

Wednesday 09/09/20

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Videos: San Francisco Skies Blackened as Wildfires Burn Across Several US States

Mass evacuation orders have been issued across several US states such as California, Oregon, Idaho, Montana and Washington, as emergency officials work tirelessly to contain multiple wildfires threatening the lives of many along the US' West Coast.

In California's San Francisco Bay Area, residents awoke early Wednesday to a dark, thick blanket of smoke and pumpkin-orange skies as a result of the growing wildfires. Photos shared on social media show that not even the sun's rays were able to penetrate the smokey air. Many residents shared images of the hazy air, noting their shock at the lack of light in the later morning hours as they underscored the toxicity of the sky.

At present, a total of 42 fires are burning throughout the Golden State, with the most recent being dubbed the Willow Fire by officials after it erupted early Wednesday. The blaze has burned over 1,000 acres and has yet to be contained.

The Willow Fire alone has prompted the evacuation of some 3,000 residents in the Loma Rica area.

Of the wildfires churning in California, the largest is the Santa Clara Unit (SCU) Lightning Complex of blazes, which started on August 16 and has since burned over 390,000 acres. It's presently 95% contained.

According to California's Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (Cal Fire), the SCU Lightning Complex fires spread through multiple counties, including Santa Clara, Alameda, Contra Costa, San Joaquin, Merced and Stanislaus. In its wrath, the fire complex has damaged or destroyed at least 250 structures.

Many of California's wildfires began in late August as a result of lightning strikes across the state's northern region. This year alone, wildfires have burned over 2.5 million acres in the state. Cal Fire noted in its Wednesday update that 14,000 firefighters are currently battling 28 major blazes in the state, and that overnight wind conditions "allowed many fires to grow significantly with extreme fire behavior."

Elsewhere, in nearby Oregon, new fires emerged as strong winds continued to blow through the region, ultimately giving more fuel to the state's Santiam and Lionshead Fires - the biggest fires growing in Marion County, which have already burned through some 200,000 acres.

Almost 100,000 homes and businesses were without power Wednesday in Oregon. The state's Office of Emergency Management reported that at least 35 fires were raging across Oregon.

Oregon Gov. Kate Brown approved an emergency order Tuesday, freeing up resources for fire crews. The Democratic governor noted that the current wildfires are "proving to be an unprecedented and significant fire event for our state and frankly for the entire West Coast."

Brown revealed in a Wednesday update that several communities have been substantially destroyed and "hundreds of homes lost." She predicts that loss of life is expected.

In Washington state, residents haven't fared much better. Wildfires burned through 330,000 acres of land within a period of just 24 hours this week.

Washington Gov. Jay Inslee [told reporters during a Tuesday news conference](#) that the situation was unprecedented. "These fires are extraordinary. They are doing things we have never seen before - as to how fast they spread," he said.

Strong winds felt in California, Oregon and Washington state have also driven wildfires in Alaska, Arizona, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Texas, Utah and even Wyoming.

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Silly Husky Sings Along to Classic '90s Song p Video Club

Belting out a couple of great howls, one adorable husky recently managed to put to shame all other interpretations of the 4 Non Blondes' classic 1990s hit "What's Up."

Hailing from Lansing, Kansas, husky Cash and his human mom Megan Vaughan opted to do the song some justice with the pair singing together; however, it might be safe to say that Cash stole the show.

"Cash loves to help me practice my vocals - or maybe he's telling me to shut up," wrote Vaughan in her YouTube post.

While it's anyone's guess on what Cash's true intentions were, the furball definitely put a new spin on the 4 Non Blondes hit.

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US Cobra Ball Spy Plane Spotted Adopting Malaysian ID to Spy on Chinese Missile Test

In the third such incident in a week, a US spy plane has been caught changing its transponder code to a civilian aircraft to disguise itself and spy on China - this time, peeking in on a Chinese missile test in the Yellow Sea.

Early Wednesday morning, a US Air Force RC-135S Cobra Ball aircraft took off from Kadena Air Force Base on the Japanese island of Okinawa, bound for the Yellow Sea. However, researchers at a Chinese think tank soon noticed the US plane had been replaced on aircraft-tracking sites by a mysterious Malaysian plane, which then flew orbits for six hours over the Yellow Sea before flying for Okinawa.

According to the South China Sea Probing Initiative (SCSPI), a think tank associated with China's Peking University, the plane's behavior matched that of an RC-135S Cobra Ball sent to watch People's Liberation Army missile tests in the Bohai Sea that day. The Cobra Ball is a specialized intelligence aircraft [with equipment for collecting data on ballistic missile tests](#).

[Sputnik reported the day prior that a relative of the Cobra Ball](#), an RC-135W Rivet Joint signals intelligence plane, had performed a similar maneuver over the South China Sea. In that incident, the Rivet Joint also disguised itself as a Malaysian plane before flying back and forth in the waterway between the Paracel Islands and Hainan for several hours.

The maneuver is accomplished by changing the plane's International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) hex code identifier, [a unique number tied to its ICAO registration](#) that tells other planes, ships and radar sites information such as type and nationality, as well as position in the sky. The US spy planes must have turned off their US transponders and turned other ones with [fake hex codes in the range of those used by Malaysian aircraft](#).

[Sputnik has documented numerous other instances of US spy planes](#) engaging in this practice or using civilian aircraft as cover - which in at least one instance resulted in a Korean airliner getting shot down by a Soviet interceptor over the Soviet Union's Sakhalin Island in 1983, killing hundreds.

China's Maritime Safety Administration has closed off several parts of the Yellow Sea for military drills over the past few weeks, with the latest including live-fire exercises on Tuesday and Wednesday, [according to India's Economic Times](#).

On Tuesday, a European Space Agency Sentinel satellite managed to capture a photo of [China's sole commissioned Type 055 destroyer, the Nanchang](#), firing a missile during drills just off the Liaodong Peninsula.

The launch happened in the same Yellow Sea restricted zone highlighted by the SCSPI in relation to the RC-135S flight, meaning the spy plane could have been watching the drill in question or collecting information about its aftermath.

Days earlier, China's two aircraft carriers, [Liaoning and Shandong, drilled together for the first time](#) in another part of the waterway.

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Poland Interested in Lockheed Martin's 'Next-Generation' Drones to Complement F-35 Buy

A vice president at US defense contractor Lockheed Martin recently revealed Warsaw's interest in the company's futuristic drones to complement the nearly three dozen F-35 stealth aircraft Poland signed a deal to buy earlier this year.

At the [MSPO international defense industry exhibition in Kielce, Poland](#), earlier this week, Jack O'Banion, the vice president for strategy and customer requirements at Lockheed Martin's Skunk Works division, said the hosting country was interested in his company's next-generation drones.

Both the US and Poland are interested in a next-generation UAS [unmanned aerial system] capability," [O'Banion said at a news briefing, Defense News reported](#). "We've seen the Polish Ministry of Defense's Technical Modernization Plan, which was released last year, which outlines the UAS need," he said, noting there was "significant overlap" between US and Polish drone needs.

In January, the NATO ally signed [a deal to buy some 32 F-35A stealth aircraft](#), which are also made by Lockheed Martin and which will begin arriving in 2024. The deal is worth \$4.6 billion. It's unclear which drones Warsaw is thinking about getting, but some of Lockheed's advanced unmanned aircraft projects include [the Stalker XE, a propane-powered, hand-launched drone](#) that can stay aloft for nearly 13 hours, and the RQ-170 Sentinel.

Nicknamed "the Beast of Kandahar" for its role in the US war in Afghanistan, the Sentinel is a mysterious, delta wing-shaped stealth drone [that we know more about from Iran](#), which shot one down in 2011, than we do from the tight-lipped US Air Force.

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'Don't Want to Show Panic': Trump Says He 'Perhaps' Misled US Public Over Seriousness of COVID-19

US President Donald Trump conceded on Wednesday that he had "perhaps" misled the US public regarding the danger of the COVID-19 novel coronavirus in the early months of the outbreak, following the release of interview quotes by journalist Bob Woodward.

On Wednesday, Woodward released excerpts from his upcoming book "Rage" that included statements by Trump in interviews with the journalist in which he revealed [he knew the dangers of COVID-19 long before they were revealed to the US public](#).

At [a news conference later on Wednesday](#) in which Trump announced new additions to his list of potential US Supreme Court nominees, a reporter asked Trump if he had indeed misled the public, as Woodward's book claims.

"In order to reduce panic, perhaps that's so," Trump said.

"Certainly i'm not going to drive this country or the world into a frenzy," he told reporters. "the last thing you want to do is create panic ... we don't want to show panic."

"We had to show calm," he continued. "The last thing we can show is panic or excitement or fear ... we had to take care of the situation we were given."

Trump said he was "very open" about information he had, including with Woodward, although he noted he considers the journalist's book "just another political hit job."

When another reporter followed up about the timeline of Trump's public statements about COVID-19 as compared to when he told Woodward he knew about certain dangers, Trump deflected, saying that in February, he "didn't really think it was going to be to the point where it was. All of a sudden, the world was infected, the entire world was infected, everyone was scrambling around looking where to buy face masks and all of the other things," which is why he only invoked the Defense Production Act in March.

Trump then abruptly ended the news conference.

Earlier on Wednesday, [White House Press Secretary Kayleigh McEnany said Trump](#) "has never lied to the American public on COVID. The president was expressing calm, and his actions reflect that."

Since the COVID-19 pandemic began, more than 6.3 million Americans have been infected with the novel coronavirus, and roughly 190,000 have died, [according to data compiled by the New York Times](#).

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Trump Boasts of Nuclear Weapon 'You Haven't Even Seen or Heard About' in Woodward Book

Excerpts from journalist Bob Woodward's forthcoming book "Rage" include comments by US President Donald Trump about the Pentagon having a nuclear weapons system "you haven't even seen or heard about."

On Wednesday, the Washington Post, of which Woodward is an associate editor, [published excerpts of the journalist's forthcoming book](#) on the Trump presidency.

The statement about a secret nuclear weapons system comes in a section in which Trump discusses the period of his presidency in 2017 when the US and Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) seemed on the brink of war.

"I have built a nuclear - a weapons system that nobody's ever had in this country before. We have stuff that you haven't even seen or heard about," Trump told Woodward, adding the US has "stuff" Russian President Vladimir Putin and Chinese President Xi Jinping "have never heard about before."

"There's nobody - what we have is incredible," he said.

The remark caught the eyes of readers, who mulled over what Trump might be referring to - or, indeed, if his statements were accurate at all. Trump has been known to overstate or misstate facts about military technology, from [the "super duper" hypersonic missile he claimed](#) was 17 times faster than present weapons to his persistent belief that the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter is [actually invisible to the human eye](#), not just to enemy radar arrays.

James Acton, the co-director of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace's Nuclear Policy Program, said on Twitter Wednesday that Trump could have been referring to the W76-2, a low-yield nuclear warhead whose manufacture was ordered by the White House [in the 2018 Nuclear Posture Review](#).

The W76-2 has a reported yield of just 5 kilotons - one-third the power of the bomb that destroyed Hiroshima, Japan, in August 1945. When the Nuclear Posture Review was published in February 2018, the suggestion drew widespread condemnation, as the option of a low-yield nuclear device could make using the weapon seem more palatable to the White House.

When the Joint Chiefs of Staff accidentally [published a document called "Nuclear Weapons: Planning and Targeting"](#) in June 2019, that fear became far more palpable.

The document, which was quickly taken down but [preserved by the Federation of American Scientists](#), describes how commanders could introduce nuclear weapons into a theater of operations if they "could create conditions for decisive results and the restoration of strategic stability."

Then just last month, the US Air Force Nuclear Weapons Center posted a request for information for contractors with [ideas about hypersonic upgrades](#) to intercontinental ballistic

missiles, which the US uses to deliver nuclear strikes. When asked about it, the Air Force quickly [took down the notice and assiduously denied](#) pursuing a hypersonic nuclear weapon, pointing to existing pledges not to do so.

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Iran Air Attempting to Sell Off Ancient Airliners Amid Suffocating Sanctions

Iran's national airline is looking to rid itself of some old aircraft as US sanctions continue to strangle the country's economy.

According to a recent notice, Iran Air will auction off one dozen passenger aircraft that haven't flown in years.

The list of jets includes some real items of aviation history, such as Airbus' flagship A300 jet, the uniquely configured and notoriously noisy Boeing 727 and several Boeing 747SPs - a short-body model the planemaker only built a handful of back in the 1970s.

[The Drive noted that in light of extensive sanctions](#) placed on Iran Air by the United States, the most likely buyer will be another Iranian airline, which will probably use the jets for spare parts. [The US has specifically targeted Iran Air](#), claiming the country's airline industry helps its military, which US President Donald Trump has claimed without evidence is responsible for terrorism around the world.

Last month, two Emirati airliners, Parthia Cargo and Delta Parts Supply FZC, [were sanctioned by the US Treasury Department](#) after it was discovered they had provided parts and logistics services to Mahan Air, Iran's largest air carrier.

Another option for a buyer is the Iranian air force, [which blew out one of the engines on its only Boeing 747-200](#) during an engine test last month. The air force uses the aircraft as a transport and even as a mid-air refueling tanker.

Iran's airliners aren't the only institutions that make use of ancient jets. The Iranian air force is the world's [sole remaining operator of the Grumman F-14 Tomcat](#), a carrier-based fighter the US sold to Tehran shortly before the 1979 Islamic Revolution that made the two countries bitter enemies.

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Australian Telescope Finds 'No Sign of Intelligent Life' After Scanning 10 Million Star Systems

Researchers detected no communications from extraterrestrial life after using a radio telescope in outback Western Australia to scan at least 10 million stars systems for signals of alien frequencies.

In a [new paper](#) published this month in the journal Publications of the Astronomical Society of Australia, astronomers at the the Astronomical Society of Australia describe using the

Murchison Widefield Array (MWA) telescope to explore the sky around the Vela constellation, which is visible in the southern celestial hemisphere.

"The MWA is a unique telescope, with an extraordinarily wide field-of-view that allows us to observe millions of stars simultaneously," Chenoa Tremblay, one of the study authors, [told Phys.org](#).

"We observed the sky around the constellation of Vela for 17 hours, looking more than 100 times broader and deeper than ever before ... With this dataset, we found no technosignatures - no sign of intelligent life," Tremblay added.

Technosignatures refer to radio emissions at frequencies similar to those used in FM radio broadcasts, which could signal the presence of intelligent life.

Even though the search conducted during the study is the broadest search for extraterrestrial life completed yet, Steven Tingay, who was involved in the study, was not surprised by the results.

"As Douglas Adams noted in 'The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy,' 'space is big, really big,'" Tingay said.

"And even though this was a really big study, the amount of space we looked at was the equivalent of trying to find something in the Earth's oceans but only searching a volume of water equivalent to a large backyard swimming pool," he added.

The MWA is located at the Murchison Radio-astronomy Observatory in Western Australia.

The observatory was built by the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organization (CSIRO), an Australian Government agency that conducts scientific research.

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Pakistani Man Sentenced to Death for Alleged Blasphemous Texts

A court in the Pakistani city of Lahore on Tuesday sentenced a Christian man to death for allegedly committing blasphemy.

Asif Pervaiz, 37, has been in custody since 2013, when he was accused of sending blasphemous text messages to a former boss at work, the man's lawyer, Saif-ul-Malook, [recently told Al Jazeera](#).

"The complainant was a supervisor in a hosiery factory where Asif was working under him," Malook told the outlet.

"He denied the allegations and said that this man was trying to get him to convert to Islam," Malook added.

During his testimony on Tuesday, Pervaiz denied the charges and said that his supervisor accused him of sending blasphemous text messages after he refused to change his religion. However, the complainant in the case, Muhammad Saeed Khokher, has denied attempting to convert Pervaiz to Islam.

"He has taken this defense after the fact, because he had no other clear defense," Khokher's lawyer, Ghulam Mustafa Chaudhry, told Al Jazeera. "That's why he accused him of trying to convert him."

Under Pakistan's strict blasphemy laws, those found guilty of the crime can be issued the death penalty.

According to a [2019 report by the Human Rights Watch](#), at least 1,472 people were charged under Pakistan's blasphemy provisions between 1987 and 2016. In addition, although no executions have been carried out, at least 17 people convicted of blasphemy in the country were on death row at the time the report was released.

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AstraZeneca Rejects Claim COVID-19 Trial Was Halted Over Case of Transverse Myelitis

British-Swedish multinational pharmaceutical company AstraZeneca has rejected claims that its third round of trials for a COVID-19 vaccine was halted over a case of transverse myelitis, a neurological disorder characterized by inflammation of both sides of a section of the spinal cord. According to the company, its COVID-19 vaccine trial was paused in July after a volunteer was found to have multiple sclerosis, a disease that causes damage to the central nervous system. However, the diagnosis was found to be unrelated to the vaccine.

"Reports claiming to be based on comments made earlier today by our CEO stating that we have confirmed that a participant in our clinical trial suffered from transverse myelitis are incorrect," notes a [statement](#) released by AstraZeneca Wednesday.

"He stated that there is no final diagnosis and that there will not be one until more tests are carried out. Those tests will be delivered to an independent safety committee that will review the event and establish a final diagnosis. We can also confirm that there was a brief trial pause in July while a safety review took place after one volunteer was confirmed to have an undiagnosed case of multiple sclerosis, which the independent panel concluded was unrelated to the vaccine," the statement adds.

Earlier Wednesday, multiple outlets erroneously reported that the shutdown of AstraZeneca's Phase 3 trial occurred after a woman in the United Kingdom experienced neurological symptoms related to transverse myelitis. News reports falsely quoted Pascal Soriot, the drug-maker's chief executive, in relation to the matter.

AstraZeneca's vaccine, known as AZD1222, uses an adenovirus that carries a gene for one of the proteins in SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19. While Phase 2/3 trials were previously started in Brazil, South Africa and the UK, the drug-maker launched its Phase 3 trial in the US in late August. The vaccine is being administered to up to 30,000 adults aged 18 years or over across the country.

"Participants are being randomized to receive two doses of either the potential vaccine or a saline control, four weeks apart, with twice as many participants receiving the potential vaccine than the saline control. The trial is assessing efficacy and safety of the potential vaccine in all participants, and local and systemic reactions and immune responses will be assessed in 3,000 participants," [AstraZeneca wrote in a September 3 news release](#).

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'I Committed the Crime': Danish Inventor Confesses to Kim Wall Murder in New Documentary

Peter Madsen, who was sentenced to life in prison for the murder of Swedish journalist Kim Wall in 2017, admitted to the crime for the first time in a documentary series entitled "Secret Recordings with Peter Madsen," which was broadcast for the first time Wednesday.

The 49-year-old inventor, who killed Wall aboard his homemade submarine in Denmark in August 2017, answered "yes" when asked by a journalist whether he killed the 30-year-old woman. At the time of the interview, the unidentified journalist was secretly recording their conversation.

"There is only one who is guilty, and that is me," Madsen said in the documentary, [AFP reported](#).

"It's my fault she died. And it's my fault because I committed the crime. It's all my fault," he added.

During his trial, Madsen claimed that Wall's death was an accident, although he did admit to throwing her dismembered body into the Baltic Sea.

"Apart from August 10, 2017, I've never done anything to anyone," Madsen said in the documentary series.

The series is based on more than 20 hours of such secretly recorded phone calls between the journalist and Madsen, who was in prison serving a life sentence for Wall's murder.

Madsen later permitted the journalist to use the recordings for the documentary.

Wall, an award-winning reporter, came in contact with Madsen after becoming interested in writing a story about his homemade submarine while she was staying in Copenhagen, Denmark, with her boyfriend. Madsen was convicted in April 2018 on charges of murder and sexual assault.

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Over Half a Million US Kids Diagnosed With COVID-19 Since Pandemic Onset - Report

More than half a million children in the US have tested positive for COVID-19, according to the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP).

Children represent 9.8% of all COVID-19 cases in the US, where [more than a total of 6.5 million cases](#) have been reported, according to the organization. The total number of confirmed cases in US children is 513,415.

The AAP also reported that there were 70,630 new child cases between August 20 and September 3, which represents a 16% increase over that two-week time period. In all states reporting, 0.3% to 8.3% of child COVID-19 cases resulted in hospitalization, and 0% to 0.2% of all child COVID-19 cases resulted in death.

“At this time, it appears that severe illness due to COVID-19 is rare among children. However, states should continue to provide detailed reports on COVID-19 cases, testing, hospitalizations, and mortality by age and race/ethnicity so that the effects of COVID-19 on children’s health can be documented and monitored,” [the AAP wrote in its update](#).

The AAP’s analysis is based on data from the health department websites of 49 states, in addition to those of New York City, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico and Guam.

The AAP’s analysis is not the only recent report regarding COVID-19 in children, as new research published Friday in The Lancet journal stated that the long-term effects of multisystem inflammatory syndrome in children (MIS-C), a pediatric disease linked to the coronavirus, could be lethal.

MIS-C, which has affected [almost 800 children in the US](#) so far as of September 3, is similar to Kawasaki disease, which causes inflammation of blood vessels throughout the body and typically appears in children younger than 5 years old.

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Global COVID-19 Death Toll Exceeds 900,000 - Johns Hopkins

The global COVID-19 death toll has exceeded 900,000, according to a Johns Hopkins University tally.

The [countries with the highest numbers of deaths](#) are the US, Brazil, India, Mexico and the United Kingdom, in that order, with around 190,000, 127,000, 73,000, 68,000 and 41,000 fatalities, respectively.

Countries with the highest case numbers include the US, India, Brazil, Russia and Peru. More than 18 million people across the world have recovered from the virus.

The COVID-19 pandemic is caused by SARS-CoV-2, which was first identified in December 2019 in Wuhan, China. The World Health Organization designated the outbreak a pandemic on March 11.

Countries across the world are racing to develop a vaccine to curtail the pandemic, with Russia becoming the first country to approve such a drug for distribution in August. However, some scientists and health experts have cast doubt on the safety and effectiveness of the Russian vaccine - dubbed Sputnik V - which has yet to undergo Phase 3 trials.

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‘Wake-Up Call’: 1 European Death in 7 Linked to Increased Air Pollution, Heat Waves

The European Environment Agency (EEA) on Tuesday revealed that environmental factors like air pollution and heat waves are responsible for around 13% of all deaths in Europe. Guy

McPherson, scientist and professor emeritus of natural resources and ecology at the University of Arizona, joined Radio Sputnik Wednesday to discuss the report.

According to [the report](#), a total of 630,000 deaths in the European Union and Britain were caused by environmental factors in 2012, which is the latest year for which data was available.

"These deaths are preventable and can be significantly reduced through efforts to improve environmental quality," the report noted, adding that air pollution contributes to more than 400,000 premature deaths each year in Europe.

"There are so many things we just take for granted, that we don't ever question ... Industrial civilization is mostly perceived as being uniformly good, just like hope is perceived as being universally good and fear is perceived as being universally bad. So we seem to be committed to a binary way of thinking, that the good, bad, the polluted, the unpolluted, the clean, the unclean - and that comes with a lot of baggage, obviously, and misinformation along the way,"

McPherson told [hosts Michelle Witte and Bob Schlehuber](#).

"We take the bad as if it's not so bad, because we are firmly committed to taking advantage of the privileges that come our way, so it's yet another wake-up call," McPherson added about the report.

"All we've done is export [the industrial revolution] to other countries. How much material was purchased in the US this year that came from China, that came from industrialization in China, that came to a very great extent from burning coal and natural gas in China? A lot. A tremendous amount, McPherson noted.

The report also found that prolonged exposure to pollutants leads to diabetes, lung disease and cancer, and potentially even higher mortality rates among COVID-19 patients. Despite these startling findings, many developed countries continue to export industrial activities that cause pollution to other countries.

"It's one interconnected world, it's one interconnected community ... and the fact that we have offshored vehicle manufacturing to Mexico and then to Asia doesn't mean we aren't still responsible for those manufacturing outcomes when we're the ones buying the cars. It's not just cars obviously; it's almost everything from toothpaste to toothbrushes to automobiles to almost every piece of everything you find in your house," McPherson noted.

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Listen: CNN President Called Trump 'The Boss,' Floated Weekly Show in Leaked Audio From 2016

Newly obtained audio from March 2016 features Jeff Zucker, president of CNN, referring to then-Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump as "the boss" as he discusses the media future of the businessman-turned-politician with then-Trump "fixer" Michael Cohen.

[Fox News host Tucker Carlson on Tuesday](#) debuted a new recording obtained by the "Tucker Carlson Tonight" team that included audio from a March 10, 2016, phone discussion between Cohen and Zucker, the latter of whom appears to be attempting to develop a closer relationship with the legal team of the then-GOP frontrunner.

"You guys have had great instincts, great guts and great understanding of everything. But you're missing the boat on how it works going forward," Zucker said to Cohen in the recording, according to Carlson.

Carlson detailed that Trump's lawyer then asked Zucker to send an email explaining the details of how things would work "going forward." The CNN president can be heard in a clip of the conversation referring to Trump as "the boss."

"I'm very conscious of not putting too much in email, as you're a lawyer, as you understand," Zucker told Cohen. "And, you know, as fond as I am of the boss, he also has a tendency, like, you know, if I call him or I email him, he then is capable of going out at his next rally and saying that we just talked, and I can't have that, if you know what I'm saying."

The executive reportedly continued to tell Cohen of the possible dangers of directly communicating with Trump, but ultimately decided to speak with him ahead of a Republican primary debate hosted by CNN.

"It's not that I don't want to talk to [Trump] every day. I've just got to be careful, because, I've just got to be careful ... I just don't want him talking about it on the campaign trail," Carlson said, quoting alleged comments made by Zucker. "But you know what? I'm going to give him a call right now and I'm going [to] wish him luck in the debate tonight."

Zucker went on to reveal that he had "all these proposals" for the US president, such as a "weekly show with him and all this stuff."

Before ending his call with Cohen, Zucker offered up some advice on how Trump should deal with Sen. Marco Rubio (R-FL), who consistently referred to Trump as a "[conman](#)" and "[con artist](#)" during the 2016 GOP primary season in which both men vied for the party's presidential nomination.

"You know what you should do? Whoever's around him today should just be calling him a conman all day so he's used to it, so that when he hears it from Rubio, it doesn't matter," Zucker can be heard saying in the recording.

"Hey conman, hey conman, hey conman.' He thinks that's his name, you know.

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US Has Revoked Over 1,000 Visas to Chinese Nationals Over Alleged Military Ties - State Department

The US has revoked more than 1,000 visas belonging to Chinese nationals linked to the People's Liberation Army, according to Wednesday statements issued by a US State Department spokesperson.

"We continue to welcome legitimate students and scholars from China who do not further the Chinese Communist Party's goals of military dominance," the spokesperson expressed in an email to Reuters.

Acting Secretary of Homeland Security Chad [Wolf expounded on the administration's decision](#) amid his 2020 State of the Homeland speech on Wednesday.

"We are blocking visas for certain Chinese graduate students and researchers with ties to China's military fusion strategy to prevent them from stealing and otherwise appropriating sensitive research," he said, accusing China of "launching new aggressive tactics" to steal US intelligence.

This US decision comes as the latest development in a series of federal [actions against Chinese students](#). The White House issued a [proclamation](#) back in May accusing China of engaging in the "acquisition of sensitive United States technologies and intellectual property to modernize its military is a threat to our Nation's long-term economic vitality and the safety and security of the American people."

According to the document, some Chinese students studying in the US, "mostly post-graduate students and post-doctorate researchers," have actually been operating as "non-traditional collectors of intellectual property" for Beijing.

Wolf noted on Wednesday that the federal government has begun "targeting illicit Chinese manufacturers" that it believes have "exploited the COVID-19 pandemic" through the production of "fraudulent, prohibited PPE [personal protective equipment] and medical supplies."

He added that the Trump administration would also be taking steps to prevent "goods produced from slave labor from entering our markets."

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Iran Begins Construction on Advanced Centrifuge Production Hall Near Natanz Nuke Site

Iran is constructing a production hall for advanced uranium enrichment centrifuges as a response to the recent fire meant to "sabotage" the country's development of the machines, according to Tuesday comments issued by the country's nuclear chief.

"Due to the sabotage, it was decided to build a more modern, larger and more comprehensive hall in all dimensions in the heart of the mountain near Natanz. Of course, the work has begun," said Ali Akbar Salehi, Iranian diplomat and head of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI), [according to Reuters](#), which cited state TV.

The "[sabotage](#)" Salehi spoke of refers to the July 2 fire and subsequent explosion that took place at the Natanz nuclear site, the country's largest uranium enrichment facility.

Iranian officials initially suspected a gas leak was responsible for the incident, which did not result in radioactive leaks or other significant damage, but a more thorough investigation has since been launched by Tehran.

Behrouz Kamalvandi, spokesperson for the AEOI, [recently told IRIB TV1](#) that the probe may be nearing an end.

"The security agencies are thoroughly investigating what happened in Natanz, which was sabotage. As far as we know, they have managed to identify the forces [responsible for the sabotage], identify the causes, details, and methods."

Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesperson Saeed Khatibzadeh [previously stated](#) that Tehran "will give the necessary response" to the alleged sabotage incident "if it comes from abroad."

This comes amid ongoing tensions between Washington and Tehran and the United Nations Security Council's (UNSC) rejection of a US-led draft resolution to extend the weapons embargo initiated under the 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo [declared prior to the UNSC vote last month](#) that Washington will do "everything that we can within our diplomatic tool set to ensure that [the] arms embargo doesn't expire" on October 18.

"We have been unambiguous about the fact we have no intention of allowing this arms embargo to expire. None whatsoever," Pompeo underscored.

Tehran, on the other hand, has expressed that it intends to [increase its exports of domestically made weapons](#) following the expiration of the arms embargo.

"We will surely be able to export more military equipment than we need to import. Therefore, we will surely use our legal right [to sell arms] in dealing with our allies once the restrictions are lifted," Iranian Defense Minister Amir Hatami said, as reported by Iran's Student News Network.

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US Fails to Control Lebanon Because Hezbollah, Amal 'Represent the Majority' - Journo

While US officials claim that their recent sanctioning of former Lebanese government ministers was designed to expose the corruption of the country's politicians, one expert tells Sputnik that Washington's recent action is nothing more than a continuation of a longstanding, but unsuccessful, Western campaign to control Lebanon.

US Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs David Schenke declared on Tuesday that political allies of Hezbollah will have to "choose between bullets and ballots," as they stand to be held "accountable for any enabling of [Hezbollah's] terrorist and illicit activities," [Arab News reported](#).

This came amid the two-day Lebanon leg of Schenke's tour of the Middle East, which also included stops in Qatar and Kuwait.

That same day, the US Department of the Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control [sanctioned](#) former Lebanese Minister of Transportation and Public Works Yusuf Finyanus and former Lebanese Minister of Finance Ali Hassan Khalil, who Washington claims "provided material support to [Hezbollah] and engaged in corruption."

Laith Marouf, an award-winning multimedia producer as well as a media policy and law consultant with the Community Media Advocacy Center, joined Radio Sputnik's [By Any Means Necessary](#) on Wednesday and told hosts Sean Blackmon and Jacquie Luqman that what is occurring right now is a continuation of "twenty-some" years of attempts by Washington and "imperial forces" to control Lebanon's government.

Marouf explained that Khalil is a member of the Amal Movement, which is "allied with Hezbollah," and Finyanus is aligned with the Christian Marada party of Suleiman Frangieh. These parties are "allied with the sovereigntist movements in Lebanon," which virtually means they "represent the majority of the [country's] population."

Because of this, he asserted, the US' attempts to gain control have been unsuccessful. "The majority of the Lebanese have lived [through] the crises," he said, referring to a "cycle" of Western military aggression and sanctions that has occurred in the years following the Lebanese Civil War.

"There's not going to be a change in the population demographics without a major, major war," he argued.