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**FBI Office of Public Affairs
The Horizon
Wednesday, Oct. 30, 2019**

National Issues

- **Human Trafficking Task Force:** OPA – Deputy Director Bowdich represented the FBI yesterday at the President’s Interagency Task Force to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons. Bowdich briefly discussed the Bureau’s work combatting human trafficking and its future initiatives, as well as reinforced the need for lawful access to subjects’ devices when used to further exploit human and sexual trafficking.
- **Whistleblower Death Threats:** OPA – The Wall Street Journal and the New York Daily News both inquired whether the FBI is investigating death threats made against the legal team representing the anonymous whistleblower who raised concerns about President Trump’s July 25 phone call with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky. OPA declined to comment.
- **Sanction Breaches in Eastern Europe:** OPA – Reuters requested an interview with an FBI official based in Europe about possible sanction breaches and money laundering in the Baltic States involving money from Russia and former Soviet states. OPA declined the interview.
- **Butina:** OPA/WFO – A reporter asked if the FBI apologized to Maria Butina. According to the reporter, she made such a claim on Russian National TV. In coordination with DOJ, OPA said that is not an accurate statement and declined further comment.
- **Jeffrey Epstein Autopsy:** OPA – Inside Edition asked for comment on Dr. Michael Baden’s interview on FOX & Friends today suggesting that Jeffrey Epstein’s autopsy was more consistent with homicidal strangulation than with suicide. OPA declined to comment.
- **Stalkerware:** OPA – An online cyber magazine, Malwarebytes Labs, asked for an interview on a type of malware known as “stalkerware” that domestic abusers may be using to track their partners movements and activities. After consulting with CID and CyD, OPA declined the interview and had a background conversation with Malwarebytes Labs to advise them that IC3 has received a small number of complaints that sounds like “stalkerware” and that local law enforcement may be the more appropriate source for questions on this subject.
- **Real Estate BEC Scams:** OPA – The New York Times interviewed SSA Abbott about how the FBI responds to BEC scams. SSA Abbott provided preventative tips for consumers and businesses and encouraged victims

to report incidents as soon as possible.

- Director's Testimony, fbi.gov: OPA – Director Wray testified before the House Homeland Security Committee at a hearing titled Global Terrorism: Threats to the Homeland. Statement for the Record: <https://www.fbi.gov/news/testimony/global-terrorism-threats-to-the-homeland-103019>

Local Stories

- Boston – Multiple media outlets in Massachusetts sought to confirm an FBI arrest of the mayor of Somerville, Mass. and the search of his home. PAO advised that the FBI did not arrest the mayor and there were no law enforcement actions undertaken by the FBI in that city today.
- Boston – Wall Street Journal reached out seeking a background interview about Operation Varsity Blues for an upcoming book that is expected to be published next summer. The reporter also advised that HBO has already committed to producing a mini-television series based on the book. PAO declined comment at this time as it remains an ongoing investigation and many of the cases are not fully adjudicated but advised that they can revisit the request when the cases are fully adjudicated.
- Boston – Two Massachusetts TV stations sought to confirm that FBI agents were at a home in East Bridgewater, Mass. late this morning. PAO advised that the FBI was not in East Bridgewater today and suggested they check with other law enforcement agencies.
- El Paso – Division received a media inquiry about the parental kidnapping of two Las Cruces brothers, 3-year-old Maverick Ransom and 4-year-old Orion Ransom by their father, Clarence Michael Ransom. Las Cruces Police Department issued a press release and stated the FBI was assisting in the case as it is believed that the children were taken to Mexico. After discussion with Albuquerque Division, Division PAO confirmed that the FBI is assisting LCPD.
- San Antonio – The local CBS affiliate in Austin interviewed SAC Combs about Lawful Access. SAC Combs advised the FBI was still unable to access encrypted data contained on the cell phone used by the shooter who killed 26 victims in November 2017 in Sutherland Springs, Texas. SAC Combs warned that even if an active shooter is apprehended or killed, law enforcement's inability to access encrypted digital evidence could make it impossible to identify co-conspirators or accomplices and prevent second-wave attacks. He advocated for a middle ground where law enforcement has lawful access to encrypted data without jeopardizing the security of sensitive information on computers, devices, and networks.
- Tampa – Division hosted an off-the-record media roundtable with roughly 12 local news reporters and executives. SAC McPherson and Division executive management discussed mission, priorities and fielded questions ranging from terrorism and election security to cyber threats. Division is planning to host additional off-the-record round table meetings for media outlets throughout the AOR.

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