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July 24, 2023
Federal Bureau of Investigation
Daily News Briefing

(In coordination with the Office of Public Affairs)

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WASHINGTON SCHEDULE

IN THE NEWS

Justice Department Tells Texas That Floating Barrier On Rio Grande Raises Humanitarian Concerns

The [Associated Press](#) (07/21, Weber) reported that the Justice Department has told Texas that a floating barrier of wrecking ball-sized buoys the state put on the Rio Grande violates federal law and raises humanitarian concerns for migrants crossing into the U.S. from Mexico. According to the article, DOJ's letter, which also informs the state that the Justice Department intends to sue if the barriers are not removed, read, "The floating barrier poses a risk to navigation, as well as public safety, in the Rio Grande River, and it presents humanitarian concerns." The article indicated that Abbott's office did not respond to a request for comment Friday, but on Twitter, the governor wrote that Texas was acting within its rights, tweeting "Texas has the sovereign authority to defend our border." The [Los Angeles Times](#) (07/21, Molina) reported that the Department of Justice intends to sue Texas over the placement of a floating buoy barrier in the Rio Grande that Gov. Greg Abbott deployed to impede migrants from crossing the river from Mexico into Texas, according to news outlets, including the [Houston Chronicle](#) (07/21, Wallace). The Justice Department, the article detailed, sent Abbott a letter on Thursday regarding the barrier, saying, "The State of Texas's actions violate federal law, raise humanitarian concerns, present serious risks to public safety and the environment, and may interfere with the federal government's ability to carry out its official duties." The article noted that Assistant Atty. Gen. Todd Kim and U.S. Atty. for the Western District of Texas Jaime Esparza wrote that the floating barrier violates the Rivers and Harbors Act that "prohibits the creation of any obstruction to the navigable capacity of waters of the United States." They, the article added, also noted that the barrier requires authorization from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. The [Washington Post](#) (07/21, Miroff) featured DOJ's letter to Governor Abbott. The accompanying [article](#) stated that the Biden officials gave Texas until Monday afternoon to respond with a commitment to quickly remove the barriers. If they don't, the article continued, "the United States intends to file legal action," the letter states. The article highlighted that Matthew Nies, a spokesman for the Justice Department's Environmental and Natural Resources Division, confirmed in an email Friday that the department had notified Texas "of our intent to pursue legal action related to unlawful construction of a floating barrier in the Rio Grande River." The letter, addressed to Abbott and Angela Colmenero, the state's interim attorney general, the article detailed, said the floating barriers run afoul of the Rivers and Harbors Act, which prohibits the obstruction of U.S. waterways. The article added that an Eagle Pass business owner who offers kayaking and canoe trips along the river filed a separate lawsuit against Abbott this month over the floating barriers, which Texas officials say they want to expand. [CNN](#) (07/21, Alvarez, Prokupecz) reported that the Justice Department has sued on border-related matters before. Last year, the article elaborated, the Justice Department sued Arizona for placing shipping containers along the US southern border – a move taken by then-Republican Gov. Doug Ducey as an affront to Biden's immigration policies. Arizona, the article continued, eventually agreed to remove the containers. The article noted that the news comes as more than 80 Democratic US lawmakers sent a letter to President Joe Biden Friday urging him to investigate Abbott's "dangerous and cruel actions" on the southern border after a Texas state trooper blew the whistle regarding alleged inhumane treatment of migrants and Mexico's top diplomat complained to Washington about Texas breaking two international treaties. [NBC News](#) (07/21, Kosnar, Mitsanas) highlighted that the letter represents the latest DOJ inquiry into Texas' migration policies. On Thursday, the article detailed, a DOJ

spokesperson told NBC News that the department is probing allegations made by a Texas trooper in an email sent to his superiors, in which he described how he and his partner were ordered to push back migrants into the Rio Grande River and deny them water despite the searing heat. [Politico](#) (07/21, Ewing) reported that the letter did not address any migrant-related concerns at the Texas-Mexico border, but DOJ spokesperson Xochitl Hinojosa said Friday that “the department is aware of the troubling reports, and we are working with DHS and other relevant agencies to assess the situation.” The story was also reported on by [CBS News](#) (07/21, Montoya-Galvez), the [Texas Tribune](#) (07/21, Schneider), [Forbes](#) (07/21, Bohannon), the [Dallas Morning News](#) (07/21, Gilman, Torres), [Axios](#) (07/21, Medoza), [The Hill](#) (07/21, Bernal), a second [The Hill](#) (07/21, Suter) article, [HuffPost](#) (07/21, Nicholson), [New York Post](#) (07/22, Crane), [Business Insider](#) (07/22, Davis), and [ABC News](#) (07/21, Barr, Mallin). Additionally, [USA Today](#) (07/21, Jervis) published an article on how razor wire on the Texas border injures young migrant children. Broadcast coverage was posted by [NBC News](#) (07/21, Video) and [ABC News](#) (07/22, Video).

Judge Sets A Trial Date For Next May In Trump’s Classified Documents Case In Florida

The [Associated Press](#) (07/21, Tucker) reported that a federal judge in Florida has scheduled a trial date for next May for former President Donald Trump in a case charging him with illegally retaining hundreds of classified documents. According to the article, the May 20, 2024, trial date, set Friday by U.S. District Judge Aileen Cannon, is a compromise between a request from prosecutors to set the trial for this December and a bid by defense lawyers to put it off indefinitely until sometime after the 2024 presidential election. If the date holds, the article noted, it would follow close on the heels of a separate New York trial for Trump on dozens of state charges of falsifying business records in connection with an alleged hush money payment to a porn actor. The article indicated that it also means the trial would not start until deep into the presidential nominating calendar and probably well after the Republican nominee is clear — though before that person is officially nominated at the Republican National Convention. [CNN](#) (07/21, Polantz, Sneed, Scannell) reported that a pretrial hearing in the case will be held on May 14. If that timeline holds, the article continued, then the trial would fall deep in the 2024 race for the White House, coming amid multiple GOP presidential primaries. The article suggested that it would be a rebuke to Trump and his legal team, who wanted to postpone the trial until after the general election takes place in November 2024. However, the article pointed out, Cannon’s order also means that the case will unfold at a far slower speed than what Smith’s team was proposing when it recommended a fast-paced timeline that would start the trial in mid-December of this year. The article explained that such a schedule would have a trial wrap-up before primary voting gets underway in the 2024 election, where Trump is the leading GOP candidate. The vast majority of state primaries, the article detailed, will be finished by mid-May, although Nebraska, Maryland, and West Virginia are set to hold their primary elections on May 14. The article specified that Oregon votes the following week and a handful of states, including New Jersey, are now scheduled to vote on June 4. During his first presidential run, the article added, Trump effectively clinched the nomination at the end of May 2016 – before formally becoming the party’s nominee in July at the GOP convention in Cleveland. The [Wall Street Journal](#) (07/21, Gurman) pointed out that if Trump were to be both the clear nominee—he is currently the clear front-runner—and convicted, the Republican presidential candidate heading into the party convention and the November vote would be a felon, potentially facing jail time if his anticipated appeals fail. If he is found not guilty, the article added, he would amplify his contention to voters that he has been unfairly targeted by the government in a bid to derail his election prospects. [ABC News](#) (07/21, Katersky) detailed that the trial will take place at the federal court in Ft. Pierce, Florida, and the next hearing in the case is tentatively scheduled for August 25. [The Hill](#) (07/21, Latour) highlighted that a spokesperson for Trump on Friday called the date “a major setback to the DOJ’s crusade to deny President Trump a fair legal process” and said the “extensive schedule allows President Trump and his legal team to continue fighting this empty hoax.” [CNN](#) (07/21, Millman) also noted that John Lauro, the recent addition to former President Donald Trump’s legal team, told Fox News on Friday there is no reason for the former president to appear before a federal grand jury investigating the 2020 election aftermath, adding that Trump “did absolutely nothing wrong.” The story was also reported on by [CBS News](#) (07/21, Quinn, Legare), [Politico](#) (07/21, Gerstein, Cheney), a second [Politico](#) (07/21, Gerstein) article, [BBC News](#) (07/21, Halpert), [Reuters](#) (07/21, Heavey, Lynch, Thomsen), [CNBC](#) (07/21, Breuninger), [Al Jazeera](#) (07/21, Staff Writer), the [New York Times](#) (07/21, Draper), and [The Hill](#) (07/21, Beitsch).

Director Wray Defends FISA, Says Law Used to ‘Detect and Thwart’ Chinese Hacking

[Fox News](#) (07/23, Singman) reported that Director Wray, in letters sent to House Speaker Kevin McCarthy and Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, defended the importance of Section 702 of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA), highlighting its role in thwarting foreign threats including Chinese hackers attempting to infiltrate U.S. critical infrastructure. Director Wray noted, “Section 702’s critical importance to our national security

has only grown with the evolution of technology and threats" and described the tool as "invaluable" for understanding the actions of foreign adversaries. Within the article Director Wray provided specific examples, such as its usage to monitor Chinese hackers who sought to establish "backdoors" into U.S. infrastructure, potentially causing significant damage and safety risks. He added that without Section 702, the FBI would be "blinded" to such malicious actions. Director Wray also cited Section 702's instrumental role in identifying Iran's cyberattack efforts and attempts to assassinate American officials, noting that it was "pivotal for the FBI to detect and thwart" these activities. Director Wray concluded by urging Congress to reauthorize Section 702, which is set to expire on Dec. 31, stressing that the FBI "needs Section 702 to keep countering the next five years of foreign threats."

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COUNTERTERRORISM

Man Who Ambushed Fargo Officers Likely Had Bigger and Bloodier Attack in Mind, Attorney General Says

The [Associated Press](#) (07/21, Dura, Hollingsworth) reported that Mohamad Barakat, an armed man who ambushed Fargo police officers, potentially had larger, more destructive plans targeting crowded events in North Dakota, according to authorities. According to the article, internet search histories reveal terms like "kill fast," "explosive ammo," "incendiary rounds," and "mass shooting events," which suggest a wider plan of attack. The article noted that Barakat had been reported to the FBI's Guardian Threat Tracking System, a preliminary level of terrorist-related inquiry that collects information about potentially suspicious behavior, but it remains unclear what actions, if any, were taken following this report. Additional reporting from [Associated Press](#) (07/21, Lauer) added that North Dakota Attorney General Drew Wrigley said on Friday that he believes the violence could have been the beginning of a bigger attack, as the Downtown Fargo Street Fair and the Red River Valley Fair were underway. Wrigley noted that Barakat had four semi-automatic handguns and three semi-automatic rifles, but only one of them — the one he picked to go on his shooting rampage — had a binary trigger. The article explained that a binary trigger is a modification that allows a weapon to fire one round when the trigger is pulled and another when it is released — in essence doubling the firing capacity, firearms experts and weapons manufacturers say. The [Associated Press](#) (07/21, Dura) also noted that a public memorial service is planned for Wednesday in Fargo for Jake Wallin, a Fargo police officer who was killed by Barakat on July 14. The [New York Times](#) (07/21, Mayorquin) and [CNN](#) (07/21, Boyette, Sottile) also reported on the story.

Iran's Terrorism Financing Flourishes Amid Sanction Easing

[Washington Examiner](#) (07/22, Noronha) reported that in 2019, Iran's support for terrorism faced a significant financial crunch. Fighters of Iran-backed groups in the Middle East saw drastic cuts in salaries and resources due to crippling sanctions imposed by the Trump administration. According to the article, the "maximum pressure campaign" targeted Iran's oil exports, putting severe strain on Iran's economy and limiting its ability to finance its proxy terrorist groups. However, by 2021, the circumstances dramatically changed for Iran's proxies. The suspension of most Iran sanctions by the Biden administration - a policy led by Rob Malley - allowed the regime's terrorist financing to bounce back. This shift aimed at facilitating Iran's return to the 2015 nuclear deal, but it ironically resulted in increased support for Iran's terrorist activities. The article noted that the ongoing FBI investigation into Malley's alleged mishandling of classified information adds an intriguing dimension to this shift in policies. The article explained that this relaxation of sanctions had alarming consequences. It led not only to a failure in reviving the nuclear deal but also fueled a substantial surge in Iran's oil exports. The Iranian regime managed to substantially increase its foreign reserves from a paltry \$4 billion in 2020 to an estimated \$43 billion in 2023. The inflated revenues have been instrumental in rejuvenating Iran's terrorist groups, with the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps reporting a 13% increase in salaries for its militia fighters in Syria. Senators have pointed out the exponential growth of Iran's "ghost fleet" of tankers, evading U.S. sanctions, from 60 vessels in 2021 to 338 today. The majority of these tankers are engaged in ferrying illicit oil from Iran to China, and the proceeds directly contribute to strengthening Hezbollah and the IRGC. According to the article, the Biden administration's policy has inadvertently ended up enriching Iran's terror networks while falling short of its strategic objectives.

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COUNTERINTELLIGENCE

FBI Wrongly Searched For U.S. Senator And State Senator In Section 702 Spy Data, Court Says

The [Associated Press](#) (07/21, Merchant) reported that FBI employees wrongly searched foreign surveillance data for the last names of a U.S. senator and a state senator. According to the article, the disclosure could further complicate the Biden administration's efforts to renew a major spy program that already faces bipartisan opposition in Congress. The article indicated that another FBI employee improperly queried the Social Security number of a state judge who alleged civil rights violations by a municipal chief of police, according to the opinion of the chief judge of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court. The article noted that news of the latest violations comes as the Biden administration faces a difficult battle in persuading Congress to renew Section 702 of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act, which allows spy agencies to collect swaths of emails and other communications. The story was also reported on by the [National Review](#) (07/21, Zymeri), [Axios](#) (07/21, Sabin), [The Hill](#) (07/21, Beitsch), [CNN](#) (07/21, Rabinowitz), [New York Times](#) (07/21, Savage), [The Register](#) (07/21, Hardcastle), [Reuters](#) (07/21, Satter), [Lawfare](#) (07/21, Hickey), [Fox News](#) (07/21, Singman, Gibson), [Daily Caller](#) (07/21, Hutchison), [Newsmax](#) (07/21, Staff Writer), [Politico](#) (07/21, Carney), [ABC News](#) (07/21, Mallin), [Wall Street Journal](#) (07/21, Volz), [New York Post](#) (07/21, Nava), and [CBS News](#) (07/21, Gazis).

China, Russia Grow Their Spy Networks in Mexico to Potentially Target the U.S.

[The Epoch Times](#) (07/21, Gomez) reported that China and Russia are reportedly increasing their number of intelligence agents in Mexico, possibly aiming to disrupt the United States. According to the article, U.S. officials, including House Foreign Affairs Committee chairman Michael McCaul, have expressed concern over the implications of this expansion, particularly as it could potentially enable covert operations within the U.S. or exacerbate the existing drug trafficking problem. The article noted that Director Wray, in his recent testimony before the House Judiciary Committee, emphasized China's broad, comprehensive threat to Western democracies, warning of the Chinese Communist Party's efforts to infiltrate U.S. and foreign companies in China to ensure compliance with party rules, thereby gaining access to company secrets and information.

U.S. Seeks To Crack Putin Power With High-Level Russian Spies

[The Hill](#) (07/23, Kelly) reported that the U.S. and its allies, with the CIA and FBI at the forefront, are working to recruit high-level Russian officials to spy for the West amid apparent cracks in Russian President Vladimir Putin's power base. CIA Director William Burns called this a "once-in-a-generation opportunity" and said, "I think Putin is already a little bit uneasy as he looks over his shoulder." According to the article, Director Burns disclosed that a CIA video on Telegram guiding Russians on how to discreetly contact the spy agency had gained 2.5 million views in its first week. He affirmed the agency's interest in advanced science, military and cyber technology, financial information, sources of valuable data, and foreign policy secrets. Director Burns, in his remarks in Aspen, also called Putin "the ultimate apostle of payback" and noted that an atmosphere of paranoia is very detrimental to any organization. He reiterated that while the focus remains on gaining information on Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the CIA is also interested in broader information on Russia. In response to potential recruits, an anonymous CIA official said, "We would say, please be patient. We thank you for your brave action and we will choose the safest time and manner to respond."

Ex-Canadian Mountie Charged Over Alleged China Interference

[BBC News](#) (07/21, Debusmann) reported that William Majcher, a retired federal police officer in Canada, has been charged with foreign interference on behalf of China following a two-year investigation conducted by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP). According to the article, Majcher allegedly used his contacts in Canada to aid China in intimidating an individual outside Canadian law's scope. According to Tasha Adams, an RCMP spokesperson, Majcher was gathering information about the unnamed individual because Chinese officials intended to target this person. The RCMP clarified that the alleged foreign interference was not related to Canadian politics or elections. The article noted that the case mirrors U.S. concerns over Chinese espionage, with the FBI reportedly opening a new China-related counter-intelligence case every 12 hours, resulting in more than 2,000 cases as of early this year.

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CRIMINAL INVESTIGATIONS

Hunter Biden DOJ Case Records Sought By Court Order Before Wednesday Plea Deal

The [Washington Examiner](#) (07/22, Oliver) reported that the Heritage Foundation is seeking emergency relief from an appellate court to obtain a narrow set of documents relating to U.S. Attorney David Weiss and "special counsel

status" from the Department of Justice ahead of Hunter Biden's plea hearing next week. According to the article, the conservative group asked the court to enforce a Freedom of Information Act request from the DOJ for all communications that "reflect, memorialize, or explain any decision on a request for regulatory or statutory Special Counsel Status" by Weiss, the lead prosecutor in the case against President Joe Biden's son.

House GOP Demands DOJ Officials Testify On Alleged Hunter Biden Coverup

The [New York Post](#) (07/21, Nelson) reported that the chairmen of three House committees called on Attorney General Merrick Garland Friday to make the "voluntary" decision to allow 11 Justice Department officials to testify about an alleged coverup in the investigation of first son Hunter Biden — setting a Monday deadline that signals potentially swift escalation next week. The article indicated that the letter, signed by Judiciary Chairman Jim Jordan (R-OH), Oversight Chairman James Comer (R-KY), and Ways and Means Chairman Jason Smith (R-MO) read, "Absent cooperation with this request, the Judiciary Committee will issue subpoenas to obtain the required testimony." According to the article, the Republican-led committees requested testimony from the DOJ officials — including Weiss, Los Angeles-based US Attorney Martin Estrada, and DC US Attorney Matthew Graves — in a June 29 letter to Garland. Also on the list, the article detailed is Delaware assistant US attorney Lesley Wolf, who allegedly steered IRS investigators away from analyzing Joe Biden's role in Hunter Biden's foreign dealings, despite communications seeming to implicate the president directly. The article added that the Republican-led panels also want to interview DOJ tax division attorneys Mark Daly, Jack Morgan, and Stuart Goldberg, Delaware US Attorney's Office Criminal Chief Shawn Weede and Delaware assistant US attorney Shannon Hanson — as well as special agent in charge of the FBI Baltimore Field Office Tom Sobocinski and his assistant special agent in charge Ryeshia Holley, whose office worked on the case.

Jurors At His Classified Documents Trial Will Come From Counties That Overwhelmingly Voted For Him In 2020

[Business Insider](#) (07/21, Sheth) reported that former President Donald Trump hit the jackpot with his upcoming criminal trial over his handling of classified government documents. The article indicated that US District Judge Aileen Cannon, who Trump nominated, signed an order Friday announcing that the former commander-in-chief will be on trial beginning May 24, 2024, in Fort Pierce, which is good news for Trump because Fort Pierce, in St. Lucie County, is in an overwhelmingly red area of South Florida. According to the article, nearly 72% of voters in neighboring Okeechobee County voted for Trump in the 2020 election, and 66.8% of voters in Highland, 62% of voters in Martin, 60.4% of voters in Indian River, and 50.4% of voters in St. Lucie cast ballots for Trump.

Former Republican Aides Shepherd Whistle-Blowers Through Congress

The [New York Times](#) (07/23, Broadwater) reported when Gary Shapley, a longtime IRS investigator, wanted to air his accusations that the federal government had mishandled the tax investigation into President Biden's son Hunter, the information he had was so sensitive he couldn't even provide it to his own lawyer without potentially committing a felony. The article added that through his attorney, he approached Empower Oversight, a small group mostly composed of Republican lawyers with deep experience in Capitol Hill investigations — including years spent as aides to Senator Charles E. Grassley, Republican of Iowa — who coached him on what to do. Armed with intricate knowledge of Congress's byzantine procedures and various whistle-blower statutes, some written by Mr. Grassley decades ago, the men developed a strategy for how to get the information to Congress lawfully. The article noted that it was not the first time that Empower Oversight had played a key role in facilitating some of the many Republican investigations into Mr. Biden's family, his administration, and federal law enforcement. As the GOP presses forward with inquiries aimed at uncovering wrongdoing by the president, the group has become a critical part of the Republican investigative ecosystem, using its knowledge of Capitol Hill to shepherd through Congress witnesses who can put names, faces, and crucial details to the allegations being made. In addition to the IRS whistle-blowers, Empower Oversight also represents two FBI agents who have harshly criticized the agency in appearances before the Republican-led select House committee on the weaponization of government.

As Inquiries Compound, Justice System Pours Resources Into Scrutinizing Trump

The [New York Times](#) (07/23, Thrush, Protes, Feuer, Goldman) reported that Jack Smith, the special counsel overseeing criminal investigations into former President Donald J. Trump, employs 40 to 60 career prosecutors, paralegals, and support staff, augmented by a rotating cast of FBI agents and technical specialists, according to people familiar with the situation. In his first four months on the job, starting in November, Mr. Smith's investigation incurred expenses of \$9.2 million. That included \$1.9 million to pay the U.S. Marshals Service to protect Mr. Smith, his family, and other investigators who have faced threats after the former president and his

allies singled them out on social media. The article noted that the main driver of all these efforts and their concurrent expenses is Mr. Trump's own behavior — his unwillingness to accept the results of an election as every one of his predecessors have done, his refusal to heed his own lawyers' advice and a grand jury's order to return government documents and his lashing out at prosecutors in personal terms. The article added that Image at the peak of the Justice Department's efforts to hunt down and charge the Jan. 6 rioters, many U.S. attorney's offices and all 56 F.B.I. field offices had officials pursuing leads. As the department and prosecutors in New York and Georgia move forward, the scope of their work, in terms of quantifiable costs, is gradually becoming clear. These efforts, taken as a whole, do not appear to be siphoning resources that would otherwise be used to combat crime or undertake other investigations. But the agencies are paying what one official called a "Trump tax" — forcing leaders to expend disproportionate time and energy on the former president, and defending themselves against his unfounded claims that they are persecuting him at the expense of public safety. According to the article, the DOJ, which includes the FBI and the U.S. Marshals, is a sprawling organization with an annual budget of around \$40 billion, and it has more than enough staff to absorb the diversion of key prosecutors, including the chief of its counterintelligence division, Jay Bratt, to the special counsel's investigations, officials said.

FBI Zeroes in on Cold-Case Murder Mystery on New York Oneida Reservation

The [New York Post](#) (07/22, Kennedy) reported that it's been 42 years since 19-year-old Tammy Mahoney, a SUNY Morrisville student from Farmingdale, Long Island, was picked up while hitchhiking to a friend's house. Cops say she was taken to the nearby 32-acre Oneida Nation Territory in what people up here, including the Natives, still call "Indian country." The article added that now, her disappearance and presumed murder is one of the hottest cold cases in the country. The FBI held a news conference in May saying the case was still active and that several new witnesses have come forward. Recently, the State Police's Major Crimes and Cold Case units joined the investigation. The article mentioned that police said that they think they've known who killed her from the start. At least 13 people were present at a party in a trailer on the Oneida Nation Territory, a small reservation in Oneida which was then a ramshackle, mud-filled stretch of land filled with mobile homes. Investigators say it was "suggested" to them by these witnesses that Mahoney, who may have known some Oneida Nation members, was gang-raped and killed. The article stated that FBI agents reportedly made visits to residents of the Onondaga reservation, a bigger Native American territory 40 miles from the Oneida Nation Territory, as recently as last week in their latest efforts to persuade more witnesses to Mahoney's disappearance to come forward. The article quoted Sarah Ruane, of the FBI's Albany, who said, "This crime is a tricky one but we have a lot of confidence that it will be solved, we have a mix of old and new information and we think we can bring this case to the finish line. The goal is a successful prosecution of the perpetrators and finally being able to lay Tammy to rest."

Judge Finds Forensic Scientist Henry Lee Liable For Fabricating Evidence In A Murder Case

The [Associated Press](#) (07/21, Eaton-Robb) reported that a federal judge ruled Friday that famed forensic scientist Henry Lee was found liable for fabricating evidence in a murder case that sent two Connecticut men, Ralph "Ricky" Birch and Shawn Henning, to prison for decades for a crime they did not commit. The article explained that the ruling sends the case against the police and the town to trial. The article said the two men were convicted in the Dec. 1, 1985, slaying of Everett Carr, based in part on testimony about what Lee said were bloodstains on a towel found in the 65-year-old's home in New Milford, 55 miles southwest of Hartford. The article reported that in his ruling Friday, U.S. District Judge Victor Bolden ruled that Lee presented no evidence to back up his testimony.

Weekend Shootings Leave at Least 6 Dead, 20 Others Wounded in Chicago

The [Associated Press](#) (07/23, Staff Writer) reported that six people have died and at least 20 others were wounded in weekend shootings across Chicago. A shooting early Saturday in the city's North Lawndale neighborhood killed one man and wounded four other men, police said. Three people, including two women, were shot Saturday night on Chicago's South Side when gunfire rang out from an alley at a group of people. The article added that since Friday, Chicago police responded to at least nine separate shooting scenes. Forty people were shot, four fatally, across Chicago over the July 14 weekend. [NBC News](#) (07/23, Ede-Osifo), [Daily Mail](#) (07/24, Gordon), [Chicago Sun-Times](#) (07/22, Staff Writer), [Chicago Tribune](#) (07/22, Smith), [WLS \(ABC-7\)](#) (07/22, Piekos), [WBBM \(CBS-2\)](#) (07/22, Bizzle), and [CBS News](#) (07/21, Video) also reported on the story.

Gunman in Monterey Park Mass Shooting Sent 'Manifesto' to Law Enforcement, Sheriff Says

[CNN](#) (07/21, Romine) reported that the gunman who opened fire during a Lunar New Year celebration near Los Angeles in January, killing 11 people and injuring others, sent writings to law enforcement, according to Los Angeles County Sheriff Robert Luna. The article noted that when asked whether authorities had discovered a motive in the

Monterey Park attack, Luna said the gunman, Huu Can Tran, had sent a "manifesto" to law enforcement that was still being examined. The article added that Tran, 72, opened fire the night of January 21 at a Lunar New Year celebration at a dance studio in Monterey Park – in a majority Asian community just east of Los Angeles. The assailant then went to a dance studio in nearby Alhambra where a man wrestled a gun from him, the sheriff has said. The suspect fled to Torrance, 30 miles away, and Tran was found dead in a white van the next day of a self-inflicted gunshot wound, authorities said. The article mentioned that the FBI is still analyzing the document and trying to piece together how the shooting unfolded and why, Luna said. The [Los Angeles Times](#) (07/21, Lin) also reported on the story.

Cops Working to Tie Rex Heuermann to 4th Gilgo Beach Murder Victim and Six More Bodies

The [New York Post](#) (07/22, Moore) reported that investigators are close to pinning the murder of the fourth Gilgo Beach victim on suspected serial killer Rex Heuermann — and are widening their probe to connect him to the other six bodies dumped in the remote Long Island spot. The article added that the latest update on the case comes after Heuermann was charged last week with killing three petite sex workers — Melissa Barthelemy, 24, Megan Waterman, 22, and Amber Lynn Costello, 27 — whose remains were found in 2010. The women, along with Maureen Brainard-Barnes, 25, were known as the "Gilgo Four." Heuermann pleaded not guilty to three counts each of first- and second-degree murder. He is considered the prime suspect in Brainard-Barnes' death, officials have said. The article noted that as far as connecting his DNA to crimes nationally, the source said, Heuermann's DNA will be put through the FBI's database only if and when he is convicted. An additional [New York Post](#) (07/21, Brown) article, [Fox News](#) (07/21, Conklin), and [Business Insider](#) (07/23, Mark) also reported on the story.

Brother-In-Law Charged in Texas Woman's 1986 Cold Case Stabbing Murder After Dna Links Him to Scene

[Fox News](#) (07/22, Stimson) reported that an 85-year-old New Mexico man was arrested and charged this week for the 1986 Texas cold case murder of his then-sister-in-law after he confessed to the crime, police said. The article noted that Liborio Canales confessed to the murder after he was named as a suspect when detectives working the cold case found DNA collected at the crime scene showed the killer was a close relative of victim Barbara Fay Villareal's husband, the Garland Police Department said in a release. Villareal was "brutally" stabbed multiple times on Nov. 7, 1986, in Garland, Texas. Possible blood from the suspect was collected at the scene at the time and her husband was quickly ruled out as a suspect. Canales allegedly told detectives he killed Villareal because he was angry about a family dispute. The article quoted the Garland Police Department, which said, "The Garland Police Department is thankful for the assistance of the Dallas FBI Violent Crimes Task Force, the Lea County Sheriff's Office, and the Lovington New Mexico Police Department for help bringing closure on this cold case and closure for Barbara Fay's family,".

Man Accused of Kidnapping, Killing His Ex-Girlfriend's 2-Year-Old Faces 20 State Charges

The [Associated Press](#) (07/22, Staff Writer) reported that a man accused of stabbing his ex-girlfriend and kidnapping and killing her 2-year-old daughter has been charged with murder by Michigan's attorney general. The article added that Attorney General Dana Nessel charged Rashad Trice, 26, on Friday with 20 counts, including one count each of first-degree premeditated murder and felony murder in Wynter Cole Smith's strangulation death. Both charges carry a mandatory life sentence without the possibility of parole. The Lansing man faces 18 other state charges, including kidnapping, in connection with the crimes committed on July 2 and July 3, when he allegedly stabbed and sexually assaulted his ex-girlfriend in Lansing, stole her car, and drove away with Smith. The child was later found strangled to death with a cellphone cord. [ABC News](#) (07/21, Deliso) also reported on the story.

Idaho Murder Update: Bryan Kohberger May Release New Details About Alibi

[Newsweek](#) (07/21, Skinner) reported that Bryan Kohberger could reveal new details about his alibi on Monday. Kohberger, 28, is accused of breaking into a rental house near the University of Idaho campus in Moscow, Idaho, in the early hours of November 13 and fatally stabbing Kaylee Goncalves, 21, Madison Mogen, 21, Xana Kernodle, 20, and Ethan Chapin, 20. The article added that at the time, Kohberger was a graduate student studying criminology at Washington State University. He was arrested at his parents' home in Pennsylvania in late December. Shortly after his arrest, a former attorney for Kohberger said his client was "eager to be exonerated. The article noted that Monday is the deadline for Kohberger's legal team to file an alibi. The first deadline for the alibi was in June, but Kohberger's public defender Anne Taylor requested the deadline be extended on account of not having enough time to review the evidence provided by the prosecution. The article mentioned that on Monday, Kohberger's legal team could file an alibi that would include Kohberger's whereabouts during the murders and any corroborating facts. However, he could not file a response at all, or his legal team could again request more time.

A Nevada Woman Who Hired a Hitman Using Bitcoin to Kill Her Ex-husband Gets Five Years in Prison

The [Associated Press](#) (07/21, Staff Writer) reported that a Nevada woman who admitted to hiring a hitman on the internet for \$5,000 in bitcoin to kill her ex-husband "and make it look like an accident" was sentenced to five years in prison. The article added that Kristy Lynn Felkins, 38, of Fallon, Nevada, pleaded guilty in March to a charge of murder-for-hire as part of a deal with federal prosecutors that avoided trial, court records show. A U.S. District Court judge in California also ordered on Thursday that Felkins be released under supervision for three years after she serves her prison sentence. The article noted that Felkins began communicating with someone in 2016 on a dark web hitman website that claimed to offer murder-for-hire services, according to her September 2020 indictment. Felkins wanted her ex-husband killed while he was traveling in Chico, California, the indictment said. Authorities described the website as a scam that simply took money from unsuspecting customers.

Chicago Rapper G Herbo To Plead Guilty To Using Stolen Credit Cards On Luxury Vehicles, 'Designer Puppies,' Court Docs Say

[NBC News](#) (07/21, Planas) reported that Chicago rapper G Herbo will plead guilty to charges related to using stolen credit card information to pay for private jets, luxury vehicles and "designer puppies." According to the article, G Herbo, whose real name is Herbert Wright III, 27, was indicted on one count of conspiracy to commit wire fraud and two counts of aggravated identity theft. The article indicated that he was one of six co-defendants in the case. Additionally, prosecutors on Wednesday filed paperwork in U.S. District Court in Massachusetts that shows the rapper agreed to plead guilty to conspiracy to commit wire fraud and making false statements. The article added that a conspiracy conviction carries a sentence of up to 20 years in prison, but the potential sentences could be reduced. The [press release](#) noted the FBI's Chicago Field Office assisted with the case.

Developer Who Paid \$500,000 Bribe To Los Angeles Councilman Sentenced To Six Years In Federal Prison

The [Associated Press](#) reported that a real estate developer was sentenced Friday to six years in federal prison for paying \$500,000 in bribes to a Los Angeles city councilman for help with a downtown project. According to the article, the U.S. attorney's office said in a statement that Dae Yong Lee, also known as "David Lee," also was fined \$750,000 and a company that he controlled was fined \$1.5 million plus prosecution costs. The article indicated that prosecutors said that in 2017, Lee bribed José Huizar and the councilman's special assistant to help resolve a labor organization's appeal that was blocking approval of a planned development that was to include more than 200 residences and some 14,000 square feet (1,300 square meters) of commercial space. At the time, the article added, Huizar chaired the city's powerful Planning and Land Use Management Committee. The [press release](#) noted that "the FBI investigated this matter."

Crypto Rapper 'Razlekhan,' Husband Reach Plea Deal Over Bitfinex Hack Laundering

[Reuters](#) (07/21, Cohen) reported that an American couple accused of laundering billions of dollars worth of cryptocurrency stolen from the 2016 hacking of virtual currency exchange Bitfinex have entered into a plea agreement, court records showed on Friday. The article added that Heather Morgan, who used the hip-hop alias "Razlekhan" to push her music online, and her husband Ilya Lichtenstein were initially arrested in February 2022. They are set to appear for a plea hearing on Aug. 3 before Senior Judge Colleen Kollar-Kotelly in Washington, court records showed. The article noted that the pair stands accused of conspiring to launder more than 100,000 Bitcoin stolen after a hacker attacked Bitfinex. They each face one count of money laundering conspiracy, with Morgan facing an initial count of conspiracy to defraud the United States, an updated charging document filed on Thursday showed. The article mentioned that the bitcoin was worth \$71 million at the time of the hack, but had appreciated to more than \$4.5 billion at the time of their arrest. Prosecutors are now seeking to have the pair forfeit assets worth around \$3 billion, according to the charging document and current spot prices of various cryptocurrencies. In addition to cash from bank accounts and tokens from crypto wallets, prosecutors want Morgan and Lichtenstein to fork over gold coins "excavated and recovered by law enforcement" from an unspecified location in California. The [New York Times](#) (07/21, Shanahan) also reported on the story.

Patrol Dogs Are Terrorizing and Mauling Prisoners Inside the United States

[Business Insider](#) (07/23, Beckler) reported that two decades after the human-rights abuses unfolded at Abu Ghraib, almost all state prison systems continue to use unmuzzled attack-trained dogs and that 12 states authorize their use against people in state custody while at least 23 prisons in eight states have deployed attack-trained dogs on prisoners in recent years — Arizona, Connecticut, Delaware, Indiana, Iowa, Massachusetts, New Jersey, and Virginia. According to the article, over the past six years, hundreds of incarcerated people have been bitten or mauled. The article highlighted that a 2005 report from the Department of Justice's inspector general scrutinized

the private contractors who helped to build and run Abu Ghraib, detailing the backgrounds of the eight corrections experts who selected the site, oversaw the rebuilding of the prison, and trained staff at Abu Ghraib. Additionally, the article noted that Red Onion and Wallens Ridge prisons in Virginia have faced multiple investigations over allegations of staff racism. In 2000, the FBI investigated Wallens Ridge following civil-rights lawsuits filed by 108 prisoners, who claimed they were subjected to racist slurs and threats. Despite the documented claims and investigations, the Virginia Department of Corrections denies the allegations, labeling them as "biased and inaccurate" or "lies from convicted felons".

Federal Investigation Into the Death of Roy McGrath May Be Unavailable to the Public for a Year

[WJZ \(CBS-13\)](#) (07/21, Staff Writer) reported that although the FBI has concluded its fact-finding investigation into the death of the former top aide to Larry Hogan, that information may not be available to the public for about a year. The article added that there is a process that investigators must adhere to in order to determine whether federal agents complied with federal policies the day that Roy McGrath was killed. McGrath worked under Hogan when he was governor of Maryland. He had been on the run for weeks after skipping out on his federal fraud trial in Baltimore on March 13. The article noted that he was facing a maximum of 100 years in federal prison for charges that he illegally recorded Hogan and stole hundreds of thousands of dollars from the state government when he disappeared. That included more than \$233,000 from the Maryland Environmental Service, the state agency where he worked before his leading role in the Hogan administration. Prosecutors said he falsified time sheets while on vacation and stole thousands in state funds to take classes at Harvard. The article mentioned that to this day, the public still doesn't know if Roy McGrath died of suicide or if the agents shot and killed him during what the FBI has described as an "agent-involved shooting,".

There Are Thousands of Unsolved Cases of Missing Black People. Carlee Russell's Unverified Report Is Rare, Advocates Say

[CNN](#) (07/23, Ellis) reported that the doubt surrounding the alleged kidnapping of Carlethia "Carlee" Nichole Russell, which Alabama police said they couldn't verify, threatens to overshadow thousands of unsolved cases of missing Black people, advocates say. The article stated that according to 2021 FBI data, Black people make up 31% of missing person reports but only 14% of the U.S. population. White people, meanwhile, makeup 54% of missing person reports and 76% of the U.S. population.

FBI Agents Spent Two Days Hauling Items Out of an Office Complex Linked to Iconic Wine Retailer Sherry-Lehmann

The [New York Post](#) (07/23, Fickenscher) reported that federal agents investigating iconic wine retailer Sherry-Lehmann spent nearly two days at an office complex north of New York City this week — hauling off items from a building where it's believed that the retailer stored customers' rare and expensive wines. The article added that about 20 agents from the FBI and the US Postal Inspection Service arrived at Blue Hill Plaza in Pearl River, NY at 5:30 a.m. on Tuesday with a search warrant in hand and stayed well into the next day. The article noted that a spokesman for the USPIS, Nick Moore, confirmed that the two actions were part of the broader investigation of Sherry-Lehmann.

Cop Called to Help Man in Crisis Instead Tased Him Seven Times in Two Minutes in New York, Feds Say

The [Charlotte Observer](#) (07/21, Marnin) reported that a police sergeant in New York surrendered to the FBI four years after tasing a man seven times while he was handcuffed and on the ground — in violation of his rights, federal prosecutors said. The article stated that Sgt. Mario Stewart, 44, of Brooklyn, was the supervising officer when he and six other Mount Vernon police officers responded to a man experiencing a mental health crisis at a parking lot in the suburb of New York City, according to an indictment filed July 19 in federal court. Under Stewart's direction, officers on the scene handcuffed the man behind his back and placed his legs in a restraint bag before he was to be transported for medical help, the indictment says. The article mentioned that while the man was on the ground, immobile in handcuffs and restraints, Stewart repeatedly tased him in front of the other officers, according to the indictment. Now, Stewart is charged with deprivation of rights under color of law, the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Southern District of New York announced in a July 20 news release.

Racist Text Scandal at Northern California Police Department at Center of Court Hearing

The [Associated Press](#) (07/21, Har) reported that a court hearing to determine whether Northern California police officers who traded racist text messages violated a state law aimed at eliminating racism in the criminal justice system adjourned Friday without any officers taking the stand to answer questions about the scandal that has

roiled the San Francisco Bay Area city. The article added that defense attorneys for four men charged with murder and attempted murder in a 2021 shooting had subpoenaed the Antioch police officers to testify about heavily redacted text messages made public in April by the Contra Costa County District Attorney's office. The article noted that the text messages came out as part of an ongoing joint investigation launched in March 2022 by the FBI and the Contra Costa district attorney into a broad range of potential offenses by officers with the Antioch and nearby Pittsburg police departments. The city of Antioch faces a federal civil rights lawsuit over the text messages and in May the state attorney general's office launched a civil rights investigation into the police department.

North Carolina Man, 69, Charged After Allegedly Groping Teen During Flight

The [Independent](#) (07/23, Flynn) reported that a 69-year-old man has been charged with abusive sexual contact after allegedly groping a teenager aboard a Delta Airlines flight from Atlanta to Seattle. Jack Allen Roberson, of Andrews, North Carolina, was arrested upon landing at Seattle-Tacoma International Airport and remained in custody following a detention hearing last week. The article noted that abusive sexual contact on an aircraft is punishable by up to two years in prison and a \$250,000 fine, according to DoJ. The case is being investigated by the FBI. [Fox News](#) (07/21, Conklin) also reported on the story.

Leon Black Agreed to Pay \$62.5 Million to Settle Epstein-Related Claims

The [New York Times](#) (07/21, Goldstein) reported that billionaire investor Leon Black agreed to pay \$62.5 million to the U.S. Virgin Islands in January to be released from any potential claims arising out of the territory's three-year investigation into the sex trafficking operation of the disgraced financier Jeffrey Epstein. According to the article, the previously undisclosed settlement came after the Virgin Islands reached a \$105 million deal in November with Epstein's estate. The article indicated that the territory sued JPMorgan Chase in federal court over the bank's 15-year relationship with Mr. Epstein, a registered sex offender who killed himself in a Manhattan jail cell in 2019. The Virgin Islands government, the article continued, produced its settlement agreement with Black in response to a public records request by the New York Times. The article detailed that in January, representatives of the two parties held a private mediation session to settle claims. The \$62.5 million settlement, the article added, followed that session, noting that Mr. Black agreed to pay in cash. The story was also reported on by [Forbes](#) (07/21, Pequeno IV).

Ex-Network Investigative Journalist Pleads Guilty to Child Sexual Abuse Material Charges

The [Associated Press](#) (07/21, Barakat) reported that a former investigative journalist for ABC News pleaded guilty Friday to federal child sexual abuse material charges. According to the article, James Gordon Meek, 53, of Arlington, Virginia, admitted during a plea hearing in U.S. District Court in Alexandria that he illegally possessed and transported images of child sexual abuse. He covered national security issues for the network until he resigned last year. Court papers indicate the investigation began when the FBI received a tip from Dropbox about videos showing the sexual abuse of children in an account associated with Meek. The article noted that as part of a plea agreement, Meek admitted he used an iPhone to exchange the illicit materials, including a video showing the sexual abuse of an infant, during a chat session with two other individuals. An FBI affidavit indicates that agents found dozens of child sexual abuse images and videos when they searched Meek's home last year, going back to at least 2014. The affidavit says evidence was also seized showing Meek used Snapchat and other apps to pressure minors into sending him sexually explicit images, and that Meek sometimes portrayed himself as a girl in some of those communications. Those allegations are not explicitly referenced in his plea deal. The [Washington Post](#) (07/21, Rizzo), [Los Angeles Times](#) (07/21, Battaglio), [Daily Beast](#) (07/21, Bolies), [Rolling Stone](#) (07/21, Rawnsley), [New York Post](#) (07/21, DeGregory), and [Business Insider](#) (07/21, Davis) also reported on the story.

A 'Help Me' Sign Leads to the Rescue of a Kidnapped Texas Girl in Southern California

The [Associated Press](#) (07/21, Staff Writer) reported that a 13-year-old girl kidnapped in Texas and sexually assaulted was rescued in Southern California when passersby saw her hold up a "help me" sign in a parked car, police, and federal authorities said. The article stated that the rescue occurred July 9 in Long Beach, south of Los Angeles, when officers responded to a trouble call and found the "visibly emotional and distressed girl," police said in a press release Thursday. The article mentioned that Steven Robert Sablan, 61, of Cleburne, Texas, was arrested and on Thursday was indicted by a federal grand jury on charges of kidnapping and transportation of a minor with intent to engage in criminal sexual activity, according to the U.S. attorney's office in Los Angeles. Sablan was being held at the federal Metropolitan Detention Center in downtown LA. It was not immediately known if he had an attorney. The article added that the girl was walking down a street in San Antonio, Texas, on July 6 when Sablan drove up, raised a black handgun, and told her, "If you don't get in the car with me, I am going to hurt you," an FBI

agent wrote in an affidavit supporting the criminal complaint. The [New York Times](#) (07/22, Carballo), [Charlotte Observer](#) (07/21, Alanis), and [WFOR \(CBS-4\)](#) (07/21, Breen) also reported on the story.

Feds Fight Nxivm Sex Cult Leader Keith Raniere's Bid at New Trial on Claims FBI Planted Child Porn on His Computer

The [New York Post](#) (07/23, Janoski) reported that federal prosecutors slammed convicted Nxivm sex cult leader Keith Raniere's bid for a new trial — denouncing his claim that he has “newly discovered evidence” that proves the FBI planted evidence on his computer. The article added that in a response filed Friday in Brooklyn federal court, prosecutors wrote that Raniere's third attempt at securing a new trial — like his first two — was “entirely without merit,” adding that the motion should be denied as “untimely, unfounded, legally unsupported, and contrary to the evidence adduced at trial.” The article noted that when the 62-year-old— who is serving a 120-year sex trafficking sentence — filed for a new trial in May 2022, he claimed he had unearthed evidence showing the government “manufactured child pornography and planted it on a computer hard drive to tie it to him,” according to court papers. The article stated that Raniere's lawyers also said the feds “falsified, fabricated, and manipulated all the key evidence it used” to convict him of child exploitation and child porn. Prosecutors, in the Friday filing, detailed the evidence the FBI found in Raniere's Halfmoon, NY, residence — including nude photos of his first sex slave, Camila, who was around 15 years old at the time.

Robbers Posing as FBI Agents Steal \$20,000, Luxury Goods in New York Home Invasion

The [Independent](#) (07/21, Farberov) reported that a pair of well-dressed thieves posing as FBI agents raided a Queen couple's apartment, tasing the victims and stealing \$40,000 worth of luxury items and cash, before fleeing in their Mercedes, police said. The article stated that the strangers, both dressed in suits and ties, identified themselves as FBI agents and displayed firearms in their waistbands, according to the police. The encounter then took a violent turn when the dapper duo tased the couple and tied them up. The article noted that the NYPD has released surveillance video showing the bogus agents. Police appealed to the public for help with identifying the suspects in the video. [WCBS \(CBS-2\)](#) (07/21, Zanger) also reported on the story.

Search on for Two Robbers Who Held up Banks In Illinois

[WBBM \(CBS-2\)](#) (07/21, Staff Writer) reported that the FBI is searching for two robbers who held up bank tellers at gunpoint in two different Chicago suburbs. The article added that in each incident, the suspects took out handguns and made verbal demands for money. The article noted that the FBI says it believes the same robbers held two BMO Harris Banks.

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CYBER DIVISION

Microsoft Hack Widens After Emails of U.S. Ambassador to China Breached

[UPI](#) (07/21, Lee) reported that hackers breached the email account of the U.S. Ambassador to China during the same cyberattack that targeted Microsoft accounts at government agencies in the United States and Europe for at least a month before being discovered. The article added that federal authorities confirmed Thursday that Nicholas Burns' unclassified emails were hacked in the breach, along with those of Assistant Secretary of State for East Asia Daniel Kritenbrink, who accompanied Secretary of State Antony Blinken on his trip to China in mid-June when the intrusion was first detected. According to the article, Burns and Kritenbrink join a growing list of administration officials to be ensnared by the suspected Chinese hack, which also exposed the emails of Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo, a congressional staffer, a U.S. humanitarian advocate, and a host of research institutes across the country. The article noted that the FBI said no U.S. secrets were compromised, and that the attack was extinguished before spreading beyond the email protocol. Officials said only a small fraction of government email accounts in the United States were exposed before the hack was contained. National Security Council spokesman Adam Hodges also confirmed that hackers had only gained access to unclassified information. The [Independent](#) (07/21, Sarkar) also reported on the story.

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LAW ENFORCEMENT SERVICES

Mental Health Crisis Response Questioned Following Fatal Police Shooting in San Antonio

The [New York Times](#) (07/22, Edmonds) reported that Melissa Perez, a 46-year-old woman with schizophrenia, was shot and killed by San Antonio police officers who were responding to reports of her cutting fire alarm wires, an action she reportedly justified by claiming the FBI was using the alarm to spy on her. According to the article, three officers involved in the incident were charged with murder within 24 hours, sparking debates over police training and the handling of mental health issues. The article noted that a lawsuit filed by Perez's family argues her death reflects systemic failures within the police department, especially as the specialized Mental Health Unit, despite being available, was not dispatched to the scene, a factor that critics say represents broader issues with how law enforcement handles situations involving mental health.

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INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Artifacts Meant for a White House Party Ended Up at Mar-A-Lago. Awkwardness Ensued.

The [Washington Post](#) (07/21, Boorstein) reported that earlier this week, a minor — but still majorly awkward — diplomatic kerfuffle surfaced when Israeli media reported that officials there were struggling to get back some ancient artifacts from Mar-a-Lago. The article added that details remain murky of how Israeli officials lost track of the centuries-old oil lamps and coins at former president Donald Trump's club in Palm Beach, Fla. But cultural heritage experts say the episode shows what can go wrong when ancient artifacts are not handled properly. The article noted that news of the items' journey first became public Tuesday when Israeli news site Haaretz reported that the government had been trying for several months "unsuccessfully" to get the artifacts returned from Mar-a-Lago. It said the items were "stranded." The article mentioned that normally, the lending nation or institution and the borrower would have a loan agreement that includes a date when the loan expires. The agreement can be modified with the consent of both parties, and, experts said, it's possible agreements' dates were extended because of pandemic travel restrictions. The article stated that if a borrower violates a loan agreement, there are legal mechanisms to enforce the contract terms. Experts said current ambassadors, the Department of Homeland Security or the FBI, among others, could have been contacted.

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CAPITOL VIOLENCE NEWS

Before Jan. 6, Mark Meadows Joked About Trump's Election Claims

The [Washington Post](#) (07/22, Dawsey, Leonnig, Alemany) reported that Mark Meadows joked about the baseless claim that large numbers of votes were fraudulently cast in the names of dead people in the days before the then-White House chief of staff participated in a phone call in which then-President Trump alleged there were close to 5,000 dead voters in Georgia and urged Secretary of State Brad Raffensperger to overturn the 2020 election there. The article indicated that in a text message that has been scrutinized by federal prosecutors, Meadows wrote to a White House lawyer that his son, Atlanta-area attorney Blake Meadows, had been probing possible fraud and had found only a handful of possible votes cast in dead voters' names, far short of what Trump was alleging. According to the article, the lawyer teasingly responded that perhaps Meadows's son could locate the thousands of votes Trump would need to win the election. The article noted that the jocular text message, which has not been previously reported, is one of many exchanges from the time in which Trump aides and other Republican officials expressed deep skepticism or even openly mocked the election claims being made publicly by Trump.

Georgia Governor Contacted By Trump Special Counsel In 2020 Probe

The [Washington Post](#) (07/21, Dawsey) reported that Special Counsel Jack Smith recently asked Georgia Gov. Brian Kemp for information about efforts by President Donald Trump and his allies to overturn the election results in Georgia in 2020, the governor's spokesman confirmed Friday afternoon. According to the article, Andrew Isenhour, the spokesman for Kemp (R), said, "Our office has been contacted by Jack Smith's office, but we will decline to comment further at this time." The [Washington Examiner](#) (07/22, Villalovas) and [CNN](#) (07/22, Collins) also reported on the story.

Judge Rejects Jail For Oath Keepers' Jan. 6 'Operations Coordinator'

The [Washington Post](#) (07/21, Hsu) reported that a federal judge on Friday sentenced a Jan. 6 “operations coordinator” for Oath Keepers founder Stewart Rhodes to two years probation and 60 hours of community service, rejecting federal prosecutors’ requests for prison time. According to the article, Michael Greene, 40, of Indianapolis, was a paid contractor known as “Whip” who helped the extremist group run security details for Republican VIPs at events leading up to and including the pro-Donald Trump rally before the Jan. 6, 2021, attack on the Capitol. The article indicated that Greene, who did not enter the Capitol, was convicted at trial in May on one count of trespassing on restricted grounds. Greene’s defense, the article detailed, argued he was not a core follower, and a jury acquitted him of three felony counts, including conspiring with Rhodes and others and tampering with evidence. The article noted that a judge declared a mistrial on a fifth count after a jury hung on a charge of conspiring to obstruct an official proceeding. Assistant U.S. Attorney Kathryn Rakoczy, the article added, called the sentence wrong and “patently unfair” to other Oath Keepers defendants sentenced to prison after they cooperated with the government and said that it would not deter future threats to democracy. [The Hill](#) (07/21, Robertson) also reported on the story.

Most Voters Think DOJ Indictments Add Drama, But Will Hurt Trump: Poll

[The Hill](#) reported that a majority of Americans, 57 percent, believe a new criminal indictment against former President Trump was served to add drama to the presidential election. However, the article highlighted, an identical majority of respondents said an additional indictment would hurt Trump’s chances at a second term. The article noted that the poll comes as Trump was served a target letter Sunday by federal special counsel Jack Smith in his investigation of the Jan. 6, 2021, riot on the Capitol and the former president’s attempts to overturn the 2020 election — sparking speculation that Smith may soon indict Trump again on additional charges.

Trump to Face Racketeering Charge in Georgia for Attempting to Overturn 2020 Election Results

The [New York Post](#) (7/21, Christenson) reported that Fulton County District Attorney Fani Willis is reportedly preparing to charge former President Donald Trump with racketeering due to his attempts to overturn the 2020 election results in Georgia. According to the article, the charges could include witness influence and computer trespassing and are connected to Trump’s phone calls to Georgia election officials asking for a vote recount to reverse his loss. The article noted that in a parallel development, Special Counsel Jack Smith is reportedly considering a federal indictment against Trump for his efforts to overturn the election results in relation to the January 6, 2021 Capitol riot.

A Former Republican Legislative Candidate Has Been Charged for His Role in the U.S. Capitol Riot

The [Associated Press](#) (07/21, Staff Writer) reported that Matthew Brackley, a former Republican legislative candidate, was arrested and charged with federal crimes, including assaulting, resisting or impeding certain officers, for his involvement in the January 6, 2021 Capitol riot. According to the article, prosecutors say that Brackley, who attended the “Stop the Steal” rally, entered the Capitol and asked for the location of House Speaker Nancy Pelosi’s office before leading a group that pushed through police officers multiple times. The article noted that Brackley’s arrest adds to the over 1,000 people who have been charged with federal crimes related to the Capitol attack, with around 100 convicted after trials and more than 600 having pleaded guilty.

The Military Ordered Big Steps to Stop Extremism. Two Years Later, It Shows No Results

[USA TODAY](#) (07/21, Carless) reported that despite a promise from Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin over two years ago to combat extremism in the US armed forces, a USA TODAY investigation found that most steps in the initiative are stalled or inactive. According to the article, in response to the Jan. 6 insurrection and a study indicating that affiliation with the U.S. military is the “single strongest” predictor of violent extremism in America, Austin’s plan included diverting extremists from recruitment, creating an investigative unit, and an educational initiative for veterans. The article noted, however, a key internal study on military extremism, commissioned by Austin, remains unreleased over a year after its completion, and the Department of Defense’s partnership with the FBI to leverage its resources on extremist groups lacks transparency, with neither agency providing information on its effectiveness.

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OTHER FBI NEWS

Booz Allen To Pay \$377.4 Million To Settle U.S. Charges Over Past Billing Practices

[Reuters](#) (07/21, Singh) reported that Booz Allen Hamilton Holding, a U.S. consulting firm, agreed to pay \$377.4 million to resolve allegations that it improperly billed commercial and international costs to its government contracts, violating federal law. According to the article, from 2011 to 2021, it is alleged that the firm allocated indirect costs unrelated or disproportionately related to its government contracts and subcontracts. The company has stated that this settlement, one of the largest procurement fraud settlements in history, is not an admission of liability, but a step to avoid protracted litigation. The [press release](#) noted that FBI was involved in the resolution of this matter. [Washington Post](#) (07/21, Nakamura, Gregg), [New York Times](#) (07/21, Robertson), [The Hill](#) (07/21, Robertson), [Bloomberg](#) (07/23, White), [Law360](#) (07/23, Konnath), and [Washington Times](#) (07/23, Matthews) also reported on the story.

New Report Points to Homicide Rate Declines in U.S. Cities After Pandemic-Era Spike

The [Associated Press](#) (07/21, Whitehurst) reported that homicides are declining in a cross-section of American cities, though their numbers remain higher than before the coronavirus pandemic took hold, according to a new report analyzing data from 30 U.S. cities. The article added that homicides on average dropped 9.4% during the first half of 2023 as compared to the same period last year, the nonpartisan Council on Criminal Justice found in a report released this week. The numbers remained about 24% higher than they were in 2019, and motor vehicle thefts were up sharply in the analyzed cities. The article noted that the homicide declines come after an increase in 2020 of 29%, according to FBI data. It was the largest one-year jump since the agency's record-keeping began, though still below historic highs of the 1990s. The article mentioned that FBI crime data, typically the country's most comprehensive, has pointed to violent crime rates beginning to level out in 2021, but the agency's most recent data was incomplete. Nearly 40% of agencies, including big cities like New York, Los Angeles and Miami, didn't send in their data for 2021 due to an overhaul in the FBI reporting system.

Epstein Victims Plan \$600 Million Lawsuit Against the FBI for Failing to Investigate Millionaire

[The Daily Beast](#) (07/21, Briquet) reported that two victims of Jeffrey Epstein have filed a legal document indicating they plan to sue the FBI for \$600 million for allegedly failing to investigate the sex trafficker in the 1990s. According to the article, on Friday an attorney for Maria Farmer and ██████████ shared their notice of claim, which is a prelude to a class-action lawsuit and argues that the FBI's inaction led to Epstein abusing scores of women and girls. The article noted that Farmer says she flagged Epstein and his accomplice Ghislaine Maxwell to New York cops and the feds in 1996 but says agents failed to take action.

Public Confidence in the FBI Has Diminished by 15% In the Last Five Years, Poll Finds

[Fox News](#) (07/23, Halon) reported that the United States is battling a "crisis of confidence" with U.S. governing institutions on the line and Director Wray's recent testimony before Congress may have been the last straw for the bureau, Wall Street Journal columnist Dan Henninger warned. The article noted that in a Wall Street Journal column titled "The FBI Loses the Public," Henninger examined the public's diminishing trust in institutions like the FBI as studies show voter confidence in the bureau and the DOJ has hit rock bottom. An NBC poll cited in the column found the public's positive view of the bureau has tanked by 15% in the last five years. The poll came days before Director Wray's contentious hearing before Congress and amid calls for his resignation from GOP lawmakers over his leadership of the bureau. The article quoted Henninger, who said, "Confidence in U.S. institutions such as the FBI, Supreme Court, and Congress has been on a steady decline since 2017 and is now reaching record lows. More broadly, less than a third of voters trust the federal government – a 20-year low...what's going on now is different. The U.S. is already amid a crisis of confidence in what we call our governing institutions. That word, governing, is taken for granted, but it took a long time for governing to become a fact of daily life. Consider the opposite of governing elsewhere—mayhem, chaos, anarchy,"

Ramaswamy Unveils Plans to Eradicate FBI, Department of Education, Nuclear Regulatory Commission

The [Epoch Times](#) (07/21, Worcester) reported that presidential hopeful Vivek Ramaswamy detailed his vision for the administrative state at a New Hampshire town hall on July 20. The article added that Mr. Ramaswamy argued that the FBI is structurally anomalous, which enables it to "[escape] cabinet-level accountability." He pointed out that there's no FBI-like independent investigative body between local prosecutors and local police, as there is between the DOJ and the U.S. Marshals. The article noted that he presented a diagram outlining the dismantling of the FBI during his first year in office, Mr. Ramaswamy said he'd shift some of its employees to the U.S. Marshals, the Drug Enforcement Administration, and other agencies less "politicized" than the brainchild of J. Edgar Hoover.

Opinion: FBI Attacked Catholics and Now It Won't Even Let Us See What It Did

An opinion piece published by [Fox News](#) (07/23, Picciotti-Bayer) stated that Catholics in the United States are being maligned by the federal government, and it's time to address what is becoming a serious challenge to religious freedom. The author mentioned that recently, members of the House Judiciary Committee questioned Director Wray about an FBI memo from the Richmond, Va., field office targeting U.S. Catholics who are drawn to the traditional Latin Mass. The author added that the memo claimed violent extremists have "sought out and attended traditional Catholic houses of worship" and suggested "trip wire or source development" within churches that offer the Latin Mass and "radical-traditionalist" Catholic online communities. The author noted that even a field office of the FBI entertained religious profiling should shock the conscience. After all, racial and religious profiling has been shown not just to be ineffective but also erodes trust both in the police and governmental authorities. The author stated that during the hearing, Director Wray said he was "aghast" when the memo came to his attention and immediately "ordered it withdrawn and removed from FBI systems." Director Wray also told the committee that the FBI is conducting an internal review of the memo, which will likely be complete later this summer. The author shared the opinion that committee members weren't impressed, and Director Wray gives them no reason to be as the FBI refuses to respond to Freedom of Information Act requests for records related to the memo.

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INTERNATIONAL NEWS

Deadly Russian Strikes Hit Odesa Cathedral and Apartment Buildings

- [New York Times: Deadly Russian Strikes Hit Odesa Cathedral and Apartment Buildings](#)

Scholarships Have Helped Displaced Afghan Students Find Homes On University Campuses Across The U.S.

- [Associated Press: Scholarships Have Helped Displaced Afghan Students Find Homes On University Campuses Across The U.S.](#)

Russia Defies Sanctions by Selling Oil Above Price Cap

- [Wall Street Journal: Russia Defies Sanctions by Selling Oil Above Price Cap](#)

Chinese Money Flees the Western World

- [Wall Street Journal: Chinese Money Flees the Western World](#)

Foreigners, Some Trained by The U.S., Are Fighting on Both Sides in Ukraine, Seeking Cash and Adventure

- [Business Insider: Foreigners, Some Trained by The U.S., Are Fighting on Both Sides in Ukraine, Seeking Cash and Adventure](#)

Israel's Identity Hangs in Balance Ahead of Key Vote on New Law

- [New York Times: Israel's Identity Hangs in Balance Ahead of Key Vote on New Law](#)

With Israel in Turmoil, Netanyahu Is Hospitalized for Pacemaker

- [New York Times: With Israel in Turmoil, Netanyahu Is Hospitalized for Pacemaker](#)

Inconclusive Election Thrusts Spain Into Political Muddle

- [New York Times: Inconclusive Election Thrusts Spain Into Political Muddle](#)

U.S., Allies Hold Record-Setting Military Exercise in Australia in Message Aimed at China

- [Wall Street Journal: U.S., Allies Hold Record-Setting Military Exercise in Australia in Message Aimed at China](#)

North Korea Launches Cruise Missiles Into Yellow Sea

- Wall Street Journal: North Korea Launches Cruise Missiles Into Yellow Sea

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OTHER WASHINGTON NEWS

Continued Reporting: Trump Indictment

- New York Times: Why Aileen Cannon May Prove Critics Wrong in Trump Documents Case
- CNN: Analysis: How Trump Maneuvered His GOP Rivals Into a Tortured Position on His Legal Battles

Continued Reporting: Biden Investigation

- New York Post: Robert F. Kennedy Jr. Says Joe Biden Bribery Claim 'Needs to Be Investigated'
- New York Post: 'We May Have a Criminal Family Sitting in the White House': Gingrich on Biden Bribery Doc
- Washington Examiner: Hunter Biden Investigation: Here Are the Leads Congress Can Follow After Whistleblower Testimony

Missouri Supreme Court Orders The GOP Attorney General To Stand Down In Fight Over Abortion Costs

- Associated Press: Missouri Supreme Court Orders The GOP Attorney General To Stand Down In Fight Over Abortion Costs
- The Hill: Missouri Supreme Court Orders Attorney General to Let Abortion Ballot Initiative Go Forward
- Reuters: Democrats Say New Alabama Congressional Map Shorts Black Voters

The Fight Over Alabama's Congressional Redistricting Now Shifts Back To Federal Court

- Associated Press: The Fight Over Alabama's Congressional Redistricting Now Shifts Back To Federal Court
- New York Times: Alabama Lawmakers Decline to Create New Majority-Black Congressional District
- Reuters: Democrats Say New Alabama Congressional Map Shorts Black Voters
- NPR: Alabama Lawmakers Refuse to Create a 2nd Majority-Black Congressional District

Struggling DeSantis and Pence Attack Criminal Justice Law They Championed

- The Guardian: Struggling DeSantis and Pence Attack Criminal Justice Law They Championed

Kansas Troopers 'Waged War on Motorists,' Federal Judge Finds

- New York Times: Kansas Troopers 'Waged War on Motorists,' Federal Judge Finds

Extreme Heat Shows the Need for Another Kind of Climate Investment

- New York Times: Extreme Heat Shows the Need for Another Kind of Climate Investment

Biden Declares War on the Cult of Efficiency

- The Atlantic: Biden Declares War on the Cult of Efficiency

Biden Admin Urges Supreme Court To Reinstate Major Gas Pipeline In West Virginia

- Fox News: Biden Admin Urges Supreme Court To Reinstate Major Gas Pipeline In West Virginia

Lawyers Say Helping Asylum Seekers in Border Custody Is Nearly Impossible

- New York Times: Lawyers Say Helping Asylum Seekers in Border Custody Is Nearly Impossible

Oklahoma Governor's Feud With Native American Tribes Continues Over Revenue Agreements

- Associated Press: Oklahoma Governor's Feud With Native American Tribes Continues Over Revenue Agreements

New U.S. Pandemic Office Set to Launch

- The Hill: New U.S. Pandemic Office Set to Launch

Female Admiral Picked as Next Navy Head

- The Hill: Female Admiral Picked as Next Navy Head

Drugmakers Are ‘Throwing the Kitchen Sink’ to Halt Medicare Price Negotiations

- New York Times: Drugmakers Are ‘Throwing the Kitchen Sink’ to Halt Medicare Price Negotiations

New Jersey Sues Federal Highway Officials in Bid to Stop New York City’s Plan to Charge Big Tolls

- Associated Press: New Jersey Sues Federal Highway Officials in Bid to Stop New York City’s Plan to Charge Big Tolls

In an ‘Extraordinary’ Move, Mississippi AG Tries To Overturn Officer’s Manslaughter Conviction

- NBC News: In an ‘Extraordinary’ Move, Mississippi AG Tries To Overturn Officer’s Manslaughter Conviction

Opinion: Cracking Down on AI Companies Could Rob America of Economic Growth

- New York Post: Opinion: Cracking Down on AI Companies Could Rob America of Economic Growth

Opinion: Stop the Post Office From Spying on Us

- The Daily Beast: Opinion: Stop the Post Office From Spying on Us

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BIG PICTURE

New York Times

- Israel’s Identity Hangs in Balance Ahead of Key Vote on New Law
- U.S. Confronts Tight but Turbulent Relationship With Israel
- How a Drugmaker Profited by Slow-Walking a Promising H.I.V. Therapy
- As Inquiries Compound, Justice System Pours Resources Into Scrutinizing Trump
- Inconclusive Election Thrusts Spain Into Political Muddle
- A Crisis in America’s Theaters Leaves Prestigious Stages Dark

Wall Street Journal

- Barbie’ Leads Robust Ticket Sales
- Ukraine’s Lack of Arms Dims Hope for War Breakthrough
- Why Businesses Can’t Stop Asking for Tips
- Hedge Funds Brawl in Real Estate
- Dying Malls Stir Up Nostalgia—and Eager Bidders for the Decor
- Schools’ Suits Allege Apps Harm Students

Washington Post

- Judge Opens Door to At-Home Care For Disabled Kids
- Green Energy Hopes Hit a Red Wall
- Spain’s Election Reflects Divide
- Hey, Kids! Teachers Are Using AI, Too.
- Soldiers in Israel Vow to Protest if Law Passes
- Liability Fears Block Access to Famed Colorado Peaks

Financial Times

- The Fed Needs to Stay Put on Rates
- U.S. Junk Loan Market Hit With Flurry of Credit Rating Downgrades
- Fed to Signal It Is Not Done Yet as It Raises Interest Rates Again

ABC News

- 80 Million Americans Under Heat Alert; Deadly Wildfires Scorch Greece; Black History Education Battle in Florida.

CBS News

- As Record Heat Continues, Phoenix Sees 24th Day of Triple-Digit Temperatures; Photographer's Work Will Be Free to Download as He Battles Pancreatic Cancer.

NBC News

- Extreme Weather Reported in Multiple Regions Across the Globe as Heat Wave Death Toll Climbs in U.S.; Dozens Hospitalized After Deck Collapse at Montana Country Club; DOJ Threatens to Sue Texas Governor Over Rio Grande Buoy Barrier.

Fox News

- We Should Take Whistleblowers Seriously: Susan Page; State Department Struggles to Keep Up With Passport Demand; Russia and Iran Try to Evade Sanctions.

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WASHINGTON SCHEDULE

White House

President Biden

- 10:00 AM: The President receives the Presidential Daily Briefing Vice President Harris · No events scheduled.

US Senate

- No events scheduled.

US House of Representatives

- No events scheduled.

Cabinet Members

- **Secretary of State Blinken** meets with OSCE Secretary General Helga Maria Schmid at the Department of State at 2:00 PM.

Visitors

- No events scheduled.

General Events

- [CSIS: Book Launch | Korea: A New History of South & North](#) – Monday, July 24, 2023. Location: CSIS, 4:00 PM. Please join the Korea Chair at the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) for a discussion of Victor Cha and Ramon Pacheco Pardo's new book, Korea: A New History of South & North. Korea has a long,

riveting history—it is also a divided nation. South Korea is a vibrant democracy, the tenth largest economy, and is home to a world-renowned culture. North Korea is ruled by the most authoritarian regime in the world, a poor country in a rich region, and is best known for the cult of personality surrounding the ruling Kim family. But both Koreas share a unique common history.

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