

FBI PUBLIC AFFAIRS – DIRECTOR’S AM NEWS BRIEFING

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Wray Discusses Threats To 2020 Election Security At House Committee Hearing. [ExecutiveGov](#)

(10/31, Edwards) reports, "FBI Director Christopher Wray said he expects threat actors from countries like Russia and China to cause possible interference in the U.S. presidential elections in 2020, The Hill reported Wednesday. 'Some of the things that the Russians have tried in other countries we expect them to try to do here as well, it's pretty common to test it out in other jurisdictions, thankfully we don't have elections every year, so that gives us a little bit of time to plan ahead,' Wray said Wednesday in his testimony before the House Homeland Security Committee." Wray "noted that China, North Korea and Iran are 'clearly interested in engaging in malign foreign influence' through disinformation efforts via social media and other activities in an attempt to interfere in the elections. 'They all have different ways of going about it, but they are all taking pages out of each others' playbooks, and as we project forward that is something that we have to be vigilant about,' Wray said of the three countries."

Wray Warns That Social Media, Encryption Fuel Domestic Terrorism. The [Daily Mail \(UK\)](#) (10/31, 5.27M) reports, "The FBI has warned that social media and encrypted messaging services are helping home-grown terrorists and revealed they are responsible for fatalities than international counterparts." Director Wray "testified Wednesday at the House Homeland Security Committee hearing in Washington DC that the death of ISIS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi leaves a vacuum that will be quickly filled." According to the Daily Mail, "Asked about putting European white nationalist and neo-Nazi groups in a Foreign Terror Organization categorization, Wray said it could help but many are self-radicalized." The Daily Mail adds, "The rapid development of technology has helped boost lone terrorists in what he called 'the biggest threat we face here'. 'Terrorism today moves at the speed of social media,' he added." Wray "added that online communication 'between U.S.-based neo Nazis and their overseas analogues' in most cases doesn't lead to travel abroad to train with terrorists. 'They're not working together but they're inspired by each other,' he warned."

FBI Probing More Than 2,000 Cases Tied To Foreign Terrorist Organizations. [Voice of America](#) (10/31, Farivar, 48K) reports, "The FBI says it is investigating more than 2,000 cases tied to groups designated by the United States as foreign terrorist organizations, a figure that reflects the persistent threat posed by outfits such as al-Qaida and Hezbollah." VOA adds, "There are currently 68 individual groups on the U.S. State Department's list of foreign terrorist organizations, the vast majority jihadi outfits such as al-Qaida. The designation allows the U.S. to freeze the groups' and their members' assets and investigate their activities." According to VOA, "The FBI's renewed focus on foreign terrorist organizations and their members partly reflects the quiet resurgence in recent years of al-Qaida, said Seamus Hughes, deputy director of the Program on Extremism at George Washington University. 'While the primary focus was ISIS the last few years, al-Qaida used that time to bide their time and build up a network,' Hughes said. 'And so, these cases are still out there, and they're going to have to look at them. It's not just ISIS – there are al-Qaida, its affiliates, and then you have groups like Hezbollah.'"

McCabe Flatly Refuses To Discuss FBI Verification Of The Steele Dossier. The [Daily Caller](#) (10/31, 716K) reports former FBI Deputy Director Andrew McCabe "flatly refused to discuss what parts of the Steele dossier FBI investigators verified before using the document to spy on Carter Page." McCabe was pressed "about the dossier during an event the Hayden Center hosted." McCabe and other FBI officials "have defended the bureau's use of the dossier in the investigation of the Trump campaign, but they have largely avoided provided specifics about the steps they took to investigate Steele's allegations." McCabe, a CNN analyst, "appeared on a panel with former CIA officials John Brennan, John McLaughlin and Michael Morell to discuss the intelligence community's role in the 2020 election."

McCabe, Brennan See No Issue With Durham Inquiry. The [Washington Examiner](#) (10/31, Yilek, 448K) reports, "Two of the people believed to be at the center of a criminal investigation into the origins of the Trump-Russia investigation defended that investigation's legitimacy." Ex-FBI Deputy Director Andrew McCabe said at a Wednesday event, "There is nothing wrong with, especially a new attorney general, coming in at the conclusion of a tumultuous, high-profile, controversial case and asking questions about how that all began and what was the factual predication that led to the initiation of that investigation and how was it conducted." Ex-CIA Director John Brennan "said investigators working with U.S. Attorney John Durham, who is leading the investigation, will 'try to ensure that this is done appropriately.'"

Sen. Johnson Seeks Clinton-Obama Emails.

[Fox News](#)

(10/31, Re, 27.59M) reports Senate

Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee Chairman Ron Johnson on Thursday "formally sought 'all email communications' between Hillary Clinton and former President Obama, saying the Justice Department was blocking their release – even though they could shed light on whether the former secretary of state discussed sensitive matters on her unsecured personal email system while she was overseas." In a letter to the US National Archives and Records Administration, Johnson "said summer 2016 communications from FBI Special Agent Peter Strzok to FBI Director James Comey's Chief of Staff James Rybicki hinted at the existence of the Clinton-Obama messages that were relevant to the issues raised by her private server."

Conspiracy Theorist Loses Case Against Robert Mueller.

[Courthouse News](#)

(11/1, Rodgers, 2K)

reports a federal judge on Thursday "dismissed a lawsuit against former special counsel Robert Mueller, rejecting a conspiracy theorist's claim that Mueller pressured him to commit perjury during the investigation into Russian interference in the 2016 election." Jerome Corsi claimed Mueller "wanted him to admit that he had served as a point of contact between Roger Stone, a longtime associate of President Trump, and Julian Assange, the founder of WikiLeaks." The opinion issued Thursday by Senior US District Judge Ellen Huvelle "shot down Corsi's claims and noted that his attorneys failed to properly serve Mueller with the lawsuit."

Opinion: Roger Stone's Trial Could Be A Nightmare For Donald Trump.

In a commentary in [Mother Jones](#) (10/31, 881K), Dan Friedman writes, "On November 5, Trump's longtime political adviser Roger Stone...will go on trial in a federal court...facing charges that he lied to Congress about his interactions with WikiLeaks during the 2016 campaign. Stone also was indicted for allegedly obstructing justice and witness-tampering. ... It could answer two bigger questions about the president: Did Trump use (or try to use) Stone as a conduit to WikiLeaks, and did Trump lie to special counsel Robert Mueller? The former might not be illegal; the latter could be a crime." He concludes, "The evidence could also reveal whether Trump lied to the special counsel. Throughout the Russia scandal, Trump has been caught in assorted lies, as he has continuously denied or dismissed the Russian attack that helped him become president."

Bomb Squad Examines Suspicious Car Parked Outside Pittsburgh FBI Office.

The [AP](#) (10/31) reports from Pittsburgh, "Authorities are looking for the owner of a car that was left unoccupied at the back gate of the FBI's office in Pittsburgh." According to the AP, "Guards saw the vehicle pull up around 5 a.m. Thursday and the driver left." FBI spokeswoman Catherine Policicchio "says the city's bomb squad was called in. They examined the vehicle, which had non-threatening words painted on it, with a K-9 and robot." Policicchio "says the area was cleared and at no time was the public in any danger."

The [Pittsburgh Post-Gazette](#) (10/31, Wimbley, 616K) reports, "The FBI and Pittsburgh police spent several hours Thursday morning investigating a suspicious vehicle that was left parked outside the FBI's South Side office building." Policicchio "said an individual drove up to the back gate of the East Carson Street building, parked the vehicle and left some time before 5 a.m. Guards who monitor a second gate on another side of the building noticed the vehicle shortly after and notified authorities." The back gate "is usually locked and monitored by security cameras rather than guards, officials said." The Post-Gazette adds, "The Pittsburgh bomb squad and police K-9 were called in to investigate, and at least two robots were brought in to examine any items found in the vehicle. Officials would not comment on what was discovered, although one of the robots pulled out a backpack from the car. 'We take all of these situations very seriously,'" Policicchio said, adding, "We can't let our guard down through any of this. We always have to make sure that we investigate fully."

The [Pittsburgh Tribune-Review](#) (10/31, Larussa, Lee, 380K) reports, "Policicchio said that car had non-threatening 'gibberish-type language' written in spray paint on driver's side door." The PT-R adds, "A tweet from Tribune-Review news partner WPXI shows the message that reads, 'RUSSIA PLANTS MICRORADIO DEVICES IN PPLS EARS & CONTROLS THEM USING A SOUND SIMILAR TO A DOG WHISTLE. SUBLIMINAL HYPNOSIS.'" According to the P T-R, Policicchio said, "Shortly after that our guards noticed the car at the back gate and alerted our security professionals and made sure that the proper protocols were filed so that we could get everybody here to figure out what was going on with this vehicle." She "said the FBI is looking for the driver of the car," and "at no point was there a threat to the public, she said. 'There were no initial indications that there was any concern for public safety, but out of an abundance of precaution we did alert the Propel schools and the Center for Victim Services here next to us as well as the Steelers facility,' she said. 'All of them cooperated and as far as we know everything for them resumed normally at their normal hour.'"

[KDKA-TV](#)

Pittsburgh (10/31, 144K), [WTAE-TV](#) Pittsburgh (10/31, Matoney, 256K) and [WPXI-TV](#) Pittsburgh

(10/31, 34K) also report on their websites.

NCTC Director Says ISIS Will Replace Slain Leader. The [AP](#) (10/31) reports a US counterterrorism official "said Wednesday he expects a new Islamic State leader to emerge after the death of Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi and warned that the extremist group's planning of major attacks probably will go on as before." Russell Travers, the acting director of the National Counterterrorism Center, said at a congressional hearing on global threats, "The ideology continues, the resonance continues, and that is a strategic concern for us." Travers "said the killing of ISIS leader al-Baghdadi by US forces in Syria on Saturday was a 'significant' development." But he "said that ISIS, which once controlled a large swath of Iraq and Syria, has a 'deep bench' of figures who could replace al-Baghdadi."

ISIS Names New Leader and Spokesperson In First Message Since US Operations. [Newsweek](#) (10/31, 1.53M) reports the Islamic State militant group (ISIS) has released "its first official public message since the back-to-back US operations in Syria that killed the group's leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi and spokesperson Abu al-Hassan al-Muhajir." The official ISIS media outlet Al-Furqan released Thursday "a new seven-and-a-half-minute audio message that was widely distributed online and attributed to new ISIS spokesperson Abu Hamza al-Qurashi." The individual warned that "despite the setback of losing its leadership, ISIS would continue to wage war on those considered to be outside of its ultraconservative Islamist vision." The man identified as Qurashi "also identified Baghdadi's successor as Abu Ibrahim al-Hashimi al-Qurayshi." The name suggests that, like Baghdadi, Qurayshi "claimed lineage to Ahl al-Bayt, the family of the Islamic Prophet Mohammed." [NPR](#) (10/31, Booker, 3.12M) reports that, "in the announcement, both Baghdadi and former ISIS spokesman Abu al-Hassan al-Muhajir were praised as 'martyrs.'"

What The Death Of Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi Says About The War That Killed Him. [TIME](#) (10/31, 18.47M) reports the death of Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi "may not change the world. Nevertheless, how it came about says a fair amount about the world he has departed." According to Time, "The first link begins with the government of Iraq, which in September arrested one of al-Baghdadi's wives and a courier. Intelligence pointed to Syria, where the CIA was already working with the Kurdish militia." Their involvement "underscores that this is a global fight: the US is not going it alone." The people actually prosecuting the war on terror "are overwhelmingly local and Muslim." Al-Baghdadi's trail "led east." He appeared to have gone "to ground not near the lush Euphrates valley where ISIS fighters made their last stand in Syria, but in Idlib province, the last large section of Syria still controlled by rebel militias, which in turn are dominated by an affiliate of al-Qaeda."

Judge Rules Searches Of Ex-CIA Employee's Home And Phones Are Okay. The [AP](#) (10/31) reports a judge in New York "says investigators properly carried out searches that led to espionage charges against a former CIA employee." US District Judge Paul Crotty ruled Thursday "in the case against Joshua Schulte." Schulte's lawyers had urged Crotty "to suppress the evidence, including electronic devices, saying the government misrepresented numerous important facts in getting search warrants." Schulte, a CIA computer engineer from 2010 to November 2016, "has pleaded not guilty to charges that he leaked classified information." Crotty noted there "were several incorrect factual statements in a government affidavit but not enough to negate probable cause."

Former Deputy CIA Director Morell Says US Partners Or Allies Could Interfere In Our Elections. The [Washington Examiner](#) (10/31, Yilek, 448K) reports Michael Morell "speculated that American partners or allies could be interfering in US elections." Morell, who served as acting CIA director twice, "spoke at a '2020 Vision' panel sponsored by George Mason University at the National Press Club on Wednesday evening, pointing to then-Director of National Intelligence Dan Coats's testimony to the Senate Intelligence Committee in January." Coats told lawmakers that "China, Russia, North Korea, and Iran...were 'advancing their cyber capabilities' as they try to disrupt and influence the populations of other countries." Morell "said Wednesday night that he thinks 'and others' could refer to American allies."

De Blasio Says "Something Doesn't Fit" About Epstein's Death. The [New York Post](#) (10/31, Marsh, 4.57M) reports that New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio said during a press conference Thursday that "something doesn't fit" concerning Jeffrey Epstein's death, "contradicting the city's own medical examiner whose office determined the serial pedophile committed suicide." De Blasio said, "I still stand by something doesn't fit here. ... It just doesn't make sense that the highest profile prisoner in America, you know, someone forgot to guard him. ... I want to understand - I think everyone wants to understand what really happened. I don't know what the nature of the death was, I just know it should never have happened and we still don't have good answer."

Missing Virginia Girl Returns Home. [ABC World News Tonight](#) (10/31, story 10, 0:15, Muir, 6.42M) reports, "Police finding that missing 14-year-old girl from Virginia. Isabel Hicks has been reunited with her family tonight. Found

about 40 miles north of Richmond. Thirty-four-year-old Bruce Lynch, known to the family, is under arrest after a police chase. Authorities say she appears unharmed."

The [Charlottesville \(VA\) Daily Progress](#) (10/31, McKenzie, 94K) reports from Louisa, Virginia, "Media coverage and alert citizens led to a Wednesday night tip that ended with the safe recovery of a Louisa County girl who authorities say was abducted Oct. 21 by a friend of her family, law enforcement officials said Thursday." Isabel Shae Hicks, 14, of Bumpass, "now is safe with family and recovering from the nine-day ordeal, Louisa sheriff's officials said during a press conference." Bruce William Lynch Jr., 34, also of Bumpass, "is being held at the Central Virginia Regional Jail in Orange on abduction charges, police said. A bond hearing has yet to be scheduled and other charges could be filed as the investigation continues, according to authorities." According to the Daily Progress, "Sheriff's Maj. Donald Lowe said a tip from a Caroline County resident who saw Hicks resulted in a police chase Wednesday evening, after which Lynch was arrested and Hicks returned to her family."

[Fox News](#) (10/31, Sorace, 27.59M) reports, "Hicks had disappeared from her home in Bumpass at around 1 a.m. on Oct. 21. The FBI joined the investigation the following day. Investigators issued an Amber Alert on Oct. 25 when they learned Lynch possessed a gun and had 'recent suicidal ideations.'"

[WRIC-TV](#) Richmond, VA (10/31, 36K) reports, "The Central Virginia community felt a sense of relief following the news that" Hicks "returned home safely Wednesday," but "questions still linger in the minds of many as the investigation transitions from a missing person's case to a criminal investigation involving a minor."

Ohio Raid Nets More Than 40 Pounds Of Fentanyl. [USA Today](#) (10/31, Stanglin, 10.31M) reports federal, state, and local authorities say "a raid by law enforcement agencies in southwest Ohio has seized more than 40 pounds of fentanyl." Vance Callender, Homeland Security Investigations special agent in charge for Michigan and Ohio, said, "Twenty-kilograms (44 pounds) of fentanyl is enough to kill the entire population of Ohio, many times over." According to authorities, "officers also arrested three people and seized 1,500 grams of suspected methamphetamine, 500 grams of suspected heroin, several firearms and over \$30,000."

[CNN](#) (10/31, Kim, 83.16M) reports, "The multimillion-dollar seizure 'clearly shows the enormity of the opioid problem in this area,' FBI Acting Special Agent in Charge Joseph M. Deters said. 'Law enforcement will continue to work aggressively to address the illegal drug supply, but there is also a continuing need to address demand as well.'"

Nineteen Arrested For Trying To Lure Children For Sex. [NJ News](#) (10/31, Nelson, 1.72M) reports, "Cops have arrested 19 men who allegedly tried to lure children for sex, officials announced Thursday." NJ News adds, "The alleged predators chatted online or on apps with officers posing as underage boys and girls. The men arranged to meet the 'kids' at two homes, and were arrested when they arrived." According to NJ News, "The arrests began Oct. 23 and ended Monday as part of a sting called 'Operation Open Door.' The undercover officers who posed as 12, 13 or 14-year-olds were part of the state's Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force, and state Attorney General Gurbir Grewal said police and prosecutors all over New Jersey had assisted, as well as the Federal Bureau of Investigation."

[My Central Jersey](#) (10/31, Deak, 24K) reports, "Like a scene from television's 'To Catch a Predator,' the suspects were arrested after highly trained undercover investigators, posing as children, 12 to 14 years old, on the internet, engaged in conversations about sex and made arrangements to meet for sex." According to MCJ, "Most of the suspects were arrested when they arrived at one of two residences in the county, where they expected to find their victims home alone."

The [Burlington County \(NJ\) Times](#) (10/31, Woolston, 64K) reports, "A Mount Holly man is one of 19 alleged child predators recently arrested in 'Operation Open Door,' an undercover multi-agency operation that targeted individuals using social media to lure underage girls and boys for sexual activity, authorities said Thursday." Asif Iqbal, 53, "was charged with second-degree attempted promotion of prostitution of a child, second-degree luring, second-degree attempted sexual assault, and third-degree attempted endangering the welfare of a child." Authorities "allege Iqbal, a business owner, attempted to meet a 14-year-old minor for sex."

[Tap Into New Jersey](#) (10/31, O'Donnell) reports, "Two New Brunswick men have been arrested in an undercover operation that focused on alleged predators who were using social media to lure children for sex, according to Somerset County Prosecutor Michael Robertson." New Jersey Attorney General Gurbir Grewal and Robertson "made the announcement at the Somerset County Prosecutor's Office today with Department of Criminal Justice Director Veronica Allende, Lieutenant Colonel Fritz Frage of the New Jersey State Police, FBI Newark Special Agent in Charge Gregory W. Ehrie and leaders and representatives of the other participating agencies." Rafael Martinez-Lezama, 37, of New Brunswick, "has been charged with second degree luring and third degree attempted endangering the welfare of a child, according to the Somerset County Prosecutor's Office."

[Tap Into New Jersey](#) (10/31, Hirsch) reports, "This is the third multi-agency undercover operation executed this year under the auspices of the New Jersey Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force, according to Grewal, who emphasized that the agency works non-stop to deter online predators. Nearly 60 predators have now been arrested as a result of the ICAC's efforts this year. The other stings were conducted in Bergen and Ocean counties." [12-TV New Jersey](#) (10/31, 17K) also reports on its website.

Federal Prosecutors File New Charges In UAW Corruption Probe. [Reuters](#) (10/31, Klayman, Carey) reports from Detroit, "A United Auto Workers official was charged on Thursday with embezzling hundreds of thousands of dollars in an alleged scheme that a person familiar with the case said involved union President Gary Jones." Edward Robinson, "working with several unnamed UAW officials, was charged with conspiracy to embezzle union funds and conspiracy to defraud the United States for stealing more than \$1.5 million from the UAW from 2010 to about September 2019, according to documents filed in the U.S. District Court in Detroit. 'We take any allegation or claim about the misuse of union resources very seriously. The UAW is grounded in the principle of putting our members first, and that belief has never wavered,' the UAW said in a statement." The FBI "has been conducting a wide-ranging investigation into illegal payoffs to UAW officials by FCA and the union had hoped to put the federal probe behind it by electing Jones, a former regional director for the union, as president in 2018."

Puerto Rico Official Resigns Amid FBI Probe. The [AP](#) (10/31) reports from San Juan, Puerto Rico, "The secretary of Puerto Rico's Department of Natural Resources is stepping down just days after announcing that her office is the target of an FBI investigation." According to the AP, Puerto Rico's governor "said Thursday that she accepted the upcoming resignation of Tania Vázquez Rivera." The AP adds, "Vázquez issued a statement on Monday confirming that FBI agents visited the department earlier this month and that her office recently submitted documents following an FBI subpoena." The resignation "comes days after the governor's chief of staff said she met Vázquez and demanded additional information tied to contracts issued after Hurricane Maria hit Puerto Rico in September 2017."

Guam Mayor To Remain In Prison. The [Guam Daily Post](#) (10/31, Nick Delgado |, Post) reports that according to District Court of Guam Chief Judge Frances Tydingco-Gatewood, Yona Mayor Jesse Blass will "remain in prison but will be remanded over to the custody of the Attorney General." FBI special agent Rafael Fernandez was called to testify in Blass' trial on Tuesday.

Madoff Trustee Asks Supreme Court To Let Clawback Ruling Stand. In a paywall-protected article, [Law360](#) (10/31, Subscription Publication, 8K) reports, "The trustee for Bernie Madoff's fraudulent investment firm has asked the U.S. Supreme Court to pass on an appeal of a Second Circuit decision that he can claw back billions in Ponzi scheme proceeds transferred between foreign parties." According to Law360, "In briefs filed Wednesday, trustee Irving Picard and the federal Securities Investor Protection Corporation – which had applied to liquidate Madoff's firm and had been a party to the lower court cases – urged the court to reject a certiorari petition asking it to take up the case, saying the Second Circuit got it right, and arguments that the decision contradicts other high court" rulings.

Two Men Plead Guilty In Uber, Lynda.com Hacks. The [New York \(NY\) Times](#) (10/30, Isaac, 18.61M) reports, "Two men pleaded guilty in federal court in San Jose, Calif., to charges of computer hacking and an extortion conspiracy on Wednesday." Brandon Glove of Florida resident and Vasile Mereacre of Canada "said that they gained access in 2016 to the private databases of Uber and Lynda.com. They said they were able to enter by using the credentials of the Amazon Web Services accounts belonging to Uber and Lynda.com employees, and then gain access to the Amazon servers that stored data for those companies."

[CNET News](#) (10/30, Al-Heeti, 1.99M) reports the men "said they gave credentials for Uber's Amazon Web Services account to a 'technically proficient hacker' who found archive files with 57 million Uber user records made up of customer and driver data."

[Reuters](#) (10/30) reports Glove and Mereacre "downloaded 57 million Uber user records, including customer and driver data, from Amazon.com Inc's cloud platform, in November 2016, the Justice Department said. Uber soon agreed to pay \$100,000 in bitcoin through a third party and demanded they sign confidentiality agreements." The following month, the men "demanded money from LinkedIn's Lynda.com for a promise to delete more than 90,000 records, but stopped communicating in January as the company sought to identify them."

The [AP](#) (10/30) reports, "U.S. Attorney David Anderson ripped into Uber for not immediately alerting authorities about the loss of so much personal information that could have been used for identity theft and other malicious purposes." Anderson said in a statement, "Companies like Uber are the caretakers, not the owners, of customers' personal information."

[The Register](#) (10/30, Thomson, 9K) reports that as part of their plea deal, "the duo are set to face up to five years in the clink and a fine of \$250,000 apiece. They will be sentenced in March."

[ZDNet](#) (10/30, Cimpanu, 299K) also reports on the story.

Government Officials Around The Globe Targeted For Hacking Through WhatsApp. [Reuters](#)

(10/31, Bing, Satter) reports senior government officials in multiple US-allied countries "were targeted earlier this year with hacking software that used Facebook Inc's WhatsApp to take over users' phones, according to people familiar with the messaging company's investigation." Sources familiar with WhatsApp's internal investigation into the breach "said a 'significant' portion of the known victims are high-profile government and military officials spread across at least 20 countries on five continents." They "said many of the nations are US allies." The hacking of a wider group of officials' smartphones "suggests the WhatsApp cyber intrusion could have broad political and diplomatic consequences." WhatsApp filed a lawsuit on Tuesday "against Israeli hacking tool developer NSO Group." The Facebook-owned software giant "alleges that NSO Group built and sold a hacking platform that exploited a flaw in WhatsApp-owned servers to help clients hack into the cellphones of at least 1,400 users between April 29, 2019, and May 10, 2019."

[BBC News Online \(UK\)](#) (10/31, 1.02M) reports messaging app WhatsApp has "said Indian journalists and activists are among some 1,400 people worldwide who were targeted with Israeli-made spyware." WhatsApp filed a lawsuit "against NSO Group on Wednesday, alleging it was behind cyber-attacks that infected devices in April and May." The Israeli company, which makes software for surveillance, "has strongly disputed the allegations." India has "400 million WhatsApp users, making the country its biggest market." Hackers were able to remotely install surveillance software "on phones and other devices by using a major vulnerability in the messaging app." WhatsApp said in a statement, "We believe this attack targeted at least 100 members of civil society, which is an unmistakable pattern of abuse."

FBI Warns Of Scammers Posing As Law Enforcement. [WTOP-FM](#) Washington (10/31, 385K)

reports, "The phone rings. A law enforcement officer on the other end of the line tells you about an indiscretion you've been involved in and asks you to confirm your identity. The officer then advises you that you're about to be arrested if you don't pay a fine." According to WTOP-FM, "There are three problems with that scenario. Number one: 'No law enforcement official is going to make contact with you over the phone and ask you to provide your Social Security number,' Kevin Vorndran, assistant special agent in charge of the Criminal Branch at the Washington Field Office of the FBI, told WTOP in an interview." WTOP-FM adds, "Secondly, law enforcement is not likely to call you, period, about any kind of criminal matter you're alleged to be involved in, he said," and "third, he said, 'Law enforcement is certainly not going to demand any money, gift cards or something of value be sent for the phone calls from law enforcement to go away.'"

Twitter Says Government Demands For User Data Continue To Rise. [TechCrunch](#) (10/31,

Whittaker, 605K) reports Twitter "says the number of government demands for user data are at a record high." In its latest transparency report covering the six months between January and June, the social media giant "said it received 7,300 demands for user data, up by 6 percent a year earlier, but that the number of accounts affected are down by 25 percent." The company turned over "some account data in just less than half of all cases." US government agencies requested the "most data from the company during the period, filing 2,120 demands for 4,150 accounts – accounting for about one-third of all demands." Japan was trailing behind "with 1,742 demands for 2,445 accounts."

ACLU Sues FBI, DOJ, DEA Over Facial Recognition Records. The [AP](#) (10/31) reports from Boston, "A civil rights group is suing the federal government to release records about its use of facial recognition technology." The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) "and its Massachusetts chapter say they filed the lawsuit in Boston federal court Thursday after law enforcement agencies failed to respond to a January public records request." The ACLU "is seeking policies, contracts, and other records on the government's use of face recognition programs and other biometric identification and tracking technology." The Justice Department, FBI and Drug Enforcement Administration are named in the suit.

The [Washington Post](#) (10/31, Harwell, 14.2M) reports, "ACLU attorneys asked a federal court in Massachusetts to order the agencies to release documents about how the government uses and audits the software, how officials have communicated with companies that provide the software, and what internal guidelines and safeguards regulate its use. 'These technologies have the potential to enable undetectable, persistent, and suspicionless surveillance on an unprecedented scale,' the attorneys

wrote. 'Such surveillance would permit the government to pervasively track people's movements and associations in ways that threaten core constitutional values.'

The [Boston Globe](#) (10/31, 972K) reports, "The lawsuit marks a new chapter in growing resistance to the technology, which has quickly become a far-reaching presence in people's lives, with little to no legislative approval or public debate." According to the [Globe](#), "Federal investigators and local police nationwide routinely use facial-recognition software to look for potential criminal suspects and witnesses, scanning hundreds of millions of Americans' photos, including from state driver's license databases." The [Globe](#) adds, "Government and law enforcement officials have argued the software offers a powerful investigative tool that can more quickly pinpoint dangerous suspects," but "some lawmakers and privacy advocates argue the systems erode protections against government surveillance and unlawful searches by scanning people without their knowledge or consent, and that inaccuracies in the systems could undermine criminal prosecutions, unfairly target people of color, and lead to false arrests."

The [Boston Herald](#) (10/31, Martinez, 410K) reports, "The lawsuit, filed Thursday in the Massachusetts U.S. District Court, states there are 'serious questions' about the technologies' reliability, including accurately identifying people of color. 'These technologies therefore elevate the risk that an innocent person will falsely be associated with criminal activity,' the suit states." The ACLU "is seeking the fulfillment of its January Freedom of Information Act request to the departments, which the ACLU says it has not received a response since February. 'The public urgently needs to know how the federal government is using face surveillance and other remote biometric monitoring systems in Massachusetts and across the nation,' Kade Crockford, a director at the ACLU of Massachusetts, said in a release." [AFP](#) (10/31) and [Digital Trends](#) (10/31, Matyus, 929K) also report.

Trump Surveys Chicago Fundraiser About Clemency For Blagojevich. The [Wall Street Journal](#) (10/31, Bravin, Bykowicz, Subscription Publication, 7.57M) reports that during his Chicago fundraiser earlier this week, President Trump surveyed those in attendance about their support for letting former Illinois Gov. Rod Blagojevich out of prison, according to several people who attended the event. Citing the [Journal](#) report, the [AP](#) (10/31) says Trump "asked for a show of hands" of those who supported clemency for Blagojevich, and "most of the 200 to 300 attendees raised their hands."

Lawmakers Call On Barr To Stop Opposing Encryption. [The Hill](#) (10/31, Rodrigo, 2.98M) reports, "A pair of Democratic lawmakers sent a letter to Attorney General William Barr on Thursday urging him to stop government requests for encryption backdoors, which allow the government to obtain certain user information from tech companies." Sen. Ron Wyden (D-OR) and Rep. Anna Eshoo (D-CA) "argued that the Justice Department's push to limit such encryption 'is not just hypocritical, but it has been repeatedly criticized by cryptographers and other leading cybersecurity experts.' 'We urge you to stop demanding that private companies purposefully weaken their encryption for the false pretense of protecting children,' the lawmakers wrote." Barr "has been an outspoken critic of encryption, which protects messages from surveillance and makes companies that use it unable to access the contents of users' messages."

Trump Blasts "Impeachment Hoax," "Do Nothing Democrats" As House Votes To Advance Process. As the House of Representatives moved toward its first formal vote related to the possible impeachment of President Trump, the President criticized Democrats and the inquiry on Twitter and in two interviews. At 10:57 a.m. the President [tweeted](#), "The Impeachment Hoax is hurting our Stock Market. The Do Nothing Democrats don't care!" About half an hour later, Trump [tweeted](#), "The Greatest Witch Hunt In American History!" (In a fact-check piece, the [AP](#) (10/31, Choe) says Trump's assertion "that Thursday's stock market decline was driven primarily by the impeachment inquiry" is false.)

In an interview with [Leading Britain's Conversation](#) (10/31) hosted by Brexit Party leader Nigel Farage, the President said, "We have the transcript, There was an exact transcript of the meeting and anybody that reads the transcript understands it was a perfect phone call with the Ukrainian President. ... The Democrats are desperate. They're desperate. They have nothing. They've got nothing going. We really call them the 'do nothing Democrats,' and it is really sticking because they are nothing and it's the only way they are going to try and win the election." The [Washington Times](#) (10/31, Boyer, 492K), among other outlets, also cover the interview.

Just before noon, the House voted [232-196](#) to direct "certain committees to continue their ongoing investigations as part of the existing House of Representatives inquiry into whether sufficient grounds exist" for impeachment. That formal action, taken for just the fourth time in US history, led all three broadcast network newscasts. On [ABC World News Tonight](#) (10/31, lead story, 4:35, Muir, 6.42M), Mary Bruce called it "history in the House. ... It's only happened three times before, the House voting on the impeachment inquiry of a sitting President. The vote exposing a bitter party divide – all but two Democrats voting to move forward, confident they have enough evidence to launch public hearings."

Norah O'Donnell said on the [CBS Evening News](#) (10/31, lead story, 3:45, 4.15M), "The impeachment inquiry is entering a new public phase tonight after today's historic vote in the House." CBS' Nancy Cordes: "All but two House Democrats voted for

these new impeachment rules, their party now fully embracing a process that appears all but certain to lead to the drafting of articles of impeachment. ... The vote paves the way for nationally televised impeachment hearings, the first in 21 years." Lester Holt said on [NBC Nightly News](#) (10/31, lead story, 3:25, 5.71M) that the vote "signal[s] growing confidence in the evidence gathered against President Trump so far." NBC's Hallie Jackson said the vote means "made-for-TV testimony could shift public opinion on whether President Trump should be removed from office."

During an 80-minute interview with the [Washington Examiner](#) (10/31, Drucker, 448K) shortly after the vote, Trump said the Democrats' actions could work in his favor. The President said, "It's energized my base like I've never seen before. I think [impeachment is] a very dirty word, it's a word that I can't believe that the do-nothing Democrats are trying to pin on me, and it's a disgrace. And I think it's going to backfire on them." At 6:44 p.m., the President [tweeted](#), "While the Do Nothing Democrats FAIL the American People, and continue the Impeachment Scam, my Administration will continue to deliver REAL RESULTS, as seen over the past month, below!" The tweet contained video of a one-minute Trump reelection campaign ad.

Impeachment Rules Pass On Near-Party Line Vote. The [AP](#) (10/31, Fram, Daly) reports Democrats "swept a rules package for their impeachment probe...through a divided House Thursday, as the chamber's first vote on the investigation highlighted the partisan breach the issue has only deepened." Lawmakers voted 232-196 to approve "the procedures they'll follow as weeks of closed-door interviews with witnesses evolve into public committee hearings and – almost certainly – votes on whether the House should recommend Trump's removal." [USA Today](#) (10/31, Jansen, 10.31M) reports the vote "almost entirely along party lines marked only the fourth time the full House authorized an impeachment inquiry."

The [New York Times](#) (10/31, Fandos, Stolberg, 18.61M) says Democrats "muscled through their resolution over unanimous Republican opposition with only two of their members breaking ranks to vote no. The tally foreshadowed the battle to come as Democrats take their case against the president fully into public view." The [Washington Post](#) (10/31, Demirjian, Bade, Viebeck, 14.2M) reports the "divided House took a critical step forward in its impeachment inquiry" with the vote, which "clear[s] the way for nationally televised hearings in mid-November and ensur[es] Trump's right to participate in the latter stage of the proceedings unless he tries to block witnesses from testifying."

[The Hill](#) (10/31, Marcos, 2.98M) reports House Speaker Pelosi "presided over the chamber during the vote, a step meant to underscore the significance of the moment. During her floor speech, she stood next to a poster of the American flag." The [Washington Times](#) (10/31, Dinan, 492K) says Pelosi "is already falling behind the 1998 GOP in her impeachment push after Thursday's vote to launch an inquiry, where she was unable to win a single Republican's support."

The [AP](#) (10/31, Daly) reports "only two Democrats broke ranks" to oppose the resolution: "Freshman Rep. Jeff Van Drew of New Jersey and 15-term veteran Rep. Collin Peterson of Minnesota complained that the process so far has been overly partisan and is further dividing the country." The [Wall Street Journal](#) (10/31, Andrews, Salama, Subscription Publication, 7.57M) reports both Peterson and Van Drew represent districts Trump won in 2016. [Politico](#) (10/31, Ferris, Bresnahan, 4.29M) calls Van Drew "a vocal impeachment critic." The [Daily Caller](#) (10/31, Davis, 716K) reports independent Rep. Justin Amash, a former Republican, voted in favor of the inquiry.

The [New York Times](#) (10/31, Hulse, 18.61M) says the "stark division" in the vote "made clear that the accelerating impeachment inquiry will continue to be highly partisan as it moves into its more public phase. ... More than a few Republicans have privately expressed qualms in general about Mr. Trump's actions," but "none risked stepping forward during the first significant impeachment floor vote." [NBC News](#) (10/31, Allen, 6.14M) says on its website that the "nasty floor flight" sets the stage for a divisive process.

In a 1,400-word [Bloomberg](#) (10/31, 4.73M) piece headlined "Trump's Presidency On Treacherous New Ground After House Vote," Jordan Fabian writes, "The resolution...does not just lay out a road map for the public phase of the inquiry. It sends a clear signal that a vote to impeach Trump, and a trial in the Senate, is all but inevitable." Trump "may well become the first president to be impeached and then seek re-election. That dynamic presents a novel challenge for the president, as he must work to keep the Republican Party unified not just to prevent his removal from office by the Senate but also at the hands of voters."

Schiff Says Rules "Very Much The Same" As In Nixon, Clinton Impeachments. House Intelligence Chairman Adam Schiff said in an interview with the [CBS Evening News](#) (10/31, story 3, 2:07, O'Donnell, 4.15M), "The rules are very much the same as they were during the Nixon impeachment, during the Clinton impeachment. But, look, all they have to argue is process, and even the President has acknowledged that's a failure. And it's been a failure because we have had over 100 members eligible to participate in the depositions. The Republicans have been given the same amount of time to question witnesses as the Democrats. When we go to open hearings that will be the case, too. The American people will get to see both with the release of the transcripts."

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