

Thursday 09/10/20

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Video: US Corrections Deputy Placed on Leave After Violent Attack on Teen, Probe Underway

A corrections deputy with Florida's Sarasota County Sheriff's Office was recently placed on administrative leave after he viciously attacked a teenager who had reportedly been uncooperative during a police lineup at a juvenile center.

The violent altercation occurred on September 1 at the state's Sarasota County Juvenile Assessment Center and was captured entirely on the facility's surveillance system.

Footage initially shows 17-year-old Terrance Devon Reed III sitting down on a bench with his arms tucked inside his shirt before Sarasota County Deputy Neil Pizzo comes charging toward the minor.

At the time, Reed had been inside a processing room at the juvenile center after being arrested and charged with contempt of court, probation violations and cocaine possession.

Video shows Pizzo instantly using his left hand to grab onto Reed's neck, pushing him against the wall before using his right hand to push the minor toward the ground.

Within moments of the initial contact, Pizzo then drags Reed to the opposite side of the room and begins to repeatedly strike him in the head as a second officer walks into the room and yanks Reed's legs, presumably in an effort to position the teen onto his side or stomach.

While Pizzo eventually places Reed in handcuffs, an additional four officers are seen coming onto the scene before he's taken out of the room in which the confrontation took place.

A second angle captured by the facility's security system shows that Reed's shirt is ripped off after Pizzo pushes him to the opposite side of the room. Pizzo is clearly seen striking Reed in the back of the head multiple times before even attempting to place the teen in restraints.

A third and final clip shows Reed being placed into a holding room as Pizzo and four other officers stand nearby. The brief interaction appears to show Pizzo and Reed exchanging words. Citing the sheriff's office report, [the Associated Press reported](#) that Reed was later hospitalized after suffering abrasions to his head. As for Pizzo, he claimed in the report that he opted to use force against Reed because the teenager had threatened to kill him and had taken a so-called fighting stance when the deputy approached him.

It's worth noting video shows that Reed only removed his arms from under his shirt when he was approached by Pizzo, and he didn't clearly appear to take any sort of defensive stance. Sarasota County Sheriff Tom Knight told the AP that he was "disappointed" in the actions he saw in the video, noting that he was concerned about Pizzo not using de-escalation methods. "If a deputy is trying to de-escalate and you go hands on and you have a confrontation, what did he attempt to do prior to the physical confrontation to prevent it from happening?" Knight said. At present, Pizzo has been placed on administrative leave pending an internal investigation into the matter. Knight noted that he does not believe that the altercation was influenced by race.

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US Toddler Tows Mini Horse With Electric Car - Video Club

Arizona, a young kid hailing from Malvern, Arkansas, recently proved that anything can be done when you put your mind to it - even in cases when you're trying to tow a mini horse via a child-sized electric vehicle.

Footage obtained via video licensor ViralHog captures Arizona driving off into the sunset - under the supervision of an adult - while her miniature horse, Hombre, kicks back in a custom, baby-pink trailer.

Get in loser, we're going riding!

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Truth Bombs Galore - Cartoon

US President Donald Trump raised a multitude of eyebrows Wednesday after excerpts from journalist Bob Woodward's latest book "Rage" revealed that Trump said the Pentagon was in the possession of a new nuclear weapons system that no one has "even seen or heard about."

Rather than keeping mum on the subject, [Trump further indicated the Land of the Free has "stuff"](#) that Russian President Vladimir Putin and Chinese President Xi Jinping "have never heard about before."

"What we have is incredible," the American commander-in-chief underscored.

Stay tuned, folks. It's anyone's guess what the president will reveal next, especially considering he's also [admitted to downplaying the seriousness of COVID-19](#) in the early months of the pandemic.

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US Navy Planning Massive 'Unmanned Fleet Battle' War Games for 2021

The US Navy is looking to hold massive war games in the Pacific next year that will focus primarily on using air, surface and subsurface drones.

On Tuesday, Rear Adm. Robert Gaucher, director of maritime headquarters with the US Pacific Fleet, said the Navy was planning an "unmanned fleet battle problem" to test just how much the service can rely on unmanned vehicles to perform a mission.

"We're shooting for early 2021 to be able to run a fleet battle problem that is centered on unmanned," Gaucher said at the Association for Unmanned Vehicle Systems International's [annual defense show, Military.com reported](#). "It will ... be on the sea, above the sea and under the sea as we get to demonstrating how we can align to the [US Indo-Pacific Command] directives to use experimentation to drive lethality."

According to US Naval Institute (USNI) News, fleet battle problems are "scenarios where an operational unit is given a training mission designed to test a commander and the crew on an aspect of high-end naval warfare. The goal is to see how well trained and deployed sailors handle the challenge cooked up by the exercise planners."

However, these drills typically feature carrier strike groups, which include an aircraft carrier, its air wing and several escort ships. To run them featuring unmanned vehicles will be a new kind of test in itself, but one that Navy leaders hope will bridge that gap toward unmanned ships one day adopting the same responsibilities as manned vessels.

"I want to create dilemmas for the adversary and I want to increase lethality," Gaucher said. "I want to be able to put an unmanned surface ship inside the adversary's denied areas. If I lose it, I'm losing a much less expensive ship and I'm not losing American lives, but I'm still creating a problem - whether I'm making them shoot it and I'm finding out where they are ... or I'm making them waste a weapon on it or I'm getting a couple of shots off before I lose it."

According to USNI News, some of the Navy's various unmanned vehicles include the [Sea Hunter surface vehicle](#), the [MQ-4 Triton surveillance unmanned aerial vehicle \(UAV\)](#), the Swordfish and Kingfish unmanned underwater explosive ordnance disposal vehicles and the Iver3 underwater monitoring vessel. The Navy has also [deployed its MQ-8C Fire Scout unmanned autonomous helicopter](#) to the Pacific aboard the littoral combat ship USS Gabrielle Giffords and has other unmanned vehicles in the works, such as the [MQ-25 Stingray carrier-based UAV](#), but they are still years from being deployed.

Still others, like the [X-47 Pegasus unmanned combat air vehicle](#), which is also intended to operate from aircraft carriers, remain in the experimental stage. The ["loyal wingman" program, designed to provide an autonomous companion](#) in air combat to fighters like the F-35 stealth aircraft, could potentially find use in the Navy, which flies a version of the F-35 specialized for carrier operations, but that program is early in its developmental stages, and the Navy has expressed no specific interest in what remains an Air Force-driven program.

Marine Brig. Gen. Eric Austin from Marine Corps Base Quantico in Virginia noted at the event that adopting so many unmanned assets is "a pretty big cultural change" for the service, but said he is confident that will change as the technology proves itself.

"Some are further ahead than others, but I think as we see increasing [technology readiness levels], increasing capabilities, it makes it easier," he said.

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US Condemns Alleged Navalny Poisoning, Will 'Work With Allies' to Hold Perpetrators Accountable

On Thursday, Washington's deputy envoy to the United Nations pledged to hold accountable those responsible for what Germany has concluded was a poisoning attack against Alexei Navalny, a Russian opposition figure.

"Russia has used chemical nerve agents from the 'Novichok' group in the past. The Russian people have a right to express their views without fear of retribution of any kind," deputy US Ambassador to the United Nations Cherith Norman-Chalet told the UN Security Council on Thursday, of which Russia is a permanent member.

"We urge Russia to cooperate fully with the international community's investigation," she said. "Those responsible – both those who committed this attack and those who ordered it – must be held accountable."

Norman-Chalet noted that could include "restricting funds for malign activities."

Navalny fell ill on August 20 while traveling from the Russian city of Tomsk to Moscow. His aircraft landed in Omsk, but he was later transferred to a medical center in Berlin, where the 44-year-old was comatose until three days ago. A report by a German military toxicology lab concluded Navalny had been "poisoned," but did not identify a specific toxic substance or suggest an origin for the toxin.

On Tuesday, [US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo asserted there was](#) a "substantial chance" Navalny's alleged "poisoning" was ordered by "senior Russian officials." However, US President [Donald Trump has said Washington has no proof](#) of a poisoning, though he noted he had no reason to doubt Berlin's findings.

Likewise, [Russian doctors who initially treated Navalny in Omsk reported no trace](#) of toxic substances in his system, and Germany has yet to [share its data on Navalny's condition with Moscow](#), despite several requests to do so, meaning Berlin's findings as yet have no other verification.

Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov responded to Pompeo's assertion on Thursday and stressed that American official's remarks "did not reflect reality."

"We have heard his statement on the matter. I will tell you once again that we are interested in establishing the reasons behind the incident," Peskov said. "As for some direct statements or hints that any Russian officials are linked to the incident, we believe such hints are inadmissible."

On Wednesday, Germany's ambassador to Moscow [received an official protest from the Russian Foreign Ministry](#), noting that a continued refusal to share information on the case would be seen as a "blatant unfriendly provocation" and a "refusal to determine the truth in an objective probe."

Poisons from the Novichok group are powerfully toxic, and [Leonid Rink, the scientist who developed the toxin, noted](#) that not only would Navalny have experienced far different symptoms than were observed, if had actually been a Novichok-group poison, he would most certainly have died.

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Trump Says No Extension Will Be Issued Over TikTok Sale Deadline

US President Donald Trump said on Thursday there would be no extension to the September 15 deadline mandating Chinese social media company TikTok sell its US operations.

"TikTok is moving along, we'll see what happens. It'll either be closed up or they'll sell it," Trump told reporters on the tarmac at Joint Base Andrews on Thursday as he prepared to fly to a political rally in Michigan.

"So we'll either close up TikTok in this country for security reasons, or it'll be sold," he said. "I'm not extending deadlines, no. It's September 15. There'll be no extension of the TikTok deadline." Last month, Trump ordered [TikTok's parent company, Beijing-based ByteDance, to sell its](#) American business or the popular video app would be banned in the US, claiming it was a threat to national security. [US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo has claimed the app](#) and others, such as WeChat, are "feeding data directly to the Chinese Communist Party, their national security apparatus."

ByteDance has [filed several lawsuits against the executive order](#), and the Chinese government has [denied it has access to, or control over, data on ByteDance apps](#) such as TikTok.

The Trump administration has also blacklisted several other Chinese tech giants, including Huawei and ZTE, barring them from selling their goods in the US except to licensed purchasers for much the same reason as TikTok.

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Chinese Bombers, Paratroopers Practice High-Altitude Drills as Himalayan Tensions With India Heat Up

Several reports of new military drills and deployments in western China point to Beijing preparing for the dispute on the Indian border to become a wider conflict.

As tensions on the China-India border near Pangong Lake reach new highs, there is new evidence Beijing is moving more military forces into the region and preparing others in case they are needed, meaning they may be preparing for a larger conflict than the violent skirmishes seen in recent months.

On Tuesday, the People's Liberation Army (PLA) Central Theater Command Air Force revealed that H-6 bombers and Y-20 transport aircraft have been deployed to the Tibetan Plateau for training missions, [the Global Times reported](#).

The outlet noted that China Central Television (CCTV) had reported the previous week on round-the-clock exercises by the PLA Tibet Military Command, and that a unit of HJ-10 anti-tank missile carriers had been shipped to the Gobi Desert in northwestern China, along with an air defense brigade.

CCTV also reported on Wednesday that a special operations brigade from the Tibet Military Area Command and an army aviation brigade had organized a parachute training exercise "in an unfamiliar area which is over 4,000 meters above sea level recently," [the South China Morning Post \(SCMP\) reported](#). According to the outlet, more than 300 troops took part, and the

training was expected to eventually include more than 1,000 troops in order to “lay a good foundation” for such operations.

According to the report, the training aimed to “improve the three-dimensional assault capabilities” of the military on the high Tibetan plateau and enhance the “overall combat capabilities of the troops stationed in Tibet.”

Hong Kong-based [military expert Song Zhongping told the SCMP](#) that Beijing moving elite units from other parts of the country is a sign it is preparing for a larger conflict than the border skirmishes seen thus far.

“While airdropping has been part of regular training of the Chinese special forces, the troops still need to get used to the high altitude, as the thinner air and stronger radiation will pose new challenges for soldiers’ physical condition, especially those trained in low-altitude areas,” Song said, noting “the high-altitude equipment also needs to be tested and calibrated. The troops also need to become familiar with this equipment and fight alongside other units.”

When a renewed dispute broke out between India and China in May over the Line of Actual Control between Indian-controlled parts of Kashmir and China’s Tibet Autonomous Region, both sides [began positioning forces close to the high-altitude conflict zone](#), and despite several attempts at negotiating an end to the situation, tensions remain high. Several hand-to-hand fights have broken out between Indian and Chinese troops, but [September 7 saw the first shots fired in the dispute](#) in more than 40 years.

The dispute is over different interpretations of a poorly demarcated border established between India and China that dates to the 19th century, when India was ruled by the United Kingdom as a crown colony.

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Video: Syrian Air Defenses Engage Hostile Targets Near Aleppo - State TV

Syrian state media reported early Friday morning that air defense systems near Aleppo had engaged hostile targets.

The Syrian state TV channel al-Ikhbariya reported early Friday morning that anti-air systems had engaged hostile targets over al-Safirah, near the northern city of Aleppo. According to al-Ikhbariya, the attack was launched by Israeli aircraft and several missiles were shot down before they reached their targets.

For Israel to attack Aleppo Governorate is uncommon: the northern province, close to the Turkish border, is ten times further from Israeli-controlled territory than the Syrian capital of Damascus is, which is just 30 miles from the Golan Heights. In May, [the Israel Defense Forces launched another attack on al-Safirah](#), targeting a research complex near the city.

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Search Underway After Tiger Spotted Roaming Free in Knoxville, Tennessee

Officials in Knox County, Tennessee, are still on the search for a tiger spotted in the area late Wednesday night.

According to the Knox County Sheriff's Office, the tiger was first spotted Wednesday night by a deputy near the River Industrial Park in Knoxville.

At around 7 a.m. local time Thursday morning, Knoxville police said they had received reports of a tiger sighting near the city's Thorngrove Pike. Crews were sent to investigate the area.

Multiple calls regarding possible sightings were also received overnight.

The Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency (TWRA) has also set up a trap baited with chickens. If caught, the tiger will be transported to Tiger Haven, an animal protection organization in Roane County, Tennessee.

"The Knox County Sheriff's Office Patrol Units, Animal Control, Air Watch, TWRA, KPD's [Knoxville Police Department's] Animal Control Unit and Representatives with Tiger Haven are working to locate a tiger that was spotted by a KCSO Deputy in the Forks of the River Industrial Park tonight," the Knox County Sheriff's Office said in a Wednesday news release.

As of now, officials are unsure as to where the tiger escaped from.

Officials at Zoo Knoxville [told local outlet WVLT](#) that all tigers at the facility have been accounted for as of Thursday morning. Tiger Haven and the Little Ponderosa Zoo in Anderson County, Tennessee, also said they weren't missing any tigers.

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Videos: Heavy Rains Flood White House Basement, Submerge Roads Around Washington, DC

Photos of the White House basement flooded with water were shared on social media Thursday, as heavy rains fell on the Washington, DC, area.

"Flash flood warning. Basement of the □@WhiteHouse□. Trying to remember how long a cubit is....." Fox News Chief White House Correspondent John Roberts tweeted Thursday, along with photos of carpeted floors soaked in water.

In another tweet, Roberts shared a photo of a flooded hallway with the caption: "Time to start bailing...!!"

Roads across the US capital are flooded, with flash flood watches currently in place until 8 p.m. local time.

According to the [US National Weather Service \(NWS\)](#), there are currently flash flood watches in effect for portions of Maryland, Virginia and Washington, DC.

"Showers and thunderstorms will produce heavy rain across the area ... Rainfall amounts will average one to three inches, with locally higher amounts possible," the NWS warned on its website, adding that heavy rainfall may cause "rapid rises" of water in small creeks and streams, as well as flash flooding in areas with poor drainage.

The NWS also [recorded heavy rainfall Thursday](#) in southern Montgomery County and north-central Prince George's County in Maryland, Virginia's Arlington County and the northeastern part of the District of Columbia.

In addition, the NWS reported Thursday that automated rain gauges have shown that water levels are rising rapidly in the DC area and that while heavier rain has moved east, runoff will cause flash flooding.

Photos and videos shared on social media show the DC Fire and Emergency Medical Services Department conducting several water rescues, and many vehicles are pictured submerged in floodwaters.

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'Lethal Consequence': COVID-19 Hijacks Brain Cells, Starves Them of Oxygen - Study

A new study, published by researchers at Yale University on preprint website bioRxiv and which has yet to be peer-reviewed, says that the COVID-19 coronavirus can also invade brain cells and cause neurological symptoms like headaches, confusion and delirium.

The researchers [found](#) that SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, uses brain cells to make copies of itself. It also uses nearby oxygen in the brain in the process, which causes neighboring cells to die.

However, researchers are still unclear on how the virus makes it to the brain and how often it does so.

"If the brain does become infected, it could have a lethal consequence," said Akiko Iwasaki, an immunologist at Yale University who led the research, [told the New York Times](#).

Scientists have found that the virus infects human cells through a protein found on their surface known as ACE2. The ACE2 protein is found in large amounts in the cells of the lungs, which explains why COVID-19 typically attacks the respiratory system.

Previous studies have stated that the brain has very little ACE2 and is thus unlikely to be a favored target of SARS-CoV-2. However, the most recent study shows that the virus can hijack brain cells through the ACE2 protein.

"It's pretty clear that it is expressed in the neurons and it's required for entry," Iwasaki explained.

The researchers also looked at two sets of mice. One of the mice had the ACE2 receptor expressed exclusively in the brain cells, while the other only had the receptor expressed in the lung cells. The researchers introduced the COVID-19 virus into the mice and noted that the mice with the ACE2 receptor expressed only in their brains lost weight and died within six days. The mice with the ACE2 receptor in their lungs neither lost weight nor died.

According to Robert Stevens, a neurologist at Johns Hopkins University not involved in the study, between 40% and 60% of hospitalized COVID-19 patients exhibit neurological and psychiatric symptoms. However, such symptoms may be unrelated to the virus's hijacking of brain cells and may instead be due to inflammation throughout the body.

“There’s no need for the brain cells themselves to be infected for [some brain-related symptoms] to occur,” Michael Zandi, consultant neurologist at University College London’s National Hospital for Neurology and Neurosurgery, told the Times.

“Different groups of patients may be affected in different ways. It’s quite possible that you’ll see a combination of both,” he added.

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Trump Minimizing COVID-19 Danger 'Unsurprising' As He's Willing to 'Save Face' at Any Cost - Journo

In his forthcoming book “Rage,” journalist Bob Woodward revealed that US President Donald Trump knowingly downplayed the danger posed by COVID-19 in the early days of the outbreak. However, to those paying attention to how the administration has handled the pandemic, the idea that they withheld information is not new, a journalist told Sputnik.

“There are so many people that are trying to cash on the Trump phenomenon. You know, obviously, he’s a very interesting character and obviously very over the top and ridiculous, but what really made me scratch my head - I saw some of the headlines - about this book ... at BreakThrough News, we covered the way the Trump administration covered up how deadly the coronavirus was,” Kei Pritsker, a journalist with BreakThrough News, told [Radio Sputnik's Political Misfits hosts Michelle Witte and Bob Schlehuber on Thursday.](#)

On February 7, in one of Trump’s 18 interviews with Woodward that form the core of the latter’s new book, Trump called COVID-19 “deadly stuff.”

“You just breathe the air, and that’s how it’s passed,” the president told Woodward in audio recordings [available to listen to on the Washington Post's website.](#) “And so that’s a very tricky one. That’s a very delicate one. It’s also more deadly than even your strenuous flus.”

However, only three days after making that comment to Woodward, Trump [told Fox News' Trish Regan:](#) “We’re in very good shape. We have 11 cases. And most of them are getting better very rapidly. I think they will all be better.”

During this time, Trump was also insisting that the virus was no more deadly than a seasonal flu and would be simple to deal with.

In a [February 26 news conference](#) at the White House, Trump said: “It’s a little like the regular flu that we have flu shots for. And we’ll essentially have a flu shot for this in a fairly quick manner.”

On March 19, Trump also admitted to Woodward that he had deliberately downplayed the danger of the virus.

“I wanted to always play it down. I still like playing it down, because I don’t want to create a panic,” the president said.

“It’s unsurprising,” that Trump made deceptive comments regarding the threat of the virus, Pritsker told Sputnik.

“We all know Donald Trump is the guy who will say whatever he has to say to get elected or to save face. And it was pretty clear in the beginning, definitely to us on BreakThrough - and I think

to a lot of people - there was some kind of truth that wasn't being told. Obviously most of the world's health experts were telling us that this virus transmits much faster than most viruses and that it's far more deadly. So to think that Trump wouldn't have known this - he really thought it was perfectly safe - is a little absurd, and I'm not at all surprised that this administration is corrupt. I think we've seen that over the last four years," Pritsker noted.

Woodward, a veteran Washington Post journalist, has faced backlash for waiting to reveal Trump's statements. However, Woodward has defended his decision, telling the Associated Press in a recent interview that he needed time to determine whether Trump's statements about the virus were in fact accurate.

"He tells me this, and I'm thinking, 'Wow, that's interesting, but is it true?' Trump says things that don't check out, right?" Woodward [told AP](#).

"It really is interesting that Bob Woodward kept this stuff back. And you know, again, though, we kind of knew ... that Trump was really covering this up. His initial reaction was not really a reaction at all. He just said: 'It'll go away,'" Pritsker noted.

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Video: New Trump Ad Touts 'Great American Comeback' While Using Ukrainian Stock Footage

At least two companies have confirmed that the US President Donald Trump's reelection team selected multiple foreign stock videos to use in 45's latest campaign ad, which argues a vote for his Democratic rival will impede an ongoing "great American comeback."

A new, made-for-TV Trump campaign ad made its debut to many via social media on Friday. The 30-second spot takes aim at Democratic presidential nominee Joe Biden, arguing the former US vice president would "kill countless American businesses, jobs and our economic future" if he won the White House.

Trump, on the other hand, would continue the "GREAT AMERICAN COMEBACK," which is allegedly already underway.

Video production company PromZone Media Group [confirmed to ABC News](#) on Thursday that the purported US warehouse footage around the 15-second mark of the ad was actually from a Ukrainian wallpaper warehouse.

Furthermore, the footage of the woman seen seconds later is also from Ukraine, Ukrainian production studio Stockbusters told ABC News, noting the woman was also Ukrainian. The footage of the frustrated man using a computer was identified to be from Italy.

Though the ad touts US job creation and the rebirth of the country's economy, the US Department of Labor [revealed early Thursday](#) that without seasonal adjustments, some 857,148 initial unemployment insurance claims were filed under state programs in the week ending on September 5. This comes in stark contrast to the 160,342 initial claims logged in the comparable week in 2019.

"The total number of people claiming benefits in all programs for the week ending August 22 was 29,605,064, an increase of 380,379 from the previous week," the release detailed.

Thursday's reporting brings the US to its fourth straight week of increases in unadjusted new claims.

The Trump-Pence reelection team's continued use of foreign stock footage comes on the heels of their "[Catalina and Madeline](#)" ad, featuring two first-generation Hispanic American sisters warning fellow voters of "Biden's America."

"This is a taste of Biden's America," one sister declared in the ad, which debuted during the Republican National Convention on August 24.

"We want to preserve the America our mother came here for," she said, speaking of her Guatemala-born parent.

[Catalonian public broadcaster CCMA](#) confirmed hours later that the footage selected to illustrate the US under a Biden presidency was actually from protests along Roger de Flor Street in Barcelona, Spain, in October 2019.

Weeks earlier, the Trump-Pence campaign issued a newsletter to supporters of the now-GOP nominee, vowing to protect the Christ the Redeemer statue of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, from "angry mobs" who were toppling post-Civil War Confederate monuments, statues of white leaders who kept enslaved Africans and other structures viewed as celebrations of racist and otherwise problematic practices.

Those belonging to the Black Lives Matter organization, as well as supporters of the general Black Lives Matter movement, have been labeled "[thugs](#)" and "[anarchists, not protesters](#)" by the US president in recent days.

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Trump: Iran to Sign New Agreement 'Very Rapidly' With US After Reelection Win

A fresh agreement between the US and Iran will be signed "very rapidly" by Tehran if US President Donald Trump wins his reelection campaign in early November, 45 told reporters on Thursday.

"If we win the election, Iran will come and sign an agreement with us very rapidly. I would say within a week, but let's give ourselves a month," he claimed during a September 10 news conference at the White House.

Trump notably [withdrew the US](#) from the 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) agreement, or Iran nuclear deal, on May 8, 2018, citing Tehran's continued "pursuit of nuclear weapons and the means of delivering them."

US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo recently made the same argument to the United Nations Security Council after the US set forth a resolution to extend the international arms embargo against Tehran - set to expire October 18.

"We will never allow the Islamic Republic of Iran to have a nuclear weapon," the Washington official vowed.

However, US allies France, Germany and the United Kingdom openly declared that Washington's push to invoke the "[snapback](#)" mechanism was actually in violation of the JCPOA, which is still being upheld by its remaining signatories.

"We remain committed to the JCPOA despite the significant challenges caused by US withdrawal," the countries wrote. "We believe that we should address the current issue of systematic Iranian non-compliance with its JCPOA obligations through dialogue between JCPOA participants."

Trump's statements on Tehran's willingness to enter a new agreement come days after Iranian President Hassan Rouhani asserted "[the path is clear](#)" for the US to reenter the JCPOA "any day," so long as Washington "decides to admit to its mistakes, make up for its illegal actions and return to Resolution 2231."

Iranian nuclear chief Ali Akbar Salehi [announced on Tuesday](#) that Tehran has initiated construction near its Natanz nuclear site on a "modern, larger and more comprehensive" production hall for advanced uranium enrichment centrifuges.

Troop Drawdown to Leave 'About 2,000' US Soldiers in Iraq - Trump

The US president also announced that the Trump administration intends to reduce the number of American troops deployed to Iraq.

"Iraq, we'll be down to about 2,000 soldiers in a very short period of time," he said.

Some 5,200 US troops are presently deployed to Iraq.

Trump's Thursday comments come contrary to those issued a day prior by US Central Command chief Gen. Frank McKenzie.

McKenzie, the top US general in the Middle East, detailed that the country will cut its troop presence in Iraq to 3,000, translating to the departure of some 2,200 US soldiers from the country.

Additionally, some 4,100 US troops would be leaving Afghanistan - which currently hosts 8,600 American soldiers - [McKenzie told reporters](#) on September 9. Trump echoed this estimate on Thursday, noting that a smaller number of troops would remain in Syria to patrol the embattled country's northeast oil fields and provide military assistance to Kurdish forces in the region.

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US Court Blocks Trump Order to Exclude Undocumented Immigrants From Census

US President Donald Trump's attempt to exclude undocumented immigrants from the US Census has been blocked by a three-judge panel of the US District Court for the Southern District of New York.

US Circuit Court Judges Richard Wesley, Peter Hall and Jesse Furman [handed down a Thursday ruling](#) which prohibits the US president from making unprecedented alterations to the constitutionally-mandated count of every living person in the country.

A [July presidential memorandum](#) called on "executive departments and agencies to share information" with Secretary of Commerce Wilbur Ross and his department, so that the

administration could legally "obtain accurate data on the number of citizens, non-citizens, and illegal aliens in the country."

The proposed move has been met with legal skepticism, including by the panel of circuit court judges, who did not make a legal determination in regard to the constitutionality of Trump's efforts.

Court documents published on September 10 noted that "the 2020 census is not collecting information regarding citizenship status, let alone legal immigration status in this country, and the 2020 census will count illegal aliens according to where they reside."

The Thursday ruling followed US District Judge Lucy Koh's Saturday issuance of a temporary restraining order in a separate legal battle, which blocked Ross and the Trump administration from implementing proposed plans geared toward altering the 2020 census count and "winding down or altering any Census field operations."

Former heads of the nonpartisan principal agency [argued in a joint August memo](#) that an extension of census field operations was "necessary," as the beginning of the COVID-19 novel coronavirus pandemic delayed the Census Bureau's intended timeline.

"To accommodate this delay," the Census Bureau called for the new schedule to be shifted from May 15 through July 31, to August 11 through October 30, ex-US Census Bureau Directors Vincent Barabba, Kenneth Prewitt, Robert Groves, John Thompson explained.

Trump and the White House legal team are expected to appeal the three-judge panel's decision in the coming days.

Meanwhile, a preliminary injunction hearing on the census timeline case has been scheduled for September 17, the expiration date of the temporary restraining order.

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'I Saved His A**': Trump Admits to Helping Saudi Crown Prince Duck Consequences of Khashoggi Murder

US President Donald Trump has admitted that he led a multi-year charge to take congressional heat off of Saudi Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman, who ordered the brutal murder of 59-year-old Washington Post journalist Jamal Khashoggi, according to a new excerpt from renowned journalist Bob Woodward's forthcoming book "Rage."

Mutassim Khashoggi, the Khashoggi family attorney, [issued a statement](#) earlier this week, asserting that they accept the final sentences leveled against eight people tied to the murder and dismemberment of the 59-year-old opposition Saudi journalist in October 2018.

Five of the convicted individuals were given 20-year prison sentences, while three others were handed down sentences ranging between seven and 10 years, [according to a spokesperson](#) for the Saudi public prosecutor's office.

While the family's statement conveys acceptance regarding the "application of Allah's law and his judgment," Trump apparently had a different perspective on how justice should be carried out.

Woodward, whose highly anticipated book "Rage" has [provoked mixed moral feelings](#) among commentators, conducted a total of 18 interviews with the US president and, until recently, kept the details of those conversations hidden.

"The people at the Post are upset about the Khashoggi killing," Woodward told Trump on January 22, [according to Business Insider](#), citing an advanced copy of the book. "That is one of the most gruesome things. You yourself have said."

"Yeah, but Iran is killing 36 people a day, so —" Trump stated before he was presumably interrupted by the journalist, who redirected the interview's focus to the Saudi crown prince's involvement in Khashoggi's death.

"I saved his a**," Trump claimed, speaking of the widespread demand to hold bin Salman accountable for ordering Khashoggi's murder. "I was able to get Congress to leave him alone. I was able to get them to stop."

[The CIA concluded](#) in November 2018 that Khashoggi's murder had been ordered by the Saudi crown prince. At the time, Riyadh denied any wrongdoing, and Trump communicated to senior White House officials that he wanted bin Salman to remain in power because Saudi Arabia keeps Iran in check, according to the Washington Post.

Allegations of the Saudi crown prince's connection to Khashoggi's murder were backed by both the United Nations and US lawmakers on both sides of the political spectrum, including Sens. Chris Van Hollen (D-MD), [Todd Young \(R-IN\) and Angus King \(I-ME\)](#).

"The failure to hold the crown prince accountable sends a terrible signal to people throughout the world and puts at risk other journalists - other critics - within Saudi Arabia and the journalists and critics of authoritarian regimes around the world," Van Hollen said in September 2019, [Middle East Eye reported](#).

A total of 18 suspects were originally arrested by Saudi authorities in October 2018, weeks after Khashoggi's slaying. However, only 11 were put on trial in front of a Saudi court, which determined that the journalist's murder was not premeditated, as Western officials had argued. A Riyadh criminal court originally sentenced five individuals to death in December 2019 for "committing and directly participating in the murder of the victim." Three individuals were found guilty of "covering up this crime and violating the law" and received prison sentences totaling 24 years.

The Khashoggi family [pardoned the late journalist's murderers](#) in May, citing the holy month of Ramadan, thus sparing them from execution. It's worth noting the opportunity to pardon the individuals came about due to the court's assessment of the murder's motivation.

"We, the sons of the martyr Jamal Khashoggi, announce that we forgive those who killed our father as we seek reward from God Almighty," Salah Khashoggi, the journalist's eldest son, expressed in a May tweet [translated by the Associated Press](#).

"If a person forgives and makes reconciliation, his reward is due from Allah," he said.

"The Saudi authorities are closing the case without the world knowing the truth of who is responsible for Jamal's murder," Hatice Cengiz, Khashoggi's fiancée, argued in a written [statement obtained by Reuters](#). "Who planned it, who ordered it, where is his body?"