions on the Central Bank and others."

### **US Imposes Sanctions On Yemeni Houthi Military Leaders.**

[Reuters](#) (5/20, Yaakoubi) reports that US Special Envoy on Yemen Tim Lenderking announced on Thursday that the Biden Administration is "imposing sanctions on two Houthi military officials leading the Iran-aligned movement's offensive to seize Yemen's gas-rich Marib region." Lenderking is quoted as saying, "The Houthis are not winning in Marib. Instead they are putting a great deal of stress on an already very fragile humanitarian situation, they are putting the lives of 1 million internally displaced people ... in danger." Reuters says Lenderking "urged the group battling a Saudi-led coalition for over six years to de-escalate and engage seriously with U.S. and U.N. efforts for a ceasefire needed to end the war."

### **Russia And Iran Competing For Syrian Oil, Mining, And Construction Projects.**

The [Washington Post](#) (5/20, 10.52M) says that "as the fighting winds down across much of Syria, President Bashar al-Assad's two main backers, Iran and Russia, have been competing for influence and the spoils of war." According to the Post, "Both have been vying for contracts in oil extraction, phosphate mining and port construction...according to Jihad Yazigi, the head of the Syria Report." The Post goes on to report that Russian companies "have traditionally prevailed in these contested sectors, for instance winning five oil contracts between 2013 and 2020, though Iran succeeded last year in landing the first Syrian oil contract of its own."

### **African Union Urges Joint Civilian-Military Provisional Government In Chad.**

[Reuters](#) (5/20) reports that the African Union called on leaders in Chad to share power until new elections can be organized after the death of President Idriss Déby. The AU previously called for a civilian-led transition to elections after 18 months, but also stated that the military officers currently in power may continue to oversee security. A spokesman for Chad's Transitional Military Council welcomed the recommendations.

### **NYTimes Reporter Deported By Ethiopia.**

The [New York Times](#) (5/20, Walsh, 20.6M) reports that Times reporter Simon Marks had his journalistic accreditation revoked and was expelled without explanation from Ethiopia, one month before Parliamentary elections in the country. Marks had been reporting extensively about the ongoing war and human rights abuses in Tigray. Marks was summoned to a meeting in Addis Ababa where he was detained for eight hours before being deported.

### **Nigerian Boko Haram Leader "Badly Wounded."**

[The Guardian \(UK\)](#) (5/20, 5.53M) reports Nigerian intelligence officials "have claimed the leader of Boko Haram is dead or seriously wounded after trying to kill himself to avoid capture during

clashes with a rival extremist faction." [AFP](#) (5/20) reports Nigerian Boko Haram leader Abubakar Shekau "has been seriously wounded after trying to kill himself to avoid capture during clashes with rival Islamic State-allied jihadists in the north of the country, two intelligence sources said Thursday." After a series of clashes, "Shekau and some of his fighters were surrounded on Wednesday by ISWAP jihadists in Boko Haram's Sambisa forest stronghold, where they demanded he surrender, one intelligence source said." According to one source, Shekau "shot himself in the chest," while a second intelligence source "said Shekau was critically wounded after detonating explosives in the house where he was holed up with his men."

### **African Union Calls For Power Sharing In Chad.**

[Reuters](#) (5/20) reports the African Union (AU) on Thursday "called for civilian and military leaders in Chad to share power until elections can be organised following the death of President Idriss Deby and subsequent military takeover last month." The AU previously called for a civilian-led transition to elections after 18 months, but also stated that the military officers currently in power may continue to oversee security. A spokesman for Chad's Transitional Military Council welcomed the recommendations.

### **Ethiopia Expels Irish NYTimes Reporter.**

The [New York Times](#) (5/20, Walsh, 20.6M) reports Ethiopia on Thursday expelled an "Irish journalist working for The New York Times, dealing a new blow to press freedom in a country as the government fights a grinding war in the northern region of Tigray." The expulsion of Simon Marks comes "one month before much-delayed Parliamentary elections in Ethiopia that are expected to cement the authority of the country's embattled prime minister, Abiy Ahmed, who won the Nobel Peace Prize in 2019."

### **Spain, Morocco At Odds Over Border Controls, Separatist Leader.**

The [AP](#) (5/20, Parra) reports tensions between Spain and Morocco over the former's decision to allow "Brahim Ghali, the leader of the Polisario Front, an Algeria-backed pro-independence movement," to receive medical treatment at a Spanish hospital "finally came to fruition this week." The move allowed "thousands of migrants to enter Ceuta, many of them children who swam or jumped over fences." The humanitarian crisis "has become a flashpoint between the two neighbors." The AP says Moroccan intelligence officials "knew about Ghali's whereabouts from the moment the Algerian jet carrying Ghali landed in Spain last month, leaking his presence to the media and exposing what had been designed by Spain" as a covert "humanitarian" operation.

***Flow Of Migrants Into Spain's Ceuta Highlights Challenges EU Faces In Requiring Outside Nations To Block Migrants.*** The [AP](#) (5/20, Cook) reports that the surge of migrants entering the Spanish African enclave of Ceuta this week "is a stark reminder of just how dependent the European Union can be on the whims of countries it chooses to pay to enforce its migration policy." The AP says that Morocco may be using its willingness to allow migrants into the Spanish territory as a negotiating tactic.

## **THE BIG PICTURE**

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### **Headlines From Today's Front Pages.**

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

[Israel, Hamas Cease-Fire Begins After 11 Days Of Conflict](#)

[Kansas City Southern Expected To Terminate Canadian Pacific Deal](#)

[Tesla Drivers Test Autopilot's Limits, Attracting Audiences – And Safety Concerns](#)

[U.S. Jobless Claims Extend Decline To New Pandemic Low](#)  
[Retailers Couldn't Stock Hand Sanitizer Fast Enough. Now They Can't Give It Away.](#)  
[Real-Estate Frenzy Overwhelms Small-Town America: 'I Came Home Crying'](#)

***New York Times:***

[Israel And Hamas Accept A Gaza Cease-Fire](#)  
[Biden To Face Uneasy Truth About Koreas](#)  
[Lives Are Upended By Unexpected Covid Bills](#)  
[Justices Assure Abortion Fight At Ballot Box](#)  
[A Push In Texas To Polish Stains Of Race History](#)  
[Prices, Demand And Hiring Soar: Steel Is Back](#)

***Washington Post:***

[As GOP-Run States Slash Jobless Aid, There's Little The White House Can Do](#)  
[Cease-Fire Begins Between Israel, Hamas](#)  
[Capitol Security Bill Squeaks By In House](#)  
[After Backing Assad, Iran And Russia Compete For The Spoils Of War In Syria](#)  
[After Biden Talk, Tlaib's Viewpoint Gains Relevance](#)

***Financial Times:***

[Biden's Bond With Netanyahu In Spotlight As Gaza Tensions Flare](#)  
[Biden Targets Crypto Transfers In Tax Crackdown Plan](#)  
[Zhang Yiming To Step Down As ByteDance Chief](#)  
[WeWork Loses \\$2.1BN And Sheds Members As Lockdowns Bite](#)

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

**ABC:** Israel/Gaza; Biden-Netanyahu; COVID Update; Biden-Anti Asian Hate Crimes Bill; Louisiana-Criminal Investigation Into Unarmed Black Man's Death; Princess Diana Interview; Severe Weather; 'Tiger King' Animals Seized.

**CBS:** Israel/Gaza; Biden-Netanyahu; Biden-Anti Asian Hate Crimes Bill; COVID Update; Louisiana-Criminal Investigation Into Unarmed Black Man's Death; Princess Diana Interview; Florida-Attempted Kidnapping; Skipped Medical Appointments; 'Tiger King' Animals Seized; Severe Weather; Missing Hiker Rescued.

**NBC:** Israel/Gaza; Biden-Netanyahu; COVID Update; Seattle-Vaccinations; Biden-Anti Asian Hate Crimes Bill; Florida-Attempted Kidnapping; Air Travel Resumes; COVID-Airline Precautions; Restaurant Revitalization Fund; Seattle Doctor.

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

Israel/Gaza – 10 minutes, 50 seconds  
COVID Update – 6 minutes, 20 seconds  
Biden-Anti Asian Hate Crimes Bill – 3 minutes, 40 seconds  
Biden-Netanyahu – 2 minutes, 55 seconds

## **WASHINGTON'S SCHEDULE**

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**Today's Events In Washington.**

***White House:***

- President Biden — Welcomes H.E. Moon Jae-in, President of the Republic of Korea, to the White House; awards the Medal of Honor to Army Colonel Ralph Puckett; H.E. Moon Jae-in, President of the Republic of Korea, the Vice President, the First Lady, and the Second Gentleman also attend; participates in a bilateral meeting with H.E. Moon Jae-in, President

of the Republic of Korea; participates in a press conference with H.E. Moon Jae-in, President of the Republic of Korea

- Vice President Harris — Hosts H.E. Moon Jae-in, President of the Republic of Korea, for a bilateral meeting; attends the awarding of the Medal of Honor to Army Colonel Ralph Puckett by the President.

**US Senate:**

- No public schedule released.

**US House:**

- House meets for legislative business – House of Representatives meets for legislative business, with agenda for the week including 'H.R. 1629 – Fairness in Orphan Drug Exclusivity Act', 'H.R. 3233 – National Commission to Investigate the January 6 Attack on the United States Capitol Complex Act', and 'H.R. 3237 – Emergency Security Supplemental to Respond to January 6th Appropriations Act, 2021'

*Location: U.S. Capitol, Washington, DC; 9:00 AM*

**Cabinet Officers:**

- Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona participates in Cabinet Affairs Meeting; 1:00 PM
- Secretary of State Antony Blinken attends meetings and briefings at the State Department

*Location: State Department, Washington, DC*

**Visitors:**

- President Biden welcomes South Korean counterpart to the White House – President Joe Biden welcomes South Korean President Moon Jae-in to the White House, with agenda including expanded bilateral meeting, followed by press conference. During the visit, President Biden also awards the Medal of Honor to Col. (Ret.) Ralph Puckett Jr., for conspicuous gallantry during the Korean War, with President Moon attending

*Location: The White House, 1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW, Washington, DC*

**General Events:**

- Ukrainian Prime Minister Shmyal discusses next Ukraine Reform Conference on GMF event – 'The Road to Vilnius: Priorities Toward the Next Ukraine Reform Conference 2021' German Marshall Fund of the U.S. online discussion, with introductory remarks from Ukrainian Prime Minister Denys Shmyal. Other speakers include Lithuanian Foreign Affairs Minister Gabrielius Landsbergis, Deputy Prime Minister for European and Euro-Atlantic Integration of Ukraine Olha Stefanishyna, European Commission SGUA Acting Head Katarina Mathernova, and European Anti-Corruption Initiative to Ukraine Head of Programmes Eka Tkeshelashvili

*Location: Virtual Event; 9:00 AM*

- AEI discussion on 'The EU's road to recovery' with Portuguese Govt officials – 'The EU's road to recovery' American Enterprise Institute virtual event, discussing the Portuguese European Union presidency, inclusive growth after the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, and the digital economy. Featured speakers include Portugal Ambassador to the U.S. Amb. Domingos Fezas Vital, Portuguese Economy and the Digital Transition Minister Pedro Siza Vieira, and AEI Resident Scholar Stan Veuger

*Location: Virtual Event; 11:00 AM*

- Press Briefing by White House COVID-19 Response Team and public health officials; 11:00 AM
- Press Briefing by Press Secretary Jen Psaki; 12:00 PM
- Axios discussion on 'Investment in renewable energy' with Dem Sen. Chris Coons – 'Investment in renewable energy' Axios virtual discussion on the shift to wind and solar jobs, the recent spike in private equity investment and the impact on local communities, with Democratic Sen. Chris Coons, WeSolar founder and CEO Kristal Hansley, and Facebook Head of Renewable Energy Urvi Parekh

*Location: Virtual Event; 12:30 PM*

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