

Tuesday 10/27/20

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Video: Violent Brawl Over Face Mask on US Flight Sees Traveler Shocked, Arrested by [Gaby Arancibia](#)

Newly surfaced cellphone footage revealed passengers aboard a Puerto Rico-bound Spirit Airlines flight engaged in a violent brawl over the weekend after a group of fellow flyers were seen maskless and walking the plane's aisles.

The incident unfolded at about 7 p.m. local time on Sunday aboard a Spirit Airlines flight that had departed from Newark, New Jersey, to San Juan, Puerto Rico. Citing police, [CBS correspondent David Begnaud reported](#) that the altercation unfolded once the plane landed, and that the exchange of blows was prompted by a traveler who reportedly punched passenger Nyasy Veronique Payne.

Video circulated on social media shows Payne initially standing atop one of the plane's seats, yelling out remarks to an individual in a white T-shirt before swinging into the crowd growing in the aisle. Law enforcement officials eventually make their way to the warring parties, and Payne is seen being struck with the electrical prongs of an officer's stun gun.

Initial reports indicated that Payne was the passenger who initiated the brawl; however, speaking to another traveler on the flight, Begnaud was informed that Payne and her party were reportedly verbally attacked by three other travelers who were "yelling homophobic & racial slurs" at Payne and the two additional women she was traveling with when the plane landed. One of the men making the remarks is said to be the same individual who first punched Payne. Payne's party, which also reportedly included a young man, are said to have caught the ire of fellow passengers over their failure to keep their masks on for the entire duration of the flight. [Telemundo Puerto Rico identified](#) the man struck by Payne as 28-year-old Javier Lopez Cruz. It is presently unclear whether Cruz is the same individual who threw the first punch at Payne, and, if so, whether he will ultimately face any charges in the matter.

Payne was arrested following the incident and is being held on a \$150,000 bond. She is scheduled to appear before a court on November 13.

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Acrobatic Kitty Takes Tumble After Perch Dismount - Video Club

Mara, an 8-week-old kitten hailing from Texas, recently demonstrated that in order to become a top-rated gymnast, one must inevitably take a few tumbles on their way to greatness.

Video shared on Twitter by Twallia Davis, Mara's human, shows the feline gymnast-in-training jumping toward a wall-mounted perch and instantly overshooting her leap and winding up swinging back to her cat tree.

Davis [told video licensor Storyful](#) that the recording captured Mara's first attempt at the jump, noting that athletic kitty is "obviously enthusiastic about her gymnastics career." She added that the cat walked away from the attempt unharmed.

Watch out Simone Biles, you got some stiff competition!

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F-35 Program's Advancement to Full-Rate Production Delayed Yet Again
by [Morgan Artyukhina](#)

Lockheed Martin's F-35 Joint Strike Fighter program will once again be delayed from receiving a full-rate production designation by the Pentagon, as the necessary test simulator is still not functioning. That means the Pentagon will have to continue buying the stealthy jet in small batches.

The "F-35 in a box" Joint Simulation Environment (JSE), [a high-tech flight simulator](#) necessary for evaluating the stealth aircraft's capabilities, has been delayed in beginning its tests yet again. According to Jessica Maxwell, a spokesperson for the office of Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition and Sustainment Ellen Lord, both the testing and the final decision on certifying the F-35 for full-rate production "are scheduled in 2021, [Bloomberg reported on Monday](#).

The simulator is necessary for testing some of the situations the F-35 might face in combat, but which are not replicable in training, [Defense News explained](#).

It's not clear exactly which situations or threats that refers to, but it could include nuclear scenarios. Earlier this year, the Pentagon [released photos showing the F-35 testing its ability](#) to carry and drop simulated B61-12 thermonuclear gravity bombs, and the aircraft is slated to replace nuclear-certified aircraft [in a slew of European countries' air forces](#), including those of Italy, the Netherlands and Belgium.

The JSE trials are the final step in the F-35's initial operational testing and evaluation (IOT&E) phase, after which it will be certified for full-rate production, enabling the Pentagon to buy larger batches of the jet at a time as Lockheed Martin slips into a more standardized model for the F-35's many features. Until now, the Pentagon has been locked into low-rate production, buying small batches of the jet that are continually updated, resulting in a wide array of abilities between newer and older F-35s [for which it has become a real headache for the Pentagon](#) to compensate.

At full-rate production, Lockheed could turn out 14 F-35s a month, or 168 jets a year, Darren Sekiguchi, Lockheed's vice president of F-35 production, [told Defense News earlier this month](#). Defense News noted that even if the simulator is online by January 2021, it will take several months for the evaluation, meaning the advancement to full-rate production isn't likely before March 2021. [The COVID-19 pandemic is responsible for at least part of the delay](#), with the

nationwide lockdowns that began in March closing Edwards Air Force Base in California, where work was being done on the simulator.

In August, [the US Air Force approved construction contracts](#) for two massive testing facilities at Edwards as well as Nevada's Nellis Air Force Base, which will house not just the JSE, but simulators for other similar aircraft like the F-22 Raptor, an interceptor also built by Lockheed Martin.

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Bitcoin Spikes to Highest Value Since 2018 Bubble Amid Slagging Stock Market
by [Morgan Artyukhina](#)

Digital cryptocurrency Bitcoin saw its market value increase by nearly 5% on Tuesday, the day after the New York Stock Exchange posted huge losses on the heels of news that the COVID-19 pandemic was getting worse and government relief was largely absent from the horizon.

[According to Bloomberg, the cryptocurrency is closing](#) in on its June 2019 high value of \$13,851, the height it reached in its most recent boom period. At the time this article went to publication, one bitcoin was trading for \$13,586.

However, Bitcoin has a bit to go before equaling its all-time high of \$19,783.06, reached on December 17, 2017, before the bubble burst and its value plummeted by one-third days later. Edward Moya, a senior market analyst at Oanda Corp, told Bloomberg, "It seems that there is more excitement and that crypto will be used more often" after online wallet site [PayPal announced it would let customers purchase and pay](#) in digital coins and Square Inc. being among those financial firms investing in a Bitcoin fund. "The world seems poised for a digital currency."

[Digital currency news outlets Coindesk reported](#) the total is a 16-month high for Bitcoin, which is up 25% for the month, even as the total number of bitcoins held on exchanges continues to drop.

That stands in sharp contrast to US stocks, which saw nearly all of their monthly gains erased on Monday.

[The Dow Jones Industrial Average lost 650 points on Monday](#), and the S&P 500 and Nasdaq Composite fared even worse, all falling in reaction to travel industries including airlines, cruise ships, and the oil industry that fuels them losing value amid record-high COVID-19 case reports. Tuesday afternoon, stocks were still down but not as dramatically as the day prior.

The US hit a record-high, single-day total in new COVID-19 cases on October 24, identifying a shocking 83,851 new cases nationwide. By Tuesday, the nation's seven-day moving average was at 70,289 - also its highest ever, [according to data from the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#).

On Tuesday, hospitalizations were reportedly increasing in 36 US states, and Albert Bourla, CEO of pharmaceutical firm Pfizer, told investors no announcement about a potential COVID-19 vaccine was likely before the [November 3 US presidential election, CNBC reported](#).

In late September, US President Donald Trump promised the US would announce the [rollout of at least one vaccine before the end of October](#) and that the nation would have 100 million doses of the vaccine distributed by the end of the year. He has since [attacked the Food and Drug Administration](#) for its safety guidelines, calling them a “political hit job” that threatens his reelection campaign by delaying the vaccine’s rollout.

News from Europe is no better, with Poland, Germany, Italy, France, Spain and the United Kingdom [recording similar new spikes, driving the enactment](#) of some of the most stringent social restrictions seen since the pandemic’s initial outbreak this past spring. [According to the World Health Organization](#), roughly half of the 465,000 new COVID-19 cases reported worldwide on Saturday were in European nations.

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'Not Above the Law': US Lawmakers Demand Probe Into DHS Agency's Use of Warrantless Surveillance
by [Morgan Artyukhina](#)

In a Friday letter to the US Department of Homeland Security’s (DHS) inspector general, five lawmakers demanded an investigation of Customs and Border Protection’s (CBP) warrantless tracking of Americans using cellphone app data collected by a private firm.

Five Democratic senators [have sent a letter to Joseph Cuffari](#), the DHS inspector general, asking him to investigate the CBP’s use of cellphone data collected by Virginia-based data broker and software company Venntel Inc. to illegally surveil Americans.

In the letter, Sens. Ron Wyden (D-OR), Elizabeth Warren (D-MA), Sherrod Brown (D-OH), Brian Schatz (D-HI) and Edward Markey (D-MA) argue that the surveillance exceeds that permitted by the US Supreme Court’s 2018 ruling in *Carpenter v. United States*. In that decision, the court ruled that police require a warrant in order to access cellphone location data from a cellphone company, [according to the blog Lawfare](#).

“CBP officials confirmed to Senate staff that the agency is using Venntel’s location database to search for information collected from phones in the United States without any kind of court order,” the senators note. “The agency refused a follow-up request for information about the legal analysis it conducted, and refused to reveal whether or not it has taken the position that the Supreme Court’s *Carpenter* decision does not apply to location data purchased by the government.”

“CBP outrageously asserted that its legal analysis is privileged and therefore does not have to be shared with Congress. We disagree,” the congressional lawmakers wrote. “CBP is not above the law and it should not be able to buy its way around the fourth amendment.”

Mana Azarmi, policy counsel at the Center for Democracy and Technology, [told Nextgov on Monday](#), “If government agencies like CBP can evade the warrant requirements imposed by *Carpenter* simply by purchasing the data, we render that ruling a nullity, and then we lack sufficient checks to protect our privacy.”

CBP told the outlet, "All CBP operations in which commercially available telemetry data may be used are undertaken in furtherance of CBP's responsibility to enforce US law at the border and in accordance with relevant legal, policy, and privacy requirements."

[According to Vice, Venntel sources its data](#) from a collection of apps on users' cellphones, including weather, games, e-commerce and others, which collect information about user location, including which cell tower their phone is using at that time. While Venntel says its data is anonymized by the company assigning it a random designation, [the New York Times has demonstrated how even anonymized data](#) can be used to triangulate someone's identity based on daily life patterns.

[In February, the Wall Street Journal reported](#) that CBP and another DHS agency, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), had used the database to track down undocumented immigrants for several years. Contractual evidence from 2018 points to [ICE buying \\$190,000 in Venntel licenses in 2018](#) and spending a collective [\\$1.1 million in 2019 for three kinds of software](#), one of which was Venntel's.

[The Intercept revealed in June that in the weeks after](#) the police killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis, Minnesota, that sparked nationwide protests against police violence and white supremacy, the FBI updated its own contract with Venntel and penned an expedited deal with Dataminr, a company that strip-mines social media networks for desired information. [Dataminr is described as an "official partner" of Twitter](#), and The Intercept also revealed how the firm [helped police target communities of color](#) amid the protests.

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'Watershed Moment': Trump Shredding JCPOA Highlighted Futility of Nations Cooperating With US

by [Morgan Artyukhina](#)

The Trump administration's policy of shredding international agreements has driven many nations into the camp of US adversaries such as Russia and China, a former Pentagon senior analyst told Sputnik. However, even if Joe Biden wins the election, Washington's assumptive position as global center of gravity won't be immediately restored.

Michael Maloof, a former senior security policy analyst in the Office of the US Secretary of Defense, told [Radio Sputnik's Fault Lines](#) on Tuesday the "economic system has been weaponized and has become a political weapon of use out of concern that there is this alternative world order being looked at very, very seriously by the East."

[Interview begins at 96:30]

Malooof noted some of those nations include China and Russia, but also Turkey and Iran and "all countries that belong to the" Shanghai Cooperation Organization.

"As long as Western countries are abiding by the Western financial system - and even the Russian ruble is pegged to the US dollar - as long as the dollar is so-called 'world currency,' they're going to be able to be manipulated politically," the analyst told hosts Jamarl Thomas and Shane Stranahan.

"The Trump administration has used particularly sanctions, not [just] against its so-called adversaries, but even against its friends, which was rather incredible. That has actually prompted a number of Western allies to begin to look eastward to get out from under that, especially if Trump is going to be reelected," he said. "So that's going to make for an interesting time."

"I think that we're seeing countries such as Russia and China, faced with sanctions on themselves, already are getting to the point now where they can't be sanctioned any more, and as a result they're just ignoring them," Maloof said, noting this is the case "especially when it comes to trading with Iran, and they're just basically going to skirt around those US sanctions, because there's nothing more to be sanctioned."

These countries, he said, are "just going to continue and try to build up on this notion of this alternative world order and begin to trade increasingly in their own currencies and not be pegged to any particular currency, even though the Chinese yuan may be a possibility. But I think for now, countries are prepared to trade in their own currencies and get out from under the dependency [on] the US dollar as long as they're trading eastward. If they have to trade with the West, with the EU [European Union], then you have the Euro currency and the dollar that you have to contend with, and I think they want to pull away from that."

"I think what's happened as a result of sanctions, even on Western companies, particularly in the EU, that Trump has initiated for trading with Iran, and also countries that want to contribute to the defense programs in Russia, which is by US law a basis for sanctions, even on those companies, then they're going to be looking more toward doing something alternatively, and that is now to look for this alternative world order. I think we're going to see that develop more and more, especially if Trump gets reelected," he said.

"What happened back in May of 2018, [when Trump dropped out of the JCPOA \[Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action\]](#), the Iranian nuclear agreement, that was a watershed moment. I think that was a wake-up call to Eastern countries that 'we've gotta do something alternatively.' Here Iran was in full compliance at the time with that agreement, and notwithstanding the fact that they had agreements and were in compliance, the US broke it," Maloof said. This, he noted, damaged any future prospects of the US convincing other nations to enter into such deals for many years to come.

Maloof said that former White House national security adviser John Bolton had exerted a particularly hostile influence over arms reduction treaties into which the US had entered, [including the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty \(New START\)](#) and the Treaty on Open Skies.

"We're still seeing the remnants of neocons within the Trump administration such as [Secretary of State Mike] Pompeo and [Vice President Mike] Pence who want to perpetuate this notion of being a hard line toward Russia and especially toward China, and that's had ramifications. Even if Biden gets in, these countries are not going to trust working with the US," he noted.

Maloof said that depending on who wins the November 3 US presidential election, "this country will go in different directions, clearly. If Trump gets reelected, there will be the continued animosity with NATO and also with Turkey, probably more tolerance of Turkey. If Biden gets in, given the relationship that Biden has with [Turkish President Recep Tayyip] Erdogan, that could have the effect of creating a great schism within NATO, because Erdogan and Biden do not get

along. And as a consequence, Turkey may look more increasingly eastward, which benefits the Russian perspective of trying to drive a wedge into NATO and breaking it up.”

The analyst noted that as the alliance struggles to find a new identity and purpose after the end of the Cold War, NATO members are increasingly likely to spiral off in pursuit of their own interests, even as it continues to expand its membership eastward, into former Soviet allies and even former Soviet republics.

“Biden, if he is elected, will basically have very poor relations with Russia, and Trump, I think, may - even though he’s imposed a lot of sanctions - may want to ease up on them and may want to work with [Russian President] Vladimir Putin, because he’ll be a lame duck, and he won’t have anything to lose. And, notwithstanding charges of collusion, he’s going to move forward, because he feels that he needs to, that there are areas of cooperation that they really do need to work with Russia on,” Maloof said.

“Biden will have more of a closer tie with China, certainly, but the United States will have far less of one under Trump,” he added.

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US Judge Rejects Justice Department's Bid to Represent Trump in Rape Defamation Suit

A federal judge on Tuesday ruled that US President Donald Trump can be personally sued for defamation in connection to a lawsuit filed by writer E. Jean Carroll, who claims Trump raped her in the mid-1990s.

According to Judge Lewis Kaplan, Trump must remain a defendant in the lawsuit and cannot be replaced by the US government.

If the US Department of Justice (DoJ) had succeeded in having the US government represent the president in the lawsuit, the government would have been liable for any potential damages to Carroll, [CNBC reported](#).

Last month, the DoJ moved to replace Trump’s legal team with government lawyers to protect him against Carroll’s accusation that Trump raped her in a Manhattan department store in the 1990s, [the New York Times reported](#).

DoJ lawyers stated in [court papers](#) that Trump was acting in his official capacity as president when he denied even knowing Carroll. As a result, he could be defended by government lawyers, the department argued.

However, on Tuesday, Kaplan ruled that Trump was not acting in his official capacity when he refuted Carroll’s accusation.

“His comments concerned an alleged sexual assault that took place several decades before he took office, and the allegations have no relationship to the official business of the United States,” the judge wrote in a statement obtained by the Times.

“Even if he were such an employee, President Trump’s allegedly defamatory statements concerning Ms. Carroll would not have been within the scope of his employment. Accordingly, the motion to substitute the United States in place of President Trump is denied,” Kaplan added, [CNBC reported](#).

Following the court's Tuesday decision, Carroll released a statement saying she could now return to "getting the truth out."

"When I spoke out about what Donald Trump did to me in a department store dressing room, I was speaking out against an individual," Carroll said in a statement obtained by the Times.

"When Donald Trump called me a liar and denied that he had ever met me, he was not speaking on behalf of the United States."

Carroll first claimed in a [July 2019 New York Magazine article](#) that Trump raped her in a changing room in the Bergdorf Goodman store on Manhattan's Fifth Avenue. Trump has denied the accusations and has accused Carroll of trying to stir up publicity.

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Trump Pulls Some Florida Ads as Campaign Enters Final Week, Report Claims

US President Donald has pulled a portion of his advertising in Florida as he focuses his remaining campaign funds on four US states, namely Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio and Pennsylvania, during the final week of the 2020 presidential election season.

According to a report by [Bloomberg](#), which analyzed data from ad-tracking firm Advertising Analytics, the president still has \$350,275 budgeted to spend on ads in Florida through Election Day, but has canceled \$5.5 million worth of ad spending in the Sunshine State in the last two weeks of the campaign.

Since Labor Day, Trump has also cut \$24 million from his national ad budget; however, unlike the president, Democratic challenger Joe Biden has added \$197 million since Labor Day, spending three times as much as Trump on ads since early September.

"You have to have a ground game. Joe Biden does not have one. The president does," Tim Murtaugh, the communications director for the Trump reelection campaign, said in a Tuesday call with reporters, Bloomberg reported.

"That's why you saw the president close the gap in Florida."

According to Bloomberg, around 312,000 more registered Republicans have voted in person in Florida than registered Democrats in the last week. "Florida is going to go the president's way," Murtaugh noted. However, Democrats lead mail-in voting in the state by 615,000.

Biden, on the other hand, has budgeted \$8.3 million in Florida, \$7.1 million in Pennsylvania, \$5.3 million in Michigan and \$4.9 million in North Carolina for ads through Election Day, outspending Trump in every battleground state except for Minnesota and Ohio.

According to a report by [Forbes](#), the Biden campaign had raised \$822.2 million as of September 30, compared to Trump's \$557.8 million.

Records obtained by Forbes also show that while Trump poured tens of millions of dollars into his 2016 campaign, he has not donated any money whatsoever into his reelection bid.

"The Trump campaign has all the resources we need going into the home stretch of this election. We're running a comprehensive campaign that incorporates our massive ground game, travel to key states, and ads on digital, TV, and radio," Samantha Zager, the Trump campaign's deputy national secretary, said in a statement obtained by Forbes.

However, hours after Bloomberg's article was published, [Murtaugh issued a fresh statement on the piece](#), bashing the outlet for misusing quotes he'd given "on another topic," and stating that the Republican National Committee was footing some of the ad costs.

"The Bloomberg story is horribly wrong and should never have been written," he wrote, adding that the campaign "is up with a seven figure buy in Florida on broadcast TV alone."

"This is sloppy reporting at the highest level," Murtaugh concluded.

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'War Propaganda': US Media Uses Russiagate Playbook to Demonize China

The US corporate media has turned from Russiagate to demonizing China using the very same playbook, Margaret Kimberley, editor and senior columnist at Black Agenda Report and author of "Prejudicial: Black America and the Presidents," told Radio Sputnik's Political Misfits on Tuesday.

"We're seeing Russiagate live on, and it's going to live on because liberals are the ones who promoted it, and it doesn't matter who the next president is," Kimberley told show [hosts Michelle Witte and Bob Schlehuber](#).

"I think the Russiagate fraud was quite successful. I know people around the country that are convinced that the only reason Donald Trump is president is because of Russian interference ... I think any other similar effort [against China] will be equally successful, unfortunately," Kimberley explained, noting that the US administration and media have taken an anti-China stance.

"The Trump administration was very hostile to China. In the last few months, they closed the consulate in Houston, saying it was a nest of spies. They banned TikTok and WeChat. They have done everything in their power to try to put the genie back in the bottle and diminish China's economic power, which, by the way, isn't going to happen. Now we see liberals doing these same thing here," Kimberley added, explaining that despite the US' efforts, there will be no way to "undo China's economic power."

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, Trump has sought to demonize China, blaming it for the virus and accusing the country of attempting to hide its coronavirus outbreak. In addition, the Trump administration's trade war with China, which began in 2018, sought to discourage imports of Chinese goods.

According to a recent report by [MarketWatch](#), Trump's trade war with China has failed at reversing a US decline in manufacturing. Although the tariffs against China did reduce the trade deficit between the two countries in 2019, the overall US trade imbalance skyrocketed to \$84 billion in August as the US turned to importing cheaper products from Vietnam, Mexico and other countries.

The US media is also playing a role in demonizing China, Kimberley explained. Most recently, [Newsweek](#) published an article claiming that hundreds of US groups linked to the Chinese Communist Party are trying to influence American politics.

"Experts say the election-related activity is just a small part of a much larger and deeper campaign of influence and interference by China that's been taking place over many years - and is a far more worrisome threat long-term," the article states.

"Almost everything you read about China in corporate media is war propaganda," Kimberley noted.

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NXIVM Cult Leader Keith Raniere Sentenced to 120 Years in Prison
by [Evan Craighead](#)

NXIVM (pronounced "nexium") sex cult leader Keith Raniere has been sentenced to 120 years behind bars following his June 2019 conviction on charges of sex trafficking, racketeering and forced labor conspiracy.

Raniere, now 60 years old, was [found guilty in June 2019](#) of starving, raping, and branding women within his notorious cult NXIVM, which was active from 1998 to June 2018.

A total of 15 victims spoke out prior to the Tuesday sentencing, describing how Raniere's sexual abuse and manipulation has left a lasting impact on their emotional health and overall quality of life.

"You are a sexual predator, and you raped me," India Oxenberg said, as [reported by the New York Times](#). "When you touched me, I recoiled."

India Oxenberg and her mother, actor Catherine Oxenberg, were both members of NXIVM.

India Oxenberg accused Raniere of trying to poison their mother-daughter relationship.

During a [recent interview with "Dateline NBC,"](#) the 60-year-old apologized for the "tragedy" and "hurt" that ensued from the organization and its secret sorority "Dominus Obsequious Sororium" ("Master over Slave Women").

"I apologize for my participation in all of this -- the pain and suffering. I've clearly participated. I've been the leader of the community."

At the same time, Raniere argued that he was "innocent."

"This is a horrible tragedy with many, many people being hurt," he said. "There is a horrible injustice here. And whether you think I'm the devil or not, the justice process has to be examined."

Seagram's liquor heiress Clare Bronfman was previously [sentenced to 81 months in prison](#) and hit with a total of \$6.5 million in penalties for her role in the sex cult.

The heiress confessed to carrying out credit card fraud on Raniere's behalf. She also admitted to harboring someone who was living in the US illegally in exchange for unpaid "labor and services."

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Survey of American Voters Reveals Widespread Distrust in Elected Officials
by [Evan Craighead](#)

A new analysis of Google trend data has found that a growing number of US voters are turning to the popular search engine to research topics such as corruption and “Trump lies” amid the ongoing 2020 presidential election.

The survey, commissioned by [Mike Donavan’s Not Free America](#), argued that Americans’ distrust in the federal government has been amplified amid the COVID-19 novel coronavirus pandemic, protests for equality and police reform, the growth of social media and the 2020 presidential election.

“From corruption to cover-ups, we looked at distrust in government by analyzing more than 1,700 terms and keywords related to government distrust in every state via Google search trends data,” the release read.

A total of 2,024 self-reporting Americans were surveyed in the study, conducted from October 5 to October 7. An estimated 47% were male, and 53% were female. Republicans made up 32% of respondents, while Democrats and independents accounted for 40% and 22%, respectively. The survey found that people in states more likely to favor Democrats were also likely to search for the keywords “Trump lies.” On the other hand, those in states that leaned more to the right of the political spectrum were more likely to search for “Deep State,” or a similar variation. Furthermore, “Deep State” stood out as the most common search term in 15 states.

This could be related to the growth of [QAnon](#), the far-right conspiracy theory movement rooted in the belief that US President Donald Trump is the chosen one to combat Satan-worshipping pedophiles running a global child sex-trafficking ring.

At the same time, the analysis highlighted that state residents were also likely to search for lies spewed from their own elected officials.

“For example, ‘Bernie Sanders corrupt’ was the most searched term in Vermont, which is the state that [Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-VT)] represents,” the release read. “The same can be said for Illinois (‘JB Pritzker corrupt’), Georgia (‘Brian Kemp corrupt’), Colorado (‘Cory Gardner lies’), South Carolina (‘Lindsey Graham lies’)” and other states.

When it comes to the pandemic, more than 67% of respondents detailed that they rely on the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention for COVID-19 updates and information. Additionally, some 56% of those surveyed were found to have “very little” or “no trust” at all in the federal government for pandemic guidance.

Amid reports of voter suppression and Trump’s spread of [misinformation concerning mail-in voting](#), 33% of respondents said they do not have [faith in the 2020 election process](#).

“However, there appears to be more trust in in-person voting rather than mail-in ballots, with 75% saying they trust their in-person ballot will be counted fairly and accurately compared to 63% feeling the same about mail-in ballots,” the release detailed.

“In terms of political affiliation, independents expressed the most concern with this year’s election process, as 43% say they do not have trust and confidence in the process, along with 34% of Democrats and 20% of Republicans.”

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Climate Change Sets 2020 on Course to Be Warmest Year on Record - Report
by [Evan Craighead](#)

A new climate change report from the UK claims 2020 will likely be recorded as the warmest year in the last half-century for the Earth's average surface temperature, despite the lack of a major El Niño event, which generally contributed to prior years of record warmth.

[The CarbonBrief report](#) used data from [NASA](#), the US [National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration](#), the [Met Office Hadley Center](#), [Berkeley Earth](#), [Cowtan and Way](#) and the EU's [Copernicus Climate Change Service](#).

Data from each organization was compiled into a graph detailing the annual global mean surface temperatures for each year since 1970, including the first nine months of 2020.

"Surface temperature records have shown around 0.9C warming since the year 1970, a warming rate of about 0.18C per decade," the report detailed, highlighting that many months in 2020 "have set new temperature records."

At least one data set on global surface temperature reported record temperatures in this year's months of January, April, May, June, July and September. No month in 2020 has been listed lower than the fourth warmest of its kind on record.

"It is likely that a growing La Niña event in the tropical Pacific will modestly depress temperatures in the next few months, but its main effect will be felt in 2021, as global temperatures tend to lag behind those in the El Niño region of the Pacific by around three months," the report explained.

Scientists predicted that the impacts of such events could bring Earth cooler surface temperatures in 2021 than those of 2020.

The analysis also concluded that greenhouse gas concentrations have "reached a new high in 2020, driven by human emissions from fossil fuels, land use and agriculture."

It highlighted that CO₂, methane (CH₄) and nitrous oxide (N₂O) are the top three greenhouse gases responsible for the majority of "additional heat trapped by human activities."

"CO₂ is by far the largest factor, accounting for roughly 50% of the increase in "radiative forcing" since the year 1750," the report read. "The remaining 16% comes from other factors including carbon monoxide, black carbon and halocarbons, such as [chlorofluorocarbons]."

The first nine months of 2020 demonstrated record concentrations of CO₂, CH₄ and N₂O in the atmosphere.

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Videos: Tear Gas Deployed by Washington, DC, Police Amid Black Lives Matter Protests
by [Evan Craighead](#)

Officers with the Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) have met local demonstrators in the Washington, DC, area with tear gas and other crowd-control weapons amid protests in connection with the electric scooter crash death of a 20-year-old.

Demonstrations began Tuesday evening around the MPD's 4th District Station, where a window was broken.

MPD officers were later seen deploying tear gas and flash-bang grenades against demonstrators.

A Sputnik correspondent on the scene confirmed around 8:40 p.m. local time that officers stationed at the Walmart in the area had cordoned off a portion of Georgia Avenue and "have been periodically unloading flash-bangs and huge plumes of pepper spray."

The ongoing protests in DC follow a Friday night crash involving a scooter operated by 20-year-old Karon Hylton and a vehicle in Northwest DC's Brightwood Park neighborhood. Hylton was hospitalized on Friday and later died on Monday.

Citing the MPD, [NBC Washington reported](#) officers attempted to stop Hylton around 10:10 p.m. local time on October 23 after they saw him riding an electric scooter without a helmet. He then went down an alley and "collided " with a vehicle near the 700 block of Kennedy Street.

Family members, including Hylton's mother, and others close to the 20-year-old victim are demanding to see the body camera footage from the officers involved in the Friday incident.

Hylton's grieving mother was reportedly one of several civilians maced by MPD officers Tuesday evening.

Hylton's daughter turned 3 months old on Monday, the same day of his death.

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'Diet' Beverages Found to be Associated With Heart Complications - Study
by [Victoria Teets](#)

Newly published research concludes that artificially sweetened beverages (ASBs) may not be a heart-healthy alternative to sugary drinks.

The study, published Monday in the [Journal of the American College of Cardiology](#), investigates the relationship between the consumption of ASBs and the risk of cardiovascular disease (CVD) in a large group of people.

Researchers analyzed data from over 100,000 adult French volunteers participating in the [French NutriNet-Santé cohort](#), an ongoing nutritional study launched in 2009 in which participants fill out three validated, web-based, 24-hour dietary records every six months. The study is expected to end in 2029.

The volunteers for the study were divided into three groups: nonconsumers, low consumers and high consumers of diet or sugary beverages.

The category of "sugary beverages" included soft drinks, fruit drinks and syrups containing at least 5% sugar, as well as 100% fruit juice. The category of "diet drinks" consisted of beverages containing non-nutritive sweeteners, such as aspartame or sucralose, as well as natural ones like stevia.

The authors state that while following up on the data from 2011 to 2019, drinking sugary beverages and drinking ASBs were separately compared to any first cases of "stroke, transient ischemic attack, myocardial infarction, acute coronary syndrome and angioplasty."

They eliminated early cases of CVDs during the first three years and adjusted for a "range of confounders" that might skew the data. What they discovered was that compared to people who didn't drink ASBs, high consumers were 20% more likely to have a CVD at any one time.

This result was similar to the difference in CVD occurrence between nonconsumers and high consumers of sugary drinks.

However, the authors do note that correlation does not necessarily imply causation:

"To establish a causal link, replication in other large-scale prospective cohorts and mechanistic investigations are needed," researchers noted in their findings.

Due to public health interest, a [2019 study](#) also set out to answer whether the consumption of sugary beverages or ASBs is associated with additional risk of mortality. Researchers examined the relationship between long-term consumption of sugary drinks and ASBs with the risk of mortality in adults living in the US.

They concluded that consumption of sugary beverages was "positively associated with mortality primarily through CVD mortality and showed a graded association with dose."

This study states that "sugar-sweetened beverages (SSBs) are the single largest source of added sugar in the US diet. They include the full spectrum of carbonated and noncarbonated soft drinks, fruit drinks, and sports drinks that contain added caloric sweeteners such as high fructose corn syrup, sucrose, or fruit juice concentrates."

The authors write, "In epidemiological studies, intake of SSBs has been associated with weight gain and a higher risk of type 2 diabetes mellitus, coronary heart disease, and stroke."

Prior to their study, the researchers note, there had been very few studies examining the association between the consumption of such beverages and mortality.