

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

**WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 21, 2019 5:00 AM EDT**

**Three Arrested In Domestic Terror Threats Across US On Tuesday.** David Muir opened [ABC World News Tonight](#) (8/20, lead story, 2:30, 6.49M) “with the disturbing new headline, after El Paso and Dayton: tonight, news of three new threats, three new arrests. Authorities say these threats of mass shootings in three separate states. Police in Florida handcuffing this 15-year-old boy with his mother by his side. He is accused of threatening to take his father’s assault-style weapon to school to shoot several other people.” ABC’s Victor Oquendo reported, “In Indianapolis, 38-year-old truck driver Thomas Matthew McVicker was arrested. Authorities say they stopped him less than a week before he planned on attacking a church in Memphis. ... And in Seattle, 35-year-old Eric Lin was arrested for allegedly writing on Facebook that he would ‘kill all Hispanic Hispanics in Miami and other places.’ These three arrests make at least six mass shooting threats in the last few days.”

[NBC Nightly News](#) (8/20, lead story, 2:00, 5.82M) also led with the story, with Lester Holt focusing on the Florida arrest as “a chilling reminder of the edge we all live on, especially police, who, in this era of more frequent mass shootings, find themselves more inclined than ever to take every threat seriously.” NBC’s Pete Williams reported that the 15-year-old issued the threat on a gaming site; his mother says it was just a bad joke. The [CBS Evening News](#) (8/20, story 3, 2:15, O’Donnell, 4M) also reported on the new arrests.

**Man Arrested In Seattle Called For “Extermination” Of All Latinos, FBI Says.** [NBC News](#) (8/20, 6.14M) reports a man “who was arrested in Seattle allegedly called for the “extermination” of all Latinos in Facebook messages where he threatened to also harm and kill a woman in Florida, according to court records.” Eric Lin, 35, “had an initial court hearing on Monday in Seattle federal court over a charge of interstate transmission of threatening communications connected to messages he allegedly sent a woman in Miami, according to court documents.” The FBI “wrote in a criminal complaint against Lin that in late July the FBI received information from the Miami Police Department that a woman had received threatening messages from two Facebook accounts since May.”

The [Seattle Times](#) (8/20, 935K) reports a criminal complaint “alleges he made ‘pro-Hitler and anti-Hispanic statements’ in more than 150 pages of Facebook messages turned over to the FBI’s Joint Terrorism Task Force in Miami by an individual residing there.” Similarly, the [AP](#) (8/20) reports the FBI complaint in Miami “says Lin sent messages via Facebook between May and August to a Hispanic woman he knows, threatening her and her family, expressing support for Adolf Hitler and calling for the extermination of Spanish-speaking people and other ethnic groups.”

The [Baltimore Sun](#) (8/20, 1.33M) reports court records “show 35-year-old Eric Lin had an initial court hearing Monday in Seattle federal court on a charge of interstate transmission of threatening communication.” Lin “has not yet entered a plea.”

[BuzzFeed News](#) (8/20) also reports.

**Lin’s Arrest Latest Example Of Racially Motivated Threats By Domestic Extremists.** Meanwhile, the [New York Times](#) (8/20, Goldman, 18.61M) reports Lin’s arrest “was the latest example in a series of what the authorities say are racially motivated threats and possible attacks by violent domestic extremists that have received renewed attention amid a spate of mass shootings and other violence.” FBI Director Chris Wray is quoted saying last month at a Senate hearing, “Domestic violent extremists collectively pose a steady threat of violence and economic harm to the United States.” The Times adds, “The F.B.I. has said that attacks by racially motivated violent extremists are on the rise and that it is taking the threat seriously while working with state and local law enforcement to thwart attacks.” Wray is also quoted saying, “We have lots and lots of investigations in that space. ... It’s a steady, persistent threat against all those different types of domestic terrorism.”

[BuzzFeed News](#) (8/20) also reports.

**Phoenix Police Must Now Log Gun-Pointing Incidents, Wear Body Cameras.** The [Washington Post](#) (8/20, Horton, 14.2M) reports, “Plagued by the highest number of police shootings in the nation, racist Facebook posts from its officers and a viral video of a family terrified by officers while held at gunpoint, Phoenix has introduced broad changes in an effort to ‘modernize’ its troubled department, the mayor said.” Officers must now “document every time they point weapons at a person...and all officers on patrol will wear body cameras.” Police Chief Jeri Williams said at a news conference, “This will allow us to have a real idea of how many times our officers are able to successfully de-escalate a situation with the potential of deadly force.”

**Dallas Mayor Launches Violent Crime Task Force.** The [Washington Times](#) (8/20, Vogt, 492K) reports Dallas Mayor Eric Johnson has announced the creation of “a task force to combat a recent uptick in violent crime without the use of law

enforcement. Citing a 9-year-old girl killed last week, Mr. Johnson said, "We owe it to Brandoniya to do everything we can to prevent violent crime in our communities."

### **FBI Arrests Florida Truck Driver Days Before He Planned To "Shoot Up" Church In Tennessee.**

[USA Today](#) (8/20, Ryckaert, 10.31M) reports federal authorities "say they arrested a Florida truck driver in Indianapolis, just days before he planned to shoot people at a church in Tennessee." Thomas Matthew McVicker, 38, was "planning to 'shoot up' a church in Memphis, Tennessee, on Thursday, according to a probable cause affidavit filed Friday in the U.S. District Court of Southern Alabama." Before he "could act on his threats, the FBI arrested McVicker in Indianapolis on Monday, according to court records." On Aug. 14, McVicker "told a witness over the phone that he was going to 'shoot up' a church in Memphis." FBI Special Agent Ketrick Kelley wrote in an affidavit, "(The witness) stated that McVicker was speaking in a frantic manner and told her that he intended to take his knife and slit the pastor's throat."

[Reuters](#) (8/20) reports McVicker, "who is from Punta Gorda but lives in his truck, is under treatment and according to his mother is on medication for schizophrenia, FBI Special Agent Ketrick Kelley said in an affidavit filed in U.S. District Court in Alabama." Kelley "said McVicker appeared to be planning to carry out a mass shooting at a church in Memphis, Tennessee, on Thursday." McVicker's messages "violated a federal law against making interstate threats to commit violence, Kelley's affidavit said."

The [AP](#) (8/20) reports the affidavit "doesn't specify a motive, nor does it identify a specific Memphis church. McVicker's friend did not learn of an exact location from the phone call." However, the affidavit says "McVicker insisted that 'something' would happen when he was in Memphis." The [AP](#) (8/20, Martin) reports McVicker "said he was haunted by 'spiritual snakes and spiders' people put in his bed." McVicker "was arrested by Indiana State Police and the FBI, said Chris Bavender, an FBI spokeswoman in Indianapolis."

[The Hill](#) (8/20, Bowden, 2.98M) reports McVicker's employer "confirmed to law enforcement that he had requested time off to travel to Memphis this week, though no other information on a motive or target was reportedly available."

### **Paramilitary Training Video Emerges Of Neo-Nazi Terror Group.**

[Vice](#) (8/20, 2.11M) reports new footage released on a known extremist Telegram channel shows "eight masked men shooting what appears to be a combination of shotguns and assault rifles." The video is the "latest propaganda posted by neo-Nazi extremist network The Base, as the group garners the attention of law enforcement in both the US and Canada." Vice reports that attacks "committed by far-right extremists are on the rise. Recently a man named Connor Climo, a member of Feuerkrieg Division, a similar group to The Base, was arrested in Las Vegas and charged with possession of an unregistered firearm after being found with the materials to make an improvised explosive device." Before his arrest, "Climo spoke to an undercover FBI agent about his plan to attack a nearby mosque with explosives and firearms."

### **FBI's Mendenhall Says Agency Working Around The Clock To Find, Stop Threats Of Mass Shootings.**

[WIBC-FM](#) Indianapolis (8/20, 6K) reports the "head of the FBI office in Indianapolis is highlighting the importance of reporting anything and everything. It's a response to the mass shootings in El Paso and Dayton." Grant Mendenhall, Special Agent in Charge, "says they are working around the clock to find, and stop, threats of mass shootings. But he also says there's only so much they can do and that they need everyone to step up to prevent a potential tragedy." Mendenhall said, "I wake up everyday thinking about exactly what we're talking about. ... With our shop here, I take the view that we have to be prepared everyday. We have to stay ahead of those threats. We don't talk about responding. We talk about preventing."

### **FBI Arrests 15-Year-Old Student For Threatening A Mass Shooting In Florida.**

The [Tampa Bay \(FL\) Times](#) (8/20, 742K) reports Adam Guzzetti, 15, a Seabreeze High School student, on Friday "became the fifth Floridian charged with threatening to commit a mass shooting after deadly shootings in El Paso and Dayton earlier this month." According to "the Volusia County Sheriff's Office...Guzzetti was charged with a felony after authorities learned he threatened to shoot and kill people at his school, Seabreeze High School in Daytona Beach." Using the username FalconWarrior920 on the gaming platform Discord, deputies "said Guzzetti on Thursday used a fake name and stated 'I Dalton Barnhart vow to bring my fathers (sic) m15 to school and kill 7 people at minimum.'" Another user "alerted the FBI to the threat, which was then passed on to the sheriff's office. Members of the FBI Joint Terrorism Task Force were able to track the FalconWarrior920 IP address to an address in Holly Hills, where Guzzetti lives with his mother, Amethy Organ, according to an arrest report."

**McQuade: Proposed Bills Will Help FBI Confront Domestic Terrorism.** University of Michigan Law School professor Barbara McQuade writes at [Lawfare](#) (8/20), "Following recent attacks in Gilroy, California; El Paso, Texas; and Dayton, Ohio, we have seen a renewed call for domestic terrorism laws to give federal law enforcement the same types of tools that are available to combat violent acts committed by international terrorists." Proposed bills "in the U.S. House of Representatives and Senate will help the FBI confront domestic terrorism on the terms it favors – left of boom." She adds, "'Left of boom' is a phrase I heard frequently from FBI agents when I worked as a federal prosecutor in national security cases." The words "describe the FBI's post-9/11 strategy to detect, disrupt and dismantle terrorist threats before acts of violence occur."

**Birmingham Man Accused Of Reaching Out To Terrorists May Have Reported Himself To FBI.** [Birmingham \(AL\) News](#) (8/20, 894K) reports that a Birmingham man "who is accused of reaching out to known terrorists possibly sent a tip to the FBI" to report his own conduct, according to court documents filed Tuesday in federal court. Arkeuntrez Kenyaz Lareco Washington, 28, is "charged with illegal gun sales in a case that involves weapons advertised online at Arslist.com and shipped to buyers in Mexico, New York and California." Washington's attorney "has requested a mental competency evaluation of her client, according to a motion made public Tuesday. The attorney, Alison Wallace, stated that Washington may be presently mentally incompetent and unable to understand the proceedings against him or properly assist in his own defense."

[WBMA-TV](#) Birmingham, AL (8/20, Gallien, 98K) reports Washington's attorney filed a motion Tuesday "asking the federal court for the mental competency exam." Among the reason "she listed included that during an August 9th hearing, testimony showed that Washington had possibly sent a tip to the FBI reporting his own conduct."

**Pompeo Says ISIS Remains A Problem.** The [Washington Times](#) (8/20, Taylor, 492K) reports Secretary of State Pompeo "said Tuesday that the Islamic State remains a 'complicated' foreign policy challenge and is actually stronger in some corners of the world today than it was before having its self-proclaimed 'caliphate' stripped by U.S.-backed forces in Syria." Pompeo also said the President "is very focused on making sure that we apply the right resources against the problem." The [CBS Evening News](#) (8/20, story 4, 2:10, O'Donnell, 4M) reported Pompeo told CBS This Morning, "What we've always said is the caliphate has been gone and there is always a risk there will be a resurgence."

**Trump Fuels Prediction That Russia Investigators Will Face Prison.** [Politico](#) (8/20, Samuelsohn, 4.29M) reports President Trump and his allies have claimed on Twitter and TV interviews that the FBI and US intelligence agencies "are on the verge of being exposed for planting spies, falsifying evidence and forging testimony" from the forthcoming DOJ review. They've relished in the possibility that "a federal prosecutor on the case could file criminal charges." And they've "predicted jail time for top Obama-era leaders who they say were behind a 'deep state' plot to take down Trump." Trump said during a recent Fox News interview with Sean Hannity, "This was treason. This was high crimes. This was everything as bad a definition as you want to come up with. This should never be allowed to happen to our country again." These hyperbolic expectations "have legal experts, even some who are often sympathetic to the president, skeptical that the final product can equal the Trump-fueled rhetoric."

**Litman: McCabe Likely To Prevail In Lawsuit About His Firing.** In his column in the [Washington Post](#) (8/20, 14.2M), Harry Litman writes about Andrew McCabe's prospects of winning his lawsuit to have his pension reinstated. Litman contends, "The termination arguably presents basic questions concerning the abuse of presidential power and, in his complaint, McCabe comes out of the box quoting Marbury v. Madison and suggesting that his case presents the question of whether 'the US government remains 'a government of laws, and not of men.' Can't get more sweeping and portentous than that." Litman adds, "But when it comes to concrete legal theories as to why his pension should be reinstated, McCabe and his legal team retreat to small-gauged alleged bureaucratic missteps by the administration." Litman concludes, "It would be a delightful end to a so far disturbing story if the bad guys – here, the president and his subordinates – lost the case because they forgot to put money in the meter."

**FBI Spy Stefan Halper Demands Likhova Lawsuit Against Him Be Dismissed.** The [Washington Examiner](#) (8/20, Dunleavy, 448K) reports Russian-born British citizen Svetlana Likhova "claims in a lawsuit that FBI informant Stefan Halper 'embroiled an innocent woman' – her – 'in a conspiracy to undo the 2016 presidential election and topple the president of the United States of America.'" Halper, a Cambridge professor and an FBI informant against Trump's campaign, "demanded the claims in the US District Court of Eastern Virginia filed in May by Likhova in a complaint that labels him a 'spy'"

and “rat f---er” be dismissed and his accuser be sanctioned by the judge.” Halper and Lokhova “know each other through Cambridge University and the Cambridge Intelligence Seminars.”

**Book Excerpt: Why The Trump-Russia Phantasm Will Ultimately Lead To Justice.** [Fox News](#)

(8/20, 27.59M) provides an excerpt from Gregg Jarrett’s forthcoming book is ‘Witch Hunt: The Story of the Greatest Mass Delusion in American Political History.’ Jarrett writes, “American citizens have a right to know what their government is doing. That is the law. The FBI routinely ignores the law.” .... “A new law was passed called the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). For the first time, any person could request access to documents or records controlled by the US government. It is through this Act that the veil of secrecy has been pierced in the Trump-Russia “collusion” case. The illicit schemes intended to frame Trump as a Russian agent have been exposed, in no small measure, due to the relentless pursuit of FOIA lawsuits. Wait... why lawsuits? Because federal agencies, such as the FBI, reflexively deny nearly all FOIA requests even though the vast majority of them are completely legitimate.”

**Solomon: President’s Release Of Declassified Documents Could Rock Washington This Fall.** In his column in [The Hill](#) (8/20, 2.98M), John Solomon writes, “Behind the scenes, some major events were set in motion last autumn that could soon change the tenor in Washington, at least as it relates to the debunked Russia collusion narrative that distracted America for nearly three years.” Solomon argues, “The foot-dragging inside the IC that occurred under now-departed DNI Dan Coats and his deputy, Sue Gordon, could halt abruptly. That’s particularly true if Trump appoints a new IC sheriff, such as former House Intelligence Committee Chairman Pete Hoekstra (R-MI), the current ambassador to the Netherlands, or longtime national security expert Fred Fleitz.” Solomon asserts that the “president has an opportunity to speed up and organize the release of declassified information by simply creating an Office of Transparency and Accountability inside his own White House.” He recommends 10 documents that, if declassified, “have the greatest chance of rocking Washington this fall.”

**Russian Firm Accused Of Interfering In 2016 Election May Face Trial In April.** [CNN International](#)

(8/20, Polantz) reports a Russian company “accused of attempting to interfere in the 2016 election could face trial in April.” The indictment “was a startling and sweeping allegation of a Russian operation to sway American voters in 2016 through divisive Facebook posts, rallies and other political propaganda on social media.” The company is accused of conspiracy “for funding the online troll farm effort.” Concord has “pleaded not guilty.” Two other Russian companies and 13 Russians, including an oligarch named Yevgeny Prigozhin, “are also charged in the case but have not appeared in US courts to enter their pleas.” Since the indictment, the case “has dragged on because of fights between Concord and prosecutors over evidence in the case and the Russians’ access to it.”

[Politico](#) (8/20, Samuelsohn, 4.29M) reports a Russian firm charged with interfering in the 2016 presidential election “has proposed an April 2020 trial – smack in the middle of the next White House campaign.” The trial would test special counsel Robert Mueller’s allegations “that the Russian firm, Concord Management and Consulting, financed and organized an army of Internet trolls to try and sow discord in the US and sway the 2016 election in Trump’s favor.”

**Craig Trial Exposes Infighting On Manafort’s Ukraine Team.** [Politico](#) (8/20, Gerstein, 4.29M)

reports Greg Craig’s ongoing criminal trial “is opening a new and often entertaining window into infighting and skullduggery on the team Manafort assembled to advise Ukraine’s government.” British public relations adviser Jonathan Hawker “testified in federal court in Washington Tuesday that Hawker and a colleague came to so detest Manafort’s right-hand man, Rick Gates, that they came up with an insulting moniker for him: ‘(P)Rick.’” Hawker “explained that the firm he was working for at the time, FTI Consulting, struggled for months to get a contract and to get payment for the public relations advice the firm was providing to Ukraine’s government, headed at the time by President Viktor Yanukovich.” Hawker “said Gates – who’s expected to be called as a witness at the trial later this week – repeatedly promised that money was being wired to FTI, but the payments did not arrive.”

**Three More Alleged Victims Sue Epstein Estate.** [ABC World News Tonight](#) (8/20, story 8, 1:35, Muir,

6.49M) reported “three more alleged victims” are suing the estate of Jeffrey Epstein, “claiming they were recruited and sexually abused. And two say it happened while he was under house arrest and during work release while he was wearing an ankle bracelet.” ABC’s Linsey Davis: “One accuser claims she was 17 when she was first groomed by Epstein in New York back in 2007, during the same time he was under federal investigation for alleged sex crimes against more than 30 minor girls.”

**Two Former Baseball Players Arrested For Drug Laundering.** [ABC World News Tonight](#) (8/20,

story 12, 0:15, Muir, 6.49M) reported that Octavio Dotel and Luis Castillo, both former Major League Baseball players, are among

"more than a dozen people" who have been arrested in connection with a probe of an "alleged drug laundering operation" in the Dominican Republic. [NPR](#) (8/20, Dwyer, 3.12M) reports the country's attorney general, Jean Alain Rodriguez, "announced Tuesday that the operation targeted alleged drug kingpin César Emilio Peralta, also known as 'César the abuser,' and the extensive criminal operation he led." Rodríguez "did not immediately specify the role authorities believe the two former baseball players performed in Peralta's operation." He "said his team had collaborated with the U.S. during the investigation, exchanging information with the FBI and the Drug Enforcement Administration."

[NBC News](#) (8/20, 6.14M) reports Tuesday's operation "included more than 700 people from multiple agencies, including the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration, the FBI and the Dominican Republic's National Drug Control Directorate." Authorities arrested "a handful of allegedly high-ranking members of the ring, Baltazar Mesa, José Jesús Tapia Pérez, and Sergio Gómez Díaz. The attorney general's office said that these men are facing possible extradition to the United States."

[The Hill](#) (8/20, Budryk, 2.98M) reports Dominican authorities "collaborated with the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration and the FBI in the probe, according to the National Drug Control Directorate." [CBS Sports](#) (8/20, Snyder, 3.87M) and the [Washington \(DC\) Post](#) (8/20, Parker, 14.2M) also report.

**FBI Investigating University Of Kansas Research Campus.** The [AP](#) (8/20) reports federal authorities "are conducting an investigation at a research facility on the University of Kansas campus in Lawrence." FBI spokeswoman Bridget Patton "confirmed the FBI and Lawrence police were at the Life Sciences Research Laboratories complex Tuesday but said she could not provide any details."

[KCTV-TV](#) Kansas City, MO (8/20, 133K) reports that "according to the Assistant Director of Strategic Communications for KU, the FBI is conducting an investigation into alleged criminal activity Tuesday afternoon." They said there is no threat to public safety at this time.

**Cohoes Mayor Shawn Morse Pleads Guilty To Wire Fraud Scheme.** The [Troy \(NY\) Record](#) (8/20, staff, 11K) reports Cohoes Mayor Shawn Morse, 52, "pleaded guilty Tuesday to a felony wire fraud scheme to defraud his supporters by stealing campaign contributions for his personal benefit, according to the U.S. Attorney's Office." FBI Special Agent in Charge of the Albany Field Office James Hendricks, along with United States Attorney Grant Jaquith, made the announcement. Authorities "said Morse pleaded guilty to one count of wire fraud and faces up to 20 years in prison, a term of post-release supervision of up to 3 years, and a fine of up to \$250,000 when he is sentenced by Senior United States District Judge Thomas J. McAvoy on December 10, 2019."

**Former South Carolina Transportation Department Official Jailed For Violating Probation.** The [AP](#) (8/20) reports a former South Carolina Department of Transportation board member "has been jailed over allegations that he violated his probation as soon as it began by offering to pay an undercover deputy \$40 for sex." Citing The State, the AP reports John Hardee "was jailed Monday. He was sentenced this month to 18 months' federal probation with no prison time for trying to destroy evidence in an FBI investigation into whether he accepted bribes while on the transportation board."

**Columnist: Charging Epstein's Alleged Accomplice, Ghislaine Maxwell, Will Be Difficult.** [Politico Magazine](#) (8/20, 4.24M) Legal Affairs Columnist Renato Mariotti writes, "In the days since convicted pedophile Jeffrey Epstein killed himself in a Manhattan jail cell, there has been a growing public outcry asking why his longtime confidante and alleged accomplice Ghislaine Maxwell has not yet been charged." Former FBI Assistant Director Frank Figliuzzi asked, "Why is she still walking around?" Unfortunately, Mariotti adds, "the answer is likely that law enforcement simply does not yet have sufficient evidence to ensure a conviction of Maxwell. If they had enough evidence, they would have charged her already." Getting that evidence "will not be anywhere near as easy as some pundits might suggest."

**FBI Investigating Death Of Red Lake Man.** The [Rochester \(MN\) Post-Bulletin](#) (8/20, Service, 44K) reports the FBI is investigating the death of a Red Lake, Minnesota man "following unease from his family about the circumstances of his death." Daniel Johnson, 23, "died on Monday, Aug. 12, according to an obituary. Johnson's family claims he was murdered." The FBI "says they do not know how Johnson died."

**FBI Still Investigating Case Where Glendale Police Tasered Man Nearly A Dozen Times.** [KNXV-TV](#) Phoenix (8/21, 266K) reports attorneys for "a man tasered nearly a dozen times by Glendale police, including once in the testicles, have claimed the city's lawyers are giving them the 'run-around' and have asked a judge to push back deadlines in the lawsuit, according to a new motion filed in the case." Johnny Wheatcroft's attorneys "claim that Glendale's lawyers have

rescheduled a deposition five different times with Officer Matthew Schneider, the main policeman involved in the troubling tasing incident." The defense's response "to the court appears to show the FBI investigation is still ongoing." ABC15 obtained records in March "that show an agent with the FBI Civil Rights/Public Corruption section was investigating the case."

### **Missouri Violent Crime Operation Removed 350 Violent Felons From Kansas City Streets.**

[KSHB-TV](#) (8/20, 90K) reports Missouri's governor and top law enforcement officials from the state "gathered Tuesday at the Jackson County Courthouse to share the results of a violent crime operation that took place during the last several months." Gov. Mike Parson, US Marshal Mark James, and US Attorney Tim Garrison "said 'Operation Triple Beam,' which took place from mid-May through mid-August, removed more than 350 violent felons from Kansas City area streets." The operation "was conducted in conjunction with the Kansas City, Missouri, and Independence police departments, the Missouri State Highway Patrol, the FBI, ATF and DEA and sheriff's offices from Platte, Clay, Jackson and Cass counties."

### **Bay-Area Man Charged In International Drug Trafficking Case Suffers From Mental Disability, Was Manipulated, Attorney Says.**

The [East Bay \(CA\) Times](#) (8/20, 63K) reports a Bay Area man "who was arrested and charged as part of a federal investigation into an international drug trafficking ring suffers from a significant mental disability and was manipulated into committing crimes, his attorney wrote in sentencing motions last week." On Monday, Sergio Rubalcaba, 24, "was sentenced to time served for his role in an East Contra Costa County drug trafficking conspiracy." In February 2018, "Rubalcaba, his cousin Sergio Vasquez-Gonzalez and two others...were all charged with methamphetamine trafficking." Authorities "later determined that the defendants had been receiving shipments of methamphetamine" that "were hidden inside horse saddles that were sent to Northern California in the mail. That detail is interesting, because in late 2016 and early 2017, another group was investigated by the FBI for receiving shipments of meth hidden inside saddles."

### **Commerce Department Allows Huawei To Do Business For Another 90 Days.**

[Politico Morning Cybersecurity](#) (8/20, Lee, 4.24M) reports the Commerce Department on Monday "extended a grace period allowing Huawei to do business with U.S. suppliers for another 90 days, but at the same time added 46 of the Chinese company's subsidiaries to its export blacklist." Huawei swiftly "criticized the move, designed to make sanctions harder to evade." A company spokesperson said, "It's clear that this decision, made at this particular time, is politically motivated and has nothing to do with national security. ... The extension of the Temporary General License does not change the fact that Huawei has been treated unjustly."

The [Washington Post](#) (8/20, Marks, 14.2M) reports the delay "highlights the supreme difficulty of fully disentangling Huawei from its vast network of U.S. suppliers. It also extends the clock if the Trump administration opts to pare back the ban as part of a broader trade deal, which Trump has repeatedly suggested he might do."

### **Twenty Local Governments In Texas Targeted In Ransomware Attack.**

The [AP](#) (8/20) reports more than 20 local governments in Texas "were targeted in a coordinated ransomware attack of unprecedented size on Friday, but several of the cities had resumed normal operations by Tuesday, state officials said." The Texas Department of Information Resources "said in a statement that it believes a single source is behind all 22 of the attacks. It didn't name the affected cities or provide details about the attacker's demands." State and federal agencies, "including the Department of Homeland Security and the FBI, are working with the affected Texas cities. Sprehe declined to provide more detail on the number of cities that have resumed normal activity or details of their recovery."

[NPR](#) (8/20, Allyn, 3.12M) reports the FBI and state cybersecurity experts "are examining the ongoing breach, which began Friday morning and has affected mostly smaller local governments. Officials have not disclosed which specific places are affected." Investigators have also "not yet identified who or what is behind the attack that took the systems offline, but the Texas Department of Information Resources says the evidence so far points to 'one single threat actor.'"

[MIT Technology Review](#) (8/20, 570K) reports the FBI "recommends against paying ransom. And last month, the United States Conference of Mayors passed a resolution against paying such extortionists." But the "fact is that when an organization is hacked and has bad or nonexistent backups, paying ransom becomes an attractive option. The downside is that you are essentially funding the criminal gang behind the operation."

The [Washington Post](#) (8/20, Siegel, 14.2M) reports the FBI "can investigate ransomware attacks that are reported to it, but victims aren't required to notify the agency. Investigators worry that too few victims come forward on their own."

### **Bi-Partisan Panel To Issue Recommendations By Early 2020 For Defending US Against Cyberattacks.**

[The Hill](#) (8/20, Miller, 2.98M) reports commission member Suzanne Spaulding said at the Digital

Government Institute's 930gov conference that the Cyberspace Solarium Commission – made up of bipartisan members of Congress, former government officials and industry representatives – “is working toward formulating a comprehensive, strategic approach.” Spaulding said, “I think we’re trying to cover everything, frankly, short of war. To have a strategic approach, you’ve got to make sure that you’re thinking about all of the tools that you have at your disposal, all of the resources, all of the levers that both you and the private sector can contribute and bring to bear.”

### **“Iranian Hackers” Claim Attack On County Government Website In Illinois.**

[Government Technology](#) (8/20, 2K) reports Macon County, Illinois, is the latest government entity “to be targeted by hackers who hijacked a web page and disabled access.” The Circuit Clerk’s Office main webpage on Sunday night “was overtaken by an image of a Guy Fawkes mask, Iranian flag and the text: ‘Hacked by Iranian Hackers. Hacked by Mamad Warning. We are always closer to you. Your identity is known to us. Your information is for us ;) take care.’” Circuit Clerk Lois Durbin “said the county Information Technology department restored the page by 10 a.m. Monday.”

### **Ratcliffe: Confirmed Plans To Reintroduce CDM Bill Soon.**

[MeriTalk](#) (8/20) reports Rep. John Ratcliffe (R-TX) “confirmed to MeriTalk that he will reintroduce the Advancing Cybersecurity Continuing Diagnostics and Mitigation (CDM) Act.” His office “said to expect the bill ‘within the next month or so.’” His legislation “would join the Senate companion bill that was reintroduced on July 30 by Sens. Maggie Hassan (D-NH) and John Cornyn (R-TX).” Rep. Ratcliffe told MeriTalk, “I’m pleased that our efforts to codify and strengthen the CDM program have recently gained renewed traction with the introduction of a new Senate version of the Advancing Cybersecurity Continuing Diagnostics and Mitigation Act.” The legislation “would codify DHS’ CDM Program into law.” CDM is “a multibillion-dollar program aimed at safeguarding Federal agency networks by providing monitoring-as-a-service tools, which give agencies better knowledge of endpoints, data, and activities occurring on their networks.”

### **New Jersey Warns That Russians May Interfere In Elections Next Year.**

[NJ News](#) (8/20, Salant, 1.72M) reports New Jersey’s Department of Homeland Security “has warned state and county elections officials that Russia or another foreign actor could hijack their websites or social media accounts, ‘severely impacting and eroding confidence in the election results.’” The warning, “which went to elections officials on the state level and in all 21 counties, was contained in a bulletin sent earlier this month by the state Cybersecurity and Communications Integration Cell.” The state agency “acted after the Senate Intelligence Committee warned about ‘Russian intentions to undermine the credibility of the election process’ and a civil grand jury in San Mateo County, California, warned of hackers using government accounts to report false election results or issue false voting instructions.”

### **Coast Guard Cybersecurity Guidance Places Shippers On Notice.**

[Law360](#) (8/20, Subscription Publication, 8K) reports “today’s commercial cargo ships are marvels of modern technology – a blend of computer navigation displays, electronic sensors, integrated shipboard control systems and telecommunication suites.” However, they are “just as vulnerable to cyberattack as shore-based computer networks.” The key difference between them “is that cargo vessels are in motion.” But like attacks on other components of critical infrastructure, attacks on shipboard networks “have the potential to cause physical damage within the ship, or to inflict damage to nearby objects outside the ship, if the computers that are compromised are part of the operational control networks rather than the IT networks.”

### **Blackrock Units Obtains CFIUS Approval To Acquire Russia-Linked Firms’s Stake In Cybersecurity**

**Company.** The [Wall Street Journal](#) (8/20, Louch, Lim, Subscription Publication, 7.57M) reports CFIUS has approved the transfer of shares of cybersecurity firm Cofense from a Russian private equity fund to Blackrock. The deal completes a lengthy process that pitted CFIUS against Pamplona Capital Management, the private equity firm with links to Russian businesspeople. The deal seeks to eliminate the risk of Pamplona’s foreign investors to influence the activities of Cofense or access it’s sensitive technology.

### **New Study Says Data Breaches Exposed 4.1B Records In First Half 2019.**

[Forbes](#) (8/20, Winder, 9.71M) reports that, according to Risk Based Security research newly published in the 2019 MidYear QuickView Data Breach Report, the first six months of 2019 “have seen more than 3,800 publicly disclosed breaches exposing an incredible 4.1 billion compromised records.” Perhaps even more remarkable “is the fact that 3.2 billion of those records were exposed by just eight breaches.” As for the exposed data itself, the report “has email (contained in 70 percent of breaches) and passwords (65 percent) at the top of the pile.” Egress CEO Tony Pepper said, “Not every insider breach is the result of reckless or negligent

employees, but regardless, the presence of human error in breaches means organizations must invest in technology that works alongside the user in mitigating the insider threat.”

## **State Election Officials Warn About Integrity Of Voting Process Ahead Of 2020 Election.**

[National Interest](#) (8/20, McLean, Griffith, 81K) reports state election officials “are sounding what is becoming an increasingly dire warning about the integrity of the voting process heading into the 2020 election, pleading for federal funds to help secure next year’s balloting against cyberattacks.” At a public forum on Thursday, the top election officials from Connecticut and Louisiana “said underfunded election systems in their states are vulnerable to hacking from outside agents who might want to create mischief, or even seek to change the outcome of the vote.” Louisiana’s Secretary of State Kyle Ardoin said at a forum hosted by the Election Assistance Commission, “We all have the same expectation, which is a secure environment for our elections, and that every vote is accurately counted and everybody gets to participate who wishes to participate.”

## **Connecticut Resident Accused Of Manslaughter In Drug-Related Case.** [ABC World News Tonight](#)

(8/20, story 10, 1:20, Muir, 6.49M) aired a report that said Connecticut resident Scott Hapgood is “charged with killing a hotel worker during a family vacation in the Caribbean.” But Hapgood, accused of manslaughter, claims the death occurred after Kenny Mitchell pulled a knife during a robbery attempt. Authorities in “Anguilla would not confirm” the results of a toxicology report that “shows Mitchell had...cocaine and marijuana in his system.”

The [CBS Evening News](#) (8/20, story 6, 1:55, O’Donnell, 4M) aired a report that showed Hapgood’s attorney, Juliya Arbisman, saying opposing counsel “withheld for more than two months a toxicology report that showed Mr. Kenny Mitchell was not only drunk, but also high on cocaine and other drugs when he attacked Scott.” [NBC Nightly News](#) (8/20, story 10, 1:30, Holt, 5.82M) aired a similar report.

This story is also covered by the [CBS News](#) (8/20, Barnett, 3.68M) website, the [Stamford \(CT\) Advocate](#) (8/18, Perkins, Cuda, 170K), the [Fox News](#) (8/20, Chakraborty, 27.59M) website, [Reuters](#) (8/20), the [Daily Mail \(UK\)](#) (8/20, 5.27M), the [ABC News](#) (8/20, Jacobo, 2.97M) website, and the [New York Daily News](#) (8/20, Schladebeck, 2.52M).

## **Trump Says US Already Has “Very Strong Background Checks” For Gun Purchases.** The [AP](#) (8/20,

Colvin) reports President Trump “insisted Tuesday that the U.S. already has ‘very, very strong background checks’ for gun purchases in the latest sign that he is backing away from throwing his political support behind changes to the system that are opposed by the powerful gun lobby.” Speaking to reporters in the Oval Office, the President said “‘a lot of the people that put me where I am are strong believers in the Second Amendment,’ and suggested he worries about blurring the contrast between Republicans and Democrats on the issue.”

Paula Reid reported on the [CBS Evening News](#) (8/20, story 2, 0:35, O’Donnell, 4M) that the White House confirmed the President spoke with NRA Chief Executive Wayne LaPierre Tuesday afternoon. Bret Baier said on [Fox News Special Report](#) (8/20, 1.53M), “The National Rifle Association says President Trump has told its top official [that] universal background checks for potential gun purchasers are off the table.” The [Washington Post](#) (8/20, Hamburger, Dawsey, 14.2M) reports Trump “told LaPierre that the White House remained interested in proposals that would address weapons getting into the hands of the mentally ill,” but his “conversation with LaPierre...further reduced hopes that major new gun-safety measures will be enacted after the latest round of mass shootings.” The [New York Times](#) (8/20, Haberman, Karni, Hakim, 18.61M) reports under the headline “N.R.A. Gets Results In One Phone Call With The President” that the half-hour discussion was “the latest conversation in an aggressive campaign by gun rights advocates to influence the White House in the weeks since the back-to-back mass shootings in Texas and Ohio.”

[USA Today](#) (8/20, Wu, 10.31M) reports the President “appeared to back away from supporting enhanced background checks,” and the [Washington Times](#) (8/20, Howell, 492K) reports Trump “offered support for greater background checks in the days after the tragedies, though he’s shifted his rhetoric toward mental health in recent days.” [Politico](#) (8/20, Kumar, 4.29M) reports, “While Trump’s recent remarks on gun control legislation have been widely interpreted as a step back from an earlier push to expand background checks during gun sales, White House and congressional aides continue to meet privately to discuss possible congressional and executive actions. ... Part of the calculus for Trump is the fact that any decision will carry significant political ramifications, according to several Republicans.”

[Reuters](#) (8/20, Alexander, Morgan) and [The Hill](#) (8/20, Chalfant, 2.98M) also cover the President’s remarks, while [Politico](#) (8/20, Everett, 4.29M) reports congressional Republicans are “start[ing] to sour on gun control laws after Trump’s reversal.” Senate Homeland Security Chairman Ron Johnson said both a national “red flag” bill and a background checks measure are now “unlikely to pass.” Sen. Joe Manchin (D-WV) said on [CNN’s Cuomo Prime Time](#) (8/20, 6.68M), “If the

President doesn't step forward and give cover to the Republicans in the Senate, they're not going to vote, period, and that's a shame."

In an editorial, the [New York Times](#) (8/20, 18.61M) writes, "Trump and his followers delight in his image as a disrupter – a dauntless fighter raring to take on entrenched political interests and sacred cows. But when it comes to addressing America's gun problem, Mr. Trump has proved both conventional and weak. As the shock fades" from this month's mass shootings, "he is poised to disappoint yet again." The [Washington Post](#) (8/20, 14.2M) editorializes, "If the president is expecting a Republican Senate to send him a gun-control bill without his strong, public backing, he will be waiting a long time." The Post says even "bare-minimum reforms seem, once again, out of reach – thanks in part to a president who apparently lacks the courage to champion measures he recognizes as necessary."

**NPR Poll: 70% Of Republicans Support Red Flag Laws.** The [Washington Times](#) (8/20, Vogt, 492K) reports an NPR poll of 1,000 US adults conducted July 16-21 "found that 70% of Republicans support red flag gun laws," and that "67% of gun owners supported the legislation." The poll was conducted before the shootings in El Paso, Texas and Dayton, Ohio.

**HHS Issued Directive On Mental Health Posts Following Shootings.** The [Washington Post](#) (8/20, Abutaleb, Wan, 14.2M) reports, "When President Trump targeted mental illness as the cause of the mass shootings in El Paso and Dayton that killed 31 people, federal health officials made sure no government experts might contradict him." An August 5 HHS directive "warned communication staffers not to post anything on social media related to mental health, violence and mass shootings without prior approval," which "alarmed some government mental health experts who said they felt muzzled."

**Sellers Find Way Around Facebook Marketplace Gun Sales Ban.** The [Wall Street Journal](#) (8/20, Olson, Elinson, Subscription Publication, 7.57M) reports gun sellers are getting around Facebook's prohibition on selling guns through its Marketplace feature by listing gun cases or boxes at highly inflated prices. Prospective buyers know that means the container will come with the weapon inside.

**Warren Outlines Ambitious Criminal Justice Reform Agenda.** The [Washington Post](#) (8/20, Linskey, 14.2M) reports Sen. Elizabeth Warren (D-MA) said Tuesday that "as president she would eliminate the death penalty, end the use of private prisons, curtail the cash bail system and overhaul the use of presidential pardons." The Post calls the announcement Warren's "entry into the volatile debate over criminal justice reform." Warren "pledged to jettison much of the 1994 crime bill," which then-Sen. Joe Biden "helped write and which has been blamed for driving a sharp increase in incarceration in the country, especially among African Americans." [Reuters](#) (8/20, Gibson) reports Warren "proposed sweeping changes to federal and state criminal justice systems." Reuters suggests the proposals are an attempt to build support "among black voters."

The [New York Times](#) (8/20, Williams, Kaplan, 18.61M) reports, "Democratic candidates are pushing ideas that were considered radical just a few years ago. But the American public has changed its views, too. ... Both liberal and centrist candidates" are backing "overhauls" of the system.

**Philadelphia Police Commissioner Resigns.** The [CBS Evening News](#) (8/20, story 10, 0:10, O'Donnell, 4M) briefly covered news breaking during its broadcast that Philadelphia Police Commissioner Richard Ross has resigned. The city's mayor "said it's in the best interest of the department, but a number of officers are facing allegations of sexual harassment, and gender and racial discrimination." The [Philadelphia Inquirer](#) (8/20, Palmer, Walsh, Roebuck, Gambacorta, 347K) reports Deputy Commissioner Christine Coulter was named interim commissioner, "the first time in department history that a woman has been named top cop. The force employs about 6,500 people, one of the largest in the nation."

**House Democrats: DOJ Seeking To Curtail Congressional Oversight Of Trump.** [Politico](#) (8/20, Cheney, Desiderio, 4.29M) reports House Democrats argued in a court filing Tuesday that the Justice Department "is ignoring centuries of presidential investigations in an attempt to dramatically curtail Congress' power to probe President Donald Trump." House lawyers "said the Justice Department's call to invalidate a subpoena for Trump's financial records was so sweeping it would essentially inoculate presidents from congressional inquiry – reversing precedents that began with George Washington, who submitted to congressional inquiry." They wrote, "These arguments are fabricated out of whole cloth: they may represent what the department wishes the law were, but they are not the law."

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