

## **FBI PUBLIC AFFAIRS – DIRECTOR’S AM NEWS BRIEFING**

**MONDAY, DECEMBER 31, 2018 5:00 AM EST**

**Holiday Message.** In observance of the U.S. federal New Year’s Day holiday, we will not publish on Tuesday, January 1, 2019. Service will resume on Wednesday, January 2, 2019. We wish our readers a safe and happy holiday.

**Giuliani: Mueller Should “Put Up Or Shut Up.”** In what [The Hill](#) (12/30, Bowden, 2.57M) casts as an effort “to put pressure on special counsel Robert Mueller to submit his report on whether the investigation into the Trump campaign and Russia has found collusion,” the President’s attorney Rudy Giuliani told radio host John Catsimatidis on Sunday that Mueller should “put up or shut up.” According to Giuliani, “It should have been wrapped up probably in May or June. That’s when they figured out they had no evidence of collusion.” Giuliani added, “Collusion is not a crime, by the way. ... You have to show a conspiracy to hack [the Democratic National Committee]. ... They don’t have any evidence of that – which is the reason they don’t submit a report, because they are embarrassed. ... So, I am challenging them: It’s time to put up or shut up. It’s time for them to submit a report.”

**Isikoff: Anti-Trump Dossier’s Collusion Charges “Likely False.”** The [Washington Times](#) (12/30, Scarborough, 567K) reports Michael Isikoff of Yahoo News, who was “an early public conduit for Christopher Steele’s anti-Trump dossier, now says the former British spy’s sensational Russia collusion charges lack apparent evidence and are “likely false.” According to the Daily Caller, Isikoff this month told John Ziegler of Mediaite, “When you actually get into the details of the Steele dossier, the specific allegations, we have not seen the evidence to support them, and in fact, there is good grounds to think that some of the more sensational allegations will never be proven and are likely false.”

**Stone Says Corsi Worked With Mueller To “Sandbag” Him.** The [Washington Examiner](#) (12/30, Chaitin, 338K) reports Roger Stone, in an Instagram [post](#) Sunday, said Jerome Corsi, who he has called a “friend” was “working with special counsel Robert Mueller to trap him with a perjury charge.” Stone wrote, “So Jerry Corsi was working with Mueller to sandbag me on a fabricated perjury charge. ... Mueller’s minion even promised Corsi no jail time if he would lie and say he gave me John Podesta’s stolen e-mails (which he did NOT) Then they were going to say I passed them on to Trump (which I did NOT). ... Jerry was willing to LIE about me but not himself! Now Jerry is lying about legitimate research he did for me regarding the Podesta brothers lucrative business in Russia.”

**Trump Denounces “Total Obstruction Of Justice” Over Deletion Of Strzok-Page Text Messages.**

The [Washington Examiner](#) (12/29, Lim, 338K) reports President Trump on Saturday “flipped the script on Robert Mueller, claiming the special counsel’s team should be investigated for possibly obstructing justice.” Trump [tweeted](#), “The Mueller Angry Democrats recently deleted approximately 19,000 Text messages between FBI Agent Lisa Page and her lover, Agent Peter S. These Texts were asked for and INVALUABLE to the truth of the Witch Hunt Hoax. This is a total Obstruction of Justice. All Texts Demanded!” According to the Examiner, “Trump’s comments follow Rudy Giuliani, the president’s personal lawyer, arguing Friday that Mueller ‘should be investigated for destruction of evidence for allowing those text messages from Strzok to be erased, messages that would show the state of mind and tactics of his lead anti-Trump FBI agent at the start of his probe.’”

The President later [tweeted](#), “Absolutely nothing’ (on Russian Collusion). Kimberley Strassel, The Wall Street Journal. The Russian Collusion fabrication is the greatest Hoax in the history of American politics. The only Russian Collusion was with Hillary and the Democrats!” He [added](#), “It turns out to be true now, that the Department of Justice and the FBI, under President Obama, rigged the investigation for Hillary and really turned the screws on Trump, and now it looks like in a corrupt & illegal way. The facts are out now. Whole Hoax exposed. @JesseBWatters.”

**Former Russian Spy Aimed To Collect On Manafort’s Debt To Oligarch.** In a more than 2,300-word exclusive, [TIME](#) (12/29, Shuster, 18.79M) reports that “when the U.S. government put out its latest sanctions list on Dec. 19, the man named at the top did not seem especially important. Described in the document as a former Russian intelligence officer, he was accused of handling money and negotiations on behalf of a powerful Russian oligarch. The document did not mention that the man, Victor Boyarkin, had links to the 2016 campaign of President Donald Trump.” However, “a months-long investigation by TIME...found that Boyarkin, a former arms dealer with a high forehead and a very low profile, was a key link between a senior member of the Trump campaign and a powerful ally of Russian President Vladimir Putin.” In an interview, “Boyarkin told TIME this fall that he was in touch with Trump’s then-campaign chairman, Paul Manafort, in the heat of the presidential race on behalf of the Russian oligarch.”

## **Goodlatte: House Committees End Investigation Into FBI, DOJ Misconduct In 2016 Election.**

[The Hill](#) (12/28, Axelrod, 2.57M) reports House Judiciary Chairman Bob Goodlatte on Friday announced the joint Oversight and Judiciary investigation "into FBI and Justice Department (DOJ) decision-making during the 2016 presidential election has concluded, marking the end of a winding probe launched last fall." Goodlatte told Acting Attorney General Whitaker and FBI Director Wray, "With the 115th Congress coming to a close, the investigation into decisions made by DOJ and FBI and related interviews conducted by the House Committee on the Judiciary and Committee on Oversight and Government Reform have, at least for the time being, been concluded." However, the [New York Times](#) (12/28, Fandos, 17.59M) reports that "in one of their final acts in the House majority, Republicans released a letter on Friday urging their Senate counterparts to pick up their politically charged inquiry into the handling of the F.B.I.'s investigations of President Trump's campaign and Hillary Clinton's use of a private email server, and called again for the appointment of a special counsel to study the matter." The Times adds that Goodlatte and Oversight Chairman Trey Gowdy "also used the letter to resurface Republicans' contested charge that the F.B.I. abused sensitive surveillance powers to spy on a former Trump campaign associate believed to be compromised by Russia."

**Russian-Owned Firm Claims Mueller Collected "Nude Selfie" During Investigation.** The [Washington Post](#) (12/28, Sonmez, Hsu, 13.51M) reports an attorney for the firm Concord Management and Consulting, "a Russian company accused of bankrolling efforts to disrupt the 2016 presidential campaign," in a court filing on Thursday said "that a 'nude selfie' is among the materials collected by special counsel Robert S. Mueller III in his ongoing probe." According to the Post, "Concord is owned by Yevgeniy Prigozhin, a Russian businessman known as 'Putin's chef' because of his close relationship to Russian President Vladimir Putin."

**Former Federal Prosecutor: Cohen Guilty Pleas Should Worry Trump Jr.** [The Hill](#) (12/28, Daughtery, 2.57M) reports "CNN legal analyst and former federal prosecutor Elie Honig said Friday that Donald Trump Jr. needs to be 'worried' by Michael Cohen's guilty plea to charges that he made hush-money payments at President Trump's behest before the 2016 presidential election." Honig stated, "When Michael Cohen pleaded guilty a couple weeks ago to making the hush money payments, the papers referenced Executive-1 and Executive-2 within the Trump Organization. Either of those are Donald Trump Jr., he could be in trouble." Honig added, "He also has potential exposure for lying to Congress about the Moscow project, which is another thing that Michael Cohen pleaded guilty to, so we could see indictments there."

**Stone Raises Nearly \$10,000 For Legal Fund.** "Robert Mueller's investigation into the 2016 election has put the hurt on President Trump's former campaign adviser Roger Stone," and he told the [Washington Times](#) (12/28, Blake, 567K) on Friday "that he signed and sold nearly 1,000 rocks during the last week and a half as part of a punny attempt to cover legal costs associated with the special counsel's probe." Stone told the Times that the "sales of the signed rocks generated between \$8,000 and \$10,000 toward Mr. Stone's legal defense fund within 10 days of the item becoming available for purchase."

**WPost: Whitaker Poses Threat To Mueller's Investigation.** In an editorial, the [Washington Post](#) (12/28, 13.51M) warns acting Attorney General Whitaker's decision "to oversee special counsel Robert S. Mueller III's probe, despite the opinion of dedicated officials that he ought to avoid the appearance of a conflict of interest, comes after the acting attorney general declined to request a formal review and instead brought in his own advisers to aid in an informal process." The Post adds "the nomination of William P. Barr to return to the role of attorney general was a relief to observers concerned that Mr. Trump would leave Mr. Whitaker in place for the remainder of his term – and most likely a relief also to Mr. Whitaker, now operating under decreased scrutiny," but "in the meantime, as long as Mr. Whitaker is in place, and as long as a law protecting Mr. Mueller is not, the Russia investigation is in danger."

## **Authorities To Screen Attendees At Times Square Ball Drop.** [USA Today](#) (12/30, Lam, 12.05M)

reports that as "about one million people" gather in New York City's Times Square for the iconic ball drop, authorities "will screen attendees and not allow backpacks, large bags, umbrellas and alcoholic beverages." The New York Police Department "will work security alongside the FBI, the New York State Police and the Mass Transit Authority Police, said Police Commissioner James P. O'Neill." Organizers "encourage attendees to take public transit because of expected heavy traffic delays and parking restrictions, as Times Square will be closed to vehicular traffic beginning at 4 a.m. Monday."

[ABC World News Tonight](#) (12/30, story 4, 1:50, Karl, 5.13M) reported that "with the clock ticking down to the new year, security is kicking into high gear." Correspondent Erielle Reshef reported on heightened security measures being taken in Boston, Los Angeles, Las Vegas, and New York City's Times Square, which hosts "one of the biggest New Year's Eve parties on the planet." According to Reshef, officials stress that "there have been no credible threats to New Year's festivities, but ISIS propaganda on the Internet" is "prompting heightened vigilance across the country." Tony Dokoupil of the [CBS Weekend News](#) (12/30, story 8, 1:50, Quijano, 1.48M) similarly said that "the NYPD is quick to point out there are no specific credible threats to the celebration, but it's not only about security."

The [AP](#) (12/30, Sisak) reports that the New York City Police Department will use a police drone to help keep watch over the New Year's Eve celebration in New York's Times Square. About 7,000 police officers "will be on duty for Monday night's festivities in Times Square, including counterterrorism teams with long guns and bomb-sniffing dogs." Deputy Commissioner of Intelligence and Counterterrorism John Miller said the remote-controlled quadcopter will be giving police "a visual aid and the flexibility of being able to move a camera to a certain spot with great rapidity through a tremendous crowd." Meanwhile, Police Commissioner James O'Neill "said there are no known, credible threats to the city or the New Year's Eve event."

[Bloomberg News](#) (12/28, Goldman, 5.74M) reports the New York City Police Department will have a UAS monitoring Times Square during the city's annual New Year's Eve celebrations. Additionally, NYPD will use a "new 'counter-drone technology' blocking other devices from the area, where they expect as many as 2 million New Year's eve revelers" in a few days. These measures will be deployed alongside traditional aircraft and helicopters for surveillance, and city and federal law enforcement officials have also been working with area hotels "in an effort to prevent an incident similar to the sniper who shot to death 59 outdoor concert-goers from a hotel room high above the Las Vegas strip on Oct. 1, 2017."

[Newsday \(NY\)](#) (12/28, 1.35M) reports that the view of the crowd from the drone is "in addition to about 1,225 surveillance cameras, Miller said." [The Hill](#) (12/30, Burke, 2.57M) reports that NYPD Chief Terence Monahan "told the AP that the drone will be tethered to a building. He added that it's unlikely people will even notice the drone because of the noise and the confetti that will be present."

[NBC Nightly News](#) (12/30, story 4, 1:25, Jackson, 4.68M) correspondent Matt Bradley reported that in Times Square, "New York City police will loft drones, keeping eyes on the skies on what could be hundreds of thousand of revelers below." NYPD Cmdr. James O'Neill commented, "With the drone, this is first time we'll be using it as a large-scale event." Bradley said NYPD officers "are pairing those with more than 1,000 surveillance cameras, along with bomb-sniffing dogs, helicopters, snipers and 200 blocker vehicles, and thousand of uniformed officers, many taking up positions in hotels around the square."

The [Washington Times](#) (12/30, Sisak, 567K) and the [New York Post](#) (12/28, Gonen, O'Neill, 4.38M) also report.

**Actress Emily Davis To Play Reality Winner In "Offbeat Thriller."** The [New York Times](#) (12/30, Hess, 17.59M) reports profiles theater director Tina Satter, who is directing "a play about the F.B.I.'s 2017 interrogation of the military contractor Reality Winner." At a recent rehearsal, Satter "stalked around the bare set in a Mickey Mouse T-shirt, blocking the strange moment when the F.B.I. agents (played by Pete Simpson and T.L. Thompson) drum what sounds like a confession out of Ms. Winner, and then seamlessly return to discussing her cat, who is on a diet."

**Investigators Examine Employment Documents Of Illegal Immigrants Who Allegedly Worked At Trump's Bedminster Golf Club.** The [Washington Post](#) (12/29, Wax-Thibodeaux, 13.51M) reports "federal and state investigators are scrutinizing the employment documents of immigrants without legal status who say they worked at President Trump's golf club in New Jersey, according to" Anibal Romero, the attorney representing five undocumented immigrants "who say they worked at the Trump National Golf Club in Bedminster." In an interview on Saturday, Romero "said...he met with investigators from the New Jersey state attorney general's office and two FBI agents in November, before the workers began to go public with their stories." According to the Post, "Romero said he turned over fake green cards and Social Security numbers that supervisors at the golf club allegedly gave one of his clients, Victorina Morales, a 44-year-old Guatemalan national. He also gave investigators the pay stubs of Sandra Diaz, a 46-year-old Costa Rican native who now has legal status but said she was undocumented when she worked at the club for three years."

[The Hill](#) (12/30, Wise, 2.57M) reports federal and state investigators "are reportedly looking into employment documents for undocumented immigrants who say they were employed at President Trump's golf club in New Jersey." Anibal Romero, a Newark attorney "who represents five immigrants who say they worked at Trump National Golf Club in Bedminster, N.J., told The Washington Post on Saturday that he met with investigators from the New Jersey state attorney general's office and two FBI agents in November." Romero "said that the FBI agents he spoke with told him they would 'coordinate' with the New Jersey state attorney general's office."

The [Huffington Post](#) (12/30, Papenfuss, 2.63M) reports the FBI and New Jersey investigators "have collected employment documents and information allegedly provided to immigrants not authorized to work by supervisors at President Donald Trump's golf club in Bedminster, The Washington Post reported Saturday." Citing the New York Daily News, the Huffington Post "reported Saturday that Romero turned over documents to state officials – but only discussed them with the FBI agents."

Other outlets reporting include the [San Francisco Chronicle](#) (12/29, 2.73M), the [Chicago Tribune](#) (12/29, Wax-Thibodeaux, 2.25M), [Rolling Stone](#) (12/30, Wade, 12.99M), and [Independent \(UK\)](#) (12/30, 1.16M).

**Mueller Has “Played Part” In Garden State Golf Club Inquiry.** The [New York Daily News](#) (12/28, Sommerfeldt, 2.63M) reports that New Jersey prosecutors “have collected evidence that supervisors at President Trump’s Garden State golf club may have committed federal immigration crimes – and the FBI as well as special counsel Robert Mueller have played part in the inquiry, the Daily News has learned.” Before he met with the state prosecutors, “Romero said he reached out to Mueller’s office because, while he wanted to contact federal authorities, he was concerned about looping in the Justice Department, which was headed by Jeff Sessions at the time.” Mueller’s office, “which is separately investigating Trump’s campaign for possible collusion with Russians during the 2016 election, made contact and informed Romero the matter was not within their jurisdiction.” A few weeks later, “an FBI agent in New Jersey called Romero.”

[Newsweek](#) (12/29, 2.02M) reports Romero “said that special counsel Robert Mueller and the FBI are also aware of the evidence and have been involved in the state’s probe into the golf club.” Both Mueller’s office and the FBI “declined to give comment to the Daily News but Romero said that he’s ‘confident that federal and state authorities will conduct a complete and thorough investigation.’”

**Ivan The Terrible Art Found In Connecticut Home Was Looted From Nazi-occupied Ukraine.** The [AP](#) (12/29) reports that Gabby and David Tracy “had become rather fond of a large painting of Ivan the Terrible that had been left behind in a house David Tracy bought when he first came to Ridgefield, Conn., in 1987.” However, a researcher “at the Potomack Co., an auction house in Alexandria, Va., discovered that the painting had been stolen from a museum in Nazi-occupied Ukraine in 1941, during World War II.” The auction house “called the FBI. Now the federal government – and the Tracys – are hopeful the artwork will soon be headed back to the country from which it was stolen.” The assistant director in charge of the FBI’s Washington Field Office, Nancy McNamara, “called the artwork important ‘not just for its monetary value, but for its place in the world of art and culture.’”

**Nearly 50% Of 479 Guns Reported Stolen In Chattanooga In 2018 Were Taken From Vehicles.** The [Chattanooga \(TN\) Times Free Press](#) (12/28, 169K) reports that as of November, “479 firearms were reported stolen this year in Chattanooga, and most of them were swiped from vehicles.” Over the past three years, “47 percent of stolen guns were taken from a vehicle. Burglary– illegal entry of a building with criminal intent– came in at second place with 27 percent and theft came in third at 13 percent.”

**Crime In Los Angeles Falls For First Time Since 2014.** The [Los Angeles Times](#) (12/29, Chang, 4.59M) reports “for the first time in five years, violent crime was down in Los Angeles in 2018, with the number of homicides on track to be among the lowest in more than 50 years,” which “mirror[s] an overall drop in crime this year in the parts of L.A. County patrolled by the Sheriff’s Department, as well as in San Francisco and Oakland.” According to the Times, “After decades of steady decline, violent crime – which includes homicide, rape, robbery and aggravated assault – had begun climbing in 2014, with a spike in shootings in South L.A. causing particular concern.” The Times highlights that “violent crime decreased by nearly 4%, though it was still 1% higher than two years ago, according to preliminary statistics through Dec. 8.” However, the Times adds “overall, crime was down in all categories in 2018, except personal theft, which rose 3%.”

**Vermont Not Able To Run Background Checks For Guns.** The [AP](#) (12/28) reports Vermont will not be able “to run its own background checks for gun sales, according to a new report.” The Department of Public Safety “finds in a report issued Dec. 17 to legislators that because only licensed dealers can access the federal database system, the state will not be able to offer an alternative to running background checks through gun shops, Vermont Public Radio reports.” Public Safety Deputy Commissioner Christopher Herrick said, “In multiple phone calls with the FBI, and reviewing federal law and regulation, it became clear that we would not be authorized to have access to the full range of databases that are performed on a normal background check for a gun purchase.”

**Miami Herald Calls For Independent Investigation Into “Egregious” Acosta/Epstein Plea Deal.** The [Miami Herald](#) (12/30, 658K) editorializes that “the questionable actions of Miami’s former U.S. Attorney Alexander Acosta in gifting a sweetheart federal plea deal to a Palm Beach multimillionaire and serial sexual predator have rightly come under fire.” They “should also come under federal investigation, as we recommended in a recent editorial.” Instead of “insisting on more-serious charges and a harsher sentence for Epstein, Acosta repeatedly caved to the demands of the sexual predator’s high-powered lawyers and even worked with the legal team to limit the scope and publicity of the FBI investigation. What a farce.”

**At Least Seven People Charged For Helping Shooting Suspect’s Bid To Evade Capture.** On [ABC World News Tonight](#) (12/29, story 6, 2:15, Karl, 6M), Jonathan Karl said “at least seven people are now charged with helping

[Gustavo Perez Arriaga] evade authorities, and more arrests might be coming." Marci Gonzalez reported Perez Arriaga was arrested "more than two days after he allegedly gunned down Newman Police Cpl. Ronil Singh during a DUI traffic stop, killing the beloved officer just hours after his wife posted this photo to Facebook of their family celebrating Christmas." Gonzalez added "police say, in all, seven people are in custody, accused of assisting the suspect in evading police, including two of Arriaga's brothers and his girlfriend. Authorities telling ABC News all of them, as well as Arriaga, are in the US illegally." On the [CBS Weekend News](#) (12/29, story 4, 2:15, Ninan, 8.1M), Mireya Villarreal reported "Arriaga faces several charges that could potentially include capital murder and will face a judge on Wednesday." Villarreal added "the family of Cpl. Singh is now planning his funeral. It's set for Saturday, Jan. 5."

**Feds "Fail To Fix Flaw" On Juvenile Abusers Escaping Accountability On Military Bases.** The [AP](#) (12/30, Pritchard, Dunklin) reports, "Despite new rules addressing sexual assault among the children of U.S. service members, the federal government failed to fix a flaw that on many military bases has let alleged juvenile abusers escape accountability or treatment." New records "underscore how few child-on-child sex assault reports pursued by military investigators are prosecuted. That problem is most serious on U.S. installations overseas, where at least 47,000 children are enrolled in Pentagon-run schools."

**FBI Offering Reward For Chicago Bank Robbery Suspect.** The [Chicago Tribune](#) (12/29, 2.25M) reports that the FBI is offering a \$1,000 reward for information leading to the arrest of a suspect who robbed the MB Financial bank branch in South Chicago. According to [WLS-TV Chicago](#) (12/30, 399K), the suspect is a black woman "with a small build and medium complexion" between 5-foot '1 and '3-inches, and was last seen wearing sunglasses and a black coat. The [Chicago Sun-Times](#) (12/29, Czaja, 862K) notes that the FBI has warned the suspect "should be considered armed and dangerous."

**Three More Jewish Cult Members Arrested In NY Kidnapping.** The [Washington Post](#) (12/28, 13.51M) reports that three more alleged leaders of the extremist Jewish cult Lev Tahor in Guatemala – Nachman Helbrans, Mayer Rosner, and Jacob Rosner – have joined Aaron Rosner in being arrested on charges of kidnapping 14-year-old Yante Teller and 12-year-old Chaim Teller from their home in upstate New York on December 8th. According to [Newsweek](#) (12/29, Porter, 2.02M), Helbrans – the mother's brother and the new leader of the cult – was witnessed with the Tellers at the Pennsylvania airport outside Scranton on surveillance footage "wearing modern clothing inconsistent with the clothing typically worn by members of Lev Tahor." [Fox News](#) (12/29, Mikelionis, 15.99M) says that the children were located on Friday in the town of Tenango del Aire in Mexico, and authorities intend to return them to their mother in the US soon. The [New York Daily News](#) (12/28, 2.63M) also reported on this development.

The [Middletown \(NY\) Times Herald-Record](#) (12/28, Yakin, 152K) reports that the FBI's Hudson Valley Safe Streets Task Force was one of many law enforcement agencies to be involved in the investigation.

**FBI Joins Search For Missing 10-Year-Old Boy In DC.** [WTTG-TV](#) Washington (12/29, 57K) reports that the FBI has joined Washington DC police in searching for Malachi Hooks, a 10-year-old boy who was last seen on Friday in Southeast. According to [WJLA-TV](#) Washington (12/29, DiGangi, 216K), Hooks is described as being "black with a light brown complexion" and having black hair and brown eyes. Weighing 124 pounds and being 5'3" tall, he was reportedly last seen wearing a gray sweatshirt, gray sweatpants, a black coat, and gray New Balance Shoes. On account of his age, the FBI's Child Exploitation and Human Trafficking Force is involved in the investigation.

**Tennessee Federal Jury Indicts Four In Alleged Drug Distribution Conspiracy.** The [Rogersville \(TN\) Review](#) (12/28, 16K) reports that a federal grand jury in Knoxville has indicted Gregory "G-Money" Lewis, Keontae "Smoke" Jones, Deontae "Tae" Buford, and Lejuan "Lay" Dawkins in a drug distribution conspiracy for the intention to "distribute one kilogram or more of a mixture or substance containing a detectable amount of heroin" in the Eastern District of Tennessee. The FBI was involved in the investigation and collaborated with a number of law enforcement agencies to seize evidence.

**North Carolina Court To Review Murder Convictions In Man's Beating.** The [Houston Chronicle](#) (12/29, 1.61M) reports that the North Carolina Court of Appeals will hold a hearing on January 31st for Thomas Martens and Molly Corbett, a father and daughter convicted of second-degree murder in 2017 for beating the woman's husband – Jason Corbett – to death, to challenge their convictions as self-defense. Martens was a former FBI agent.

**Law Enforcement Investigates Bank Robbery In California.** The [Santa Clarita Valley \(CA\) Signal](#) (12/28, Lunetta, 11K) reports that Santa Clarita authorities are investigating the robbery of a Logix Bank on Friday in Saugus in which a

male suspect handed a note claiming he was armed to a teller and demanded money. Upon receiving it, he fled on foot, and authorities are assessing the situation. Due to a local agreement with the FBI, the Los Angeles Sheriff's Department Major Crimes Bureau has taken the lead on the investigation with FBI supervision.

**Law Enforcement Illnesses Tied To New York Apartment Raid.** The [Niagara \(NY\) Gazette](#) (12/28, Gambini, 21K) reports that law enforcement officials have now identified 21 people as of Friday who have fallen sick with "flu-like" symptoms after participating in a search of a Packard Court apartment in Niagara Falls, New York on December 14th. Those who became ill were largely federal authorities who had direct contact with the suspect, Jeffery Richards, an alleged drug trafficker. Public Affairs Director Maureen Dempsey of the FBI's Buffalo field office has reported that "none of the federal agents involved required hospitalization."

**Maine Subject Of FBI Manhunt To Begin Trial January 7th.** The [York County \(ME\) Journal-Tribune](#) (12/29, Pierce, 25K) reports that the trial of Joshua Weldon, a Springvale resident charged with conspiracy to distribute fentanyl and who was later the subject of a FBI manhunt in November, will begin its jury selection in federal court on January 7th. After being arrested by the FBI on August 13th, Weldon failed to fulfill his release terms from custody and evaded law enforcement before being arrested again on November 16th. The FBI's Southern Maine Gang Task Force was involved in the investigation.

**Connecticut Man Arrested After Shooting.** The [Hartford \(CT\) Courant](#) (12/31, Owens, 528K) reports that Abdul-Hakim Ali, a man accused of murder, first-degree assault, and criminal possession of a firearm, was arrested by Hartford detectives on Thursday after a shooting that left one dead and another wounded. The FBI was involved in the investigation.

**Former FBI Agent Remains Haunted Years After Fugitive Killed Own Family.** The [Houston Chronicle](#) (12/28, 1.61M) says that former FBI agent Henry Schlumpf remains "haunted" nearly two decades after negotiating with Timothy Blackburn, the man behind Nevada's largest bank heist in history in 1998, because he ultimately killed himself and his family on August 29th, 1999, after a Las Vegas police officer accidentally fired his shotgun while guarding the squared off perimeter. Schlumpf and the FBI at large were heavily involved in the investigation into Blackburn's heist and his role as a fugitive after escaping prison with his wife.

**Parents Of Alleged Hate Crime Victim In California Encourage Acts Of Kindness.** [ABC News](#) (12/30, Shapiro, 2.7M) reports that a year after Blaze Bernstein, a gay Jewish 19-year-old, was killed in early 2018 in an alleged hate crime against his sexual orientation, his parents have since sought to sponsor a campaign that encourages acts of kindness. This comes in light of recent FBI data, which states that hate crimes against sexual orientation in 2017 increased 5 percent from 2016, and hate crimes overall increased by 17 percent.

**Wyden Calls For Action In Criminal Case Involving Saudi National Who Fled The Country.** [ABC World News Tonight](#) (12/29, story 7, 2:00, Karl, 6M) correspondent Stephanie Ramos reported Sen. Ron Wyden (D-OR) is asking the Administration to take action over a hit-and-run case involving Saudi national Abdulrahman Noorah, an exchange student to the US who "fled the country before his trial for allegedly killing a teen girl" in 2016. Noorah's passport was confiscated and he was put on house arrest as he awaited trial "after the Saudi government reportedly paid a portion of his bond," but in 2017 "Noorah cut off his ankle monitor bracelet" and was seen by surveillance entering a black SUV. Citing [The Oregonian](#), Ramos said federal investigators "believe Noorah left the US in a private plane with an illegal passport headed to Saudi Arabia with the help of Saudi officials." In a letter to the Administration, Wyden wrote, "These are shocking claims in any event, but with the barbaric murder of US resident Jamal Khashoggi, they suggest a brazen pattern of disregard for the law and abuse of diplomatic privileges."

The [Washington Post](#) (12/29, Rosenberg, 13.51M) says the "unusual case has drawn wide attention since it was reported by the Oregonian this week," in large part because it comes amid "simmering international anger" over Khashoggi's killing. If the "Saudi connection is proved" in Noorah's case, the Post says, the incident "would be another illustration of the impunity with which Saudi Arabia seems to act around the world."

**Computer Virus Disrupts Tribune Publishing Newspaper Production.** The [AP](#) (12/29) reported a computer virus on Saturday attacked "newspaper printing plants in Los Angeles and at Tribune Publishing newspapers across the country." The [Chicago Tribune](#) (12/29, Channick, 2.25M) reported that Tribune Publishing spokeswoman Marisa Kollias said in a statement, "This issue has affected the timeliness and in some cases the completeness of our printed newspapers. Our websites and mobile applications however, have not been impacted." According to Kollias, "the company is investigating the malware

attack and 'making progress' to resolve issues with its newspaper production." Tribune Publishing also "reported the attack to the FBI on Friday."

[Reuters](#) (12/30) reports that "the cyber attack appeared to originate outside the United States," according to a source. The [Baltimore Sun](#) (12/30, 757K) reports that "the malware has been identified as Ryuk ransomware," according to a source with knowledge of the investigation. The source added that "there was no ransom demand made."

The [AP](#) (12/30) reports that the origins of the cyber attack remained unclear Sunday. Katie Waldman, a spokeswoman for the Department of Homeland Security, said in an email Sunday that the agency was "aware of reports of a potential cyber incident" affecting several news outlets. Waldman said the agency is "working with our government and industry partners to better understand the situation."

[Newsweek](#) (12/30, 2.02M) reports that "according to a report released over the summer by cyber threat intelligence company Check Point Research, Ryuk malware was first detected earlier in the year, and had hit three large organizations in the U.S. and outside the country." The report "links the malware to the North Korean APT Lazarus Group, which has launched a series of high-profile cyber attacks globally."

Meanwhile, the [Huffington Post](#) (12/30, Russo, 2.63M) reports that "among the affected newspapers were the Baltimore Sun, the Chicago Tribune and the San Diego Union-Tribune as well as the New York Times' and the Wall Street Journal's West Coast editions." [TIME](#) (12/30, 18.79M) reports that "the Saturday edition of the Chicago Tribune was published without paid death notices and classified ads, according to the newspaper." The malware also disrupted "operations at the South Florida Sun Sentinel, temporarily shutting down newspaper production and impacting phone lines, causing already confused subscribers to be incorrectly told that the numbers they were calling were not in service, the newspaper later reported."

The [Wall Street Journal](#) (12/30, Mullin, McMillan, Subscription Publication, 6.23M) reports that newspapers were delivered on schedule across the U.S. on Sunday, a day after the cyberattack. However the [Chicago Tribune](#) (12/30, Channick, 2.25M) reports that "the Chicago Tribune and other Tribune Publishing newspapers on Sunday continued to experience issues associated with a malware attack, and some content likely will be missing from Monday's papers, the Chicago-based company said."

In a piece for [Forbes](#) (12/30, 9.79M), Davey Winder says that "the nature of this attack, targeting the printing and distribution processes of major newspapers, reveals that it was designed to disrupt rather than steal data." In his view, it seems "likely that this was a money-making criminal enterprise rather than a politically-motivated state action." However, "it's too early to know for sure, of course, and North Korea is well known within cybersecurity circles for using malware attacks as a wealth generating exercise rather than for industrial espionage."

**San Diego School District Suffers Cyberattack.** The [Washington Post](#) (12/28, Strauss, 13.51M) reported that "hackers hit the San Diego Unified School District's computer system and obtained access to a file that had detailed personal data on more than 500,000 students going back a decade, authorities said." The Post said that the district acknowledged that "the data potentially includes Social Security numbers, health and discipline information, addresses, and phone numbers." The Post added that "the breach is believed to have started in January and did not end until it was discovered in October, when school system personnel began investigating multiple phishing emails, according to a letter sent last week to school district families."

**FTC Under Fire For Failing To Police Tech Companies.** The [New York Times](#) (12/30, Confessore, Kang, 17.59M) reports the Federal Trade Commission is "under growing attack for what critics say is a systemic failure to police Silicon Valley's giants and their enormous appetite for personal data." The agency "serves as the country's de facto privacy regulator, relying on more limited rules against deceptive trade practices to investigate Google, Twitter and other tech firms accused of misleading people about how their information is used." However, many in Washington say "that as evidence of abuses has piled up against tech companies, the F.T.C. has been too cautious."

**Democrats Push To Revive Office Of Technology Assessment.** [Politico](#) (12/29, Scola, 4.04M) reports Democrats in the House are pushing to restore the Office of Technology Assessment, which was abolished by then-Speaker Newt Gingrich in the 1990s. Advocates say bringing back the office "would be one way to help Congress get a grip on the complex topics it is trying to tackle, ranging from digital privacy, encryption and quantum computing to online election interference and allegations of social media political bias." The push has "gained traction among both mainstream GOP lawmakers and the party's libertarian wing."

**Congress To Set Sights On Social Media Companies, Data Encryption.** [Fox News](#) (12/28, 15.99M) reports that lawmakers are targeting large social media companies and data encryption next year. Democrats want social media sites to clamp down on "fake news faster than they did in 2016," while Republicans want companies to be held accountable for their perceived anti-conservative bias. Meanwhile, Republicans want legislation to force tech companies to decrypt data when "national security is at stake." On the other hand, Democrats are more concerned about protecting privacy rights.

**FCC Probes Nationwide CenturyLink Outage, 911 Failures.** The [AP](#) (12/28, Ridler) reported and federal officials and Washington state regulators "said Friday that they have started investigations into a nationwide CenturyLink internet outage that has disrupted 911 service." The Federal Communications Commission's Public Safety and Homeland Security Bureau will "investigate the cause and effect of the outage." The [Wall Street Journal](#) (12/28, Malas, Krouse, Subscription Publication, 6.23M) reports, FCC Chairman Ajit Pai in a statement Friday said the outage is "completely unacceptable, and its breadth and duration are particularly troubling." A CenturyLink spokeswoman said the company will offer full cooperation with any investigation. [Reuters](#) (12/28) reports that Pai said the investigation will "include an examination of the effect that CenturyLink's outage appears to have had on other providers' 911 services."

**European Commission Offering Almost \$1M In Bug Bounties On Open Source Software.** In a piece for [Forbes](#) (12/30, Guerrini, 9.79M), contributor Federico Guerrini writes that the European Commission is offering €851,000 (\$973,000) in prizes for ethical hackers "to discover security flaws in some of the most popular free and open source software around." The 15 "bug bounties" will be offered for popular programs "the EU institutions rely on," including "7-zip, Apache Tomcat, Drupal, Filezilla, VLC, KeePass, Notepad++," with "rewards ranging from €25,000 to €90,000 (\$28,600 to \$103,000)."

**IRS Wants Social Media Tool To Help Find Clues On Tax Cheats.** The [Miami Herald](#) (12/28, 658K) reports that the IRS is "looking for new ways to catch suspected tax cheats over social media." The IRS "wants a new tool to help it check public social media feeds and websites for details on people already suspected of not complying with the tax code, the tax-collecting agency said in a Dec. 18 request for information from vendors." The agency "said it doesn't want to comb through every taxpayer's social media — just those they're already investigating, according to the request for information."

**USA Today Highlights 2018 Cybersecurity Threats.** In an overview of cybersecurity in 2018, [USA Today](#) (12/28, Snider, 12.05M) reports that "billions of people were affected by data breaches and cyberattacks in 2018 — 765 million in the months of April, May and June alone — with losses surpassing tens of millions of dollars, according to global digital security firm Positive Technologies." The article adds that "cyberattacks increased 32 percent in the first three months of the year and 47 percent during the April-June period, compared to the same periods in 2017, according to the firm, which was founded in 2002." Meanwhile, "as consumers grow more accustomed to breaches being revealed regularly," the article notes that "several breaches in 2018 were among the largest of all time."

**Personal Information Of North Korean Defectors Stolen After Hackers Hit Resettling Agency.** [CNN](#) (12/28, Kwon, 82.81M) reported that the personal data of "almost 1,000 North Korean defectors has been stolen after hackers targeted an agency which helped them resettle in South Korea." Officials on Friday said "that a computer belonging to the Gyeongbuk Hana Center was 'infected with malicious code,' enabling hackers to access the information — including names, birth dates, and addresses — of 997 defectors." A Unification Ministry spokesman told CNN, "Currently no harm or damage has been observed due to the leak. We have been contacting each defector (to brief them)."

**Blue Cross Informing 15K Members Of Potential Data Breach.** The [Detroit News](#) (12/28, 521K) reports, "Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan is informing nearly 15,000 customers about a potential leak of some of their private information, officials said Friday." According to officials with the company, "the notification is a precaution and there is no evidence any of the information has been accessed by an unauthorized person." Officials said the data was "on a laptop used by an employee of a vendor contracted by a Blue Cross Blue Shield subsidiary that was stolen."

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