

Wednesday 09/16/20

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New Video Shows First Look Inside Pentagon's Secretive X-37B Spaceplane
by [Morgan Artyukhina](#)

A newly unveiled video gives a peek inside the cargo bay of the US Air Force's X-37B spaceplane, about which the service has said extremely little.

The veil surrounding the Pentagon's secretive, new spaceplane got pulled back just a little bit on Tuesday when a clip from a Boeing promotional video showing the X-37B's cargo bay doors opening appeared on social media.

The short clip was taken from a promotional video shown by Boeing Space at the [Air Force Association's annual convention](#), according to Twitter user DutchSpace.

In the clip, the large bay doors on the Space Shuttle-like craft open, and a pair of snugly-packed solar panels is deployed from inside. [According to The Drive, this is the first time the craft's interior](#) has been viewed, giving a little more of an idea about what can fit inside the reusable spaceplane.

[The entire craft is just 29 feet long](#) - small enough to fit inside the Space Shuttle's cargo bay - and the X-37B's cargo bay is said to be about the size of the bed of a large pickup truck. It's unclear what exactly could be put inside such a tiny space, but rumors abound regarding microsatellites, anti-satellite weapons [such as microwave emitters or particle beams](#) and various experiments. In the past, little has been said about the X-37B's missions, [but in 2015, the Air Force did say the spaceplane was testing](#) an experimental ion thruster as well as carrying up and back a slew of materials, the effects of space travel and exposure on which NASA was interested in observing.

The Pentagon's reticence continued with the X-37B's sixth mission launch in May, saying only that it was carrying experiments of interest to NASA and the US Naval Research Laboratory, [Sputnik reported at the time](#).

The X-37B is not the world's first spaceplane, as the US Space Shuttle flew for many years before retiring in 2011. The Soviet Union [built an analogue of the Space Shuttle, the Buran](#), but it only made one unmanned space flight in 1988 before the collapse of the USSR ended the program. Earlier this month, [China launched its own reusable spaceplane for the first time](#), although next to nothing is known about its properties or its mission, apart from that it launched and returned successfully. Several commercial spaceplanes are [also being developed, including by Virgin Galactic](#).

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Pentagon Reportedly Seeks Authority to Expand Undeclared War on al-Shabaab Into Kenya

by [Morgan Artyukhina](#)

In the aftermath of an al-Shabaab attack on a Kenyan air base housing US aircraft in January, US Africa Command (AFRICOM) is seeking authorization to expand its undeclared drone war against the Somali militant group across the Kenyan border.

AFRICOM commanders are asking for authorization to carry out drone strikes across the Somalia-Kenya border under certain circumstances, [the New York Times reported on Tuesday](#), citing four anonymous American officials.

According to the report, the cross-border raid by al-Shabaab against Camp Simba's Manda Bay airstrip stirred up panic at AFRICOM headquarters in Stuttgart, Germany, about its inability to respond with air attacks to another incursion.

The January 5 raid was carried out by fewer than 20 militants, but they killed three Americans - one soldier and two security contractors - and destroyed several aircraft, including a De Havilland Canada Dash 8 surveillance aircraft and two helicopters, plus three other aircraft.

The Dash 8 was later revealed as belonging to L3Harris Technologies, a private security contractor [the Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project \(OCCRP\) exposed](#) as flying drones for airstrikes by AFRICOM out of Manda Bay.

AFRICOM spokesperson Col. Christopher P. Karns did not comment directly on the proposal, but he told the Times the command "certainly recognizes the need to apply consistent international pressure on al-Shabaab and to monitor their activity, presence, and actively confront them in order to prevent their spread. This can take several forms."

According to the anonymous officials, the draft guidelines would authorize not just defensive strikes in Kenya, but also offensive attacks if justified as preemptive. However, the authorization would be limited to the border counties of Garissa and Lamu - where Manda Bay is located - and any strikes would require the explicit approval of Nairobi.

The US delivered the first six of a dozen MD-530F Cayuse Warrior light attack helicopters to the Kenyan Armed Forces in late January, [although as Sputnik reported, the deal followed a halving of US foreign aid](#) to Kenya beginning the previous October.

The US has [been at war in Somalia since the early 1990s](#), but after the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks by al-Qaeda, the US opened a new, undeclared drone war across a slew of countries, including Somalia, under the self-granted authority of the Authorization for Use of Military Force Against Terrorists (AUMF) that underpinned the US War on Terror.

However, it wasn't until 2013 that the Obama administration created a vague set of standards by which to judge the validity of ordering such an attack, including "near certainty" of the target's presence as well as the absence of potential civilian casualties. [Sputnik has documented how the Trump administration has eroded](#) those standards, requiring simply a "reasonable certainty" of the target's presence and totally erasing considerations for potential civilian collateral damage.

At the same time, the Trump administration has dramatically intensified its air war in Somalia. In the first seven months of 2020 alone, the US carried out more drone strikes in the East African nation than under the George W. Bush and [Obama administrations combined, Time reported](#). According to AFRICOM, that's 43 airstrikes between January and July 2020, compared to just 42 strikes between 2007 and 2017.

Persistent [investigative reports of AFRICOM's actions by Amnesty International](#), which proved those airstrikes have killed and injured many Somalis, contradicting Pentagon claims, resulted in AFRICOM [deciding this past spring to begin issuing quarterly reports](#) based on its investigations into claimed civilian casualties. However, their underlying methods for calculating casualties remain unchanged.

AFRICOM chief Army Gen. Stephen J. Townsend told Voice of America in March that the uptick in strikes had happened because ["the threat is higher" after the Manda Bay attack](#).

"Al-Shabaab is the largest and most kinetically violent arm of al-Qaeda," [the AFRICOM commander told the House Armed Services Committee](#) at the time. "They are a serious threat to not only the Somali people, but the entire region, and one example [is] in a recent attack in Kenya. Another example is their threats to embassies in the region outside of Somalia. ... I would just say that I'm of the belief that al-Shabaab today poses a significant threat to American interests in the region."

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Trump: Distribution of COVID-19 Vaccine May Start in Mid-October
by [Morgan Artyukhina](#)

US President Donald Trump claimed on Wednesday that the United States could have a vaccine for SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes the COVID-19 novel coronavirus, by the middle of October - several weeks before the presidential election in early November.

Trump said at a White House press conference on Wednesday that the US could have a COVID-19 vaccine in the next month, if the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approves the drug.

"We're very close to that vaccine," Trump said, adding that it could be ready by mid-October, "maybe a little bit later than that ... As soon as it's given the go-ahead."

Trump further claimed the US would have distributed 100 million doses of the vaccine by the end of 2020, with priority vaccination going to elderly people, [according to the administration's distribution strategy](#) released on Tuesday.

"It's a plan like no other," Trump said, adding that his election rival, Democratic nominee Joe Biden, "acted as though there was no distribution plan."

Scott Atlas, a Hoover Institute senior fellow and adviser on Trump's coronavirus task force, further said the US would have 700 million doses by the end of March 2021.

Trump did not state which vaccine effort he believed the FDA would approve, but UK-based AstraZeneca's vaccine entered phase III clinical testing at the end of August, [according to the National Institutes of Health](#), but last week [was temporarily halted over safety issues](#). Others are being developed by Moderna and Pfizer.

Russia unveiled [the world's first COVID-19 vaccine in August, dubbed "Sputnik V."](#) and the first doses have already entered public circulation.

In response to a question about Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Director [Robert Redfield's claim earlier on Wednesday that a vaccine](#) would not be ready until the summer of 2021, Trump claimed the CDC chief had "misunderstood the question."

"I think he made a mistake when he said that ... I believe he was confused," he said, adding that "under no circumstance" would the US be following the schedule Redfield had laid out.

However, Trump also said he disagrees with Redfield's statement that a mask is more effective at controlling COVID-19 than a vaccine.

"It's not more effective," Trump said, noting there are "a lot of problems" with masks, such as people touching them and then touching other people or surfaces. "Vaccines are much more effective."

He dismissed Biden's wearing of a mask, suggesting it was performative and he might be wearing it to hide an undesirable facial feature.

The US presidential election is scheduled for November 3 and Trump has based no shortage of his reelection campaign around the argument that his administration's handling of the coronavirus, which has infected at least 6.6 million Americans and killed 196,000 of them, [according to New York Times data](#).

By comparison, Trump has hammered at Biden for his record in handling the H1N1 epidemic in 2009, when Biden was vice president, which Trump says was grossly mismanaged, proving Biden would do a worse job than him of handling COVID-19. At the press conference, Trump claimed a Biden administration would not have a vaccine ready for two years.

Trump noted at the press conference that a person on the White House staff had tested positive for COVID-19, but said it was no one close to him.

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Photos: Researchers Develop Cortical Implant to Restore Vision for Blind People
by [Morgan Artyukhina](#)

Australian university researchers have developed a world-first cortical implant: an electronic device that sits on the brain and can restore vision to people who have lost it.

Researchers at Monash University in Melbourne, Australia, announced earlier this week they had developed a vision-restoring cortical implant and are preparing for human trials.

The device comes out of 10 years of research driven by the Monash Vision Group, a collaborative partnership between Monash University and Melbourne's Alfred Hospital.

[According to a Monday news release](#), the [Gennaris bionic eye](#) is a 9-square-millimeter miniaturized wireless vision processor implant that sits on the surface of the brain, which receives data from custom-designed camera headgear. The device then turns the visual information into a series of electrical pulses that stimulate the brain so the user can see.

"Further investigations have shown promise for this technology to deliver improved health outcomes to patients with otherwise untreatable neurological conditions, such as limb paralysis," Monash said in the release. "Many people who are clinically blind have damaged optic nerves. These prevent signals being transmitted from the retina to the 'vision center' of the brain."

“Cortical vision prostheses aim to restore visual perception to those who have lost vision by delivering electrical stimulation to the visual cortex – the region of the brain that receives, integrates and processes visual information,” Arthur Lowery, a professor in Monash’s Department of Electrical and Computer Systems Engineering, said in the release.

“Our design creates a visual pattern from combinations of up to 172 spots of light (phosphenes) which provides information for the individual to navigate indoor and outdoor environments, and recognize the presence of people and objects around them,” he continued.

Philip Lewis, another professor from the department, said if the trials are successful, the Monash Vision Group will “look to create a new commercial enterprise focused on providing vision to people with untreatable blindness and movement to the arms of people paralysed by quadriplegia, transforming their health care.”

The device’s first success was recorded in a paper [published in the Journal of Neural Engineering in July](#), which detailed a successful 2,700-hour trial on sheep. Jeffrey Rosenfeld, a senior neurosurgeon at Alfred Hospital and lead author of the study, said it indicates that “long-term stimulation through wireless arrays can be achieved without induction of widespread tissue damage, nor visible behavioral issues or seizures resulting from the stimulation.”

The news comes on the heels of an announcement by industrialist Elon Musk in late August that his [Neuralink project had yielded a coin-sized brain implant](#) that promises to cure a variety of neurological and spinal problems, ranging from paralysis to memory loss and blindness. Musk characterized the device, which is not wireless, as like “a Fitbit in your skull with tiny wires.” Like the Monash project, the Neuralink device was tested on livestock first, and Musk’s demonstration included a live feed from the brains of several pigs brought to the press hall.

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‘Go Back to Africa!’: Woman Hurls Glass Bottle, Yells Slur at Black Woman Jogging in NYC - Video

A video of a woman hurling a glass bottle at a Black woman while the latter is jogging in Queens, New York, has recently surfaced online, prompting a police investigation. In the video, the unidentified woman throws a glass bottle at Tiffany Johnson, 37, while Johnson is jogging and minding her own business. The victim looks confused as she tries to jump out of the way.

The unidentified woman can also be heard shrieking, “Go back to Africa, n****r.” Johnson did not initially report the incident, which occurred on August 17, to the authorities. However, bystanders captured the incident on camera, and after they recently released the footage, Johnson spoke about what happened via her own social media account.

“I was attacked by a racist with a glass bottle. Racism is truly real and alive even in a diverse area like Astoria/Woodside Queens, NY. The [hatred] is real. My freedom, my time, my humanity matters, my body matters. I hope this helps to raise awareness to a real issue. #runningwhileblack or literally doing ANYTHING while black,” Johnson wrote in a post on [her Facebook page describing the attack](#).

"This incident happened to me while I was jogging in 98 degree weather minding my business. I had no idea somebody was filming this, it literally surfaced 1 month later and is now viral on the internet," Johnson added.

According to the New York Daily News, the New York Police Department (NYPD) Hate Crimes Task Force is currently investigating the incident.

The suspect in the video is a light-skinned woman in her 40s, who is about 5-foot-5, 160 pounds and appears to have a foreign accent. She also has blue eyes and blonde hair, according to the NYPD Hate Crimes Task Force.

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'Ongoing Threat': First Potential Human Case of Deadly Mosquito-Borne Virus Detected in US State

The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) is urging residents of 10 of the state's counties to cancel or postpone outdoor events after dusk to prevent people from contracting the rare and dangerous mosquito-borne illness eastern equine encephalitis (EEE) after an adult from Barry County is believed to have come down with it.

"This suspected EEE case in a Michigan resident shows this is an ongoing threat to the health and safety of Michiganders and calls for continued actions to prevent exposure, including aerial treatment," Dr. Joneigh Khaldun, chief medical executive and chief deputy for health at the MDHHS, said in a [recent news release](#).

The release adds that preliminary test results show that the Barry County resident has EEE. However, the MDHHS and the Barry-Eaton District Health Department are still waiting on confirmatory testing to be completed by the end of the week.

The MDHHS is also urging people in the counties of Barry, Clear, Ionia, Isabella Jackson, Kent Mecosta, Montcalm, Newaygo and Oakland to also remain heedful of the virus, which is spread through the bites of infected mosquitoes.

In addition to this human case, there are 22 confirmed cases of the viral disease in horses in 10 Michigan counties. There are nine confirmed human cases of the West Nile Virus, which is primarily transmitted by mosquitoes, in the state as well.

"MDHHS continues to encourage local officials in the affected counties to consider postponing, rescheduling or cancelling outdoor activities occurring at or after dusk, particularly those involving children to reduce the potential for people to be bitten by mosquitoes," Khaldun added. EEE is one of deadliest mosquito-borne illnesses in the world. According to the [US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#), it is characterized by fever, chills, malaise, arthralgia, or joint pain, and myalgia, also known as muscle pain or muscle ache.

Some people recover from the illness when it does not affect the central nervous system. Signs of a neurologic infection include fever, headache, vomiting, diarrhea, seizures, behavioral changes, drowsiness and coma.

A third of all people who develop brain inflammation due to the virus die, according to the CDC.

"Death usually occurs 2 to 10 days after onset of symptoms but can occur much later. Of those who recover, many are left with physical or mental sequelae, which can range from mild brain dysfunction to severe intellectual impairment, personality disorders, seizures, paralysis, and cranial nerve dysfunction. Many patients with severe sequelae require long-term care and die within a few years," the CDC warns.

Last year, EEE infected [38 people in the US](#), more than in any previous year since 2010, when the CDC started tracking EEE infections in the country.

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Polish Prosecutors Initiate Arrest of Air Traffic Controllers Who Worked During 2010 Kaczynski Crash

The Polish Prosecutor General's Office has started the process of arresting the air traffic controllers who were working at the Smolensk airfield in western Russia at the time of a 2010 plane crash that killed Poland's then-president.

"Investigative group No.1 of the Prosecutor General's Office applied to the district court of the Warsaw-Mokotow region with a motion for the temporary arrest of three air traffic controllers who served at the Smolensk-Severnoy airport in 2010," Polish Prosecutor General's Office spokesperson Ewa Bialik told reporters.

"The charges brought against the air traffic controllers relate to the deliberate provocation of a plane crash that resulted in the death of many people," Bialik added.

The prosecutor's office earlier issued a decree to alter the charges against Russian air traffic controllers from unintentionally provoking the disaster to causing it by deliberate action.

During a re-investigation of the 2010 plane crash, the Polish commission revealed in 2018 that it had found traces of explosives in the wreckage, although soil samples collected at the site at the time did not contain any such traces. As such, the commission went on to claim that the crash was prompted by the alleged presence of explosives.

Following claims that Russia may have been responsible for the crash, Russian President Vladimir Putin stated that the explosives might have been taken aboard the plane in Poland and noted that the first Polish investigation into the incident said that the pilots' erroneous actions may have caused the disaster, [Sputnik reported](#).

On April 10, 2010, a Russia-made Tu-154M passenger plane carrying then-Polish President Lech Kaczynski, his wife, several high-ranking Polish officials and others crashed while attempting to land on an airfield covered in heavy fog near Smolensk, killing all 96 passengers aboard the plane.

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US Government Releases Plan to Distribute Free COVID-19 Vaccines to All Americans

The US Department of Defense and the US Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) have outlined a plan to make a future COVID-19 vaccine available for free to all Americans.

The document outlines a strategic overview of how to provide a COVID-19 vaccine to the American public as quickly and reliably as possible.

“As part of Operation Warp Speed, we have been laying the groundwork for months to distribute and administer a safe and effective COVID-19 vaccine as soon as it meets FDA’s [US Food and Drug Administration] gold standard,” HHS Secretary Alex Azar [said in a recent news release](#).

“This in-depth, round-the-clock planning work with our state and local partners and trusted community organizations, especially through CDC [US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention], will ensure that Americans can receive a safe and effective vaccine in record time.”

According to the plan, most people will need two doses of the vaccine between 21 and 28 days apart. In addition, since there will likely be a limited supply of vaccines when the drug first becomes available, health workers, essential workers and vulnerable populations will be the first to receive immunizations.

“Early in [the] COVID-19 vaccination program there may be a limited supply of vaccine and vaccine efforts may focus on those critical to the response, providing direct care and maintaining societal functions, as well as those at highest risk for developing severe illness,” CDC Director Robert Redfield said, according to the release.

In addition, state and local communities will devise their own plans for receiving and distributing vaccines. States and cities will have one month to submit plans on how they will distribute the vaccine, which may require refrigeration or freezing. The drug will be provided free of charge due to billions of dollars in taxpayer funding approved by Congress.

The government’s plan also notes that an information technology initiative will need to be established to keep track of who is getting what vaccines, since it is likely there will be multiple such drugs in use.

“COVID-19 vaccination providers will be required to report inventory of COVID-19 vaccines, and jurisdictions must ensure this inventory information is submitted with each order,” [the document notes](#).

“To ensure that information systems continue to work as expected, CDC has worked with FDA and the manufacturers to include a two dimensional (2D) barcode on the vaccine vial (if possible) and carton (required) labels that includes a National Drug Code (NDC), lot number, and a placeholder expiration date of 12/31/9999 to be read by a scanner,” it explains.

During a Wednesday news conference, [US President Donald Trump told reporters](#) that a distribution of the highly-anticipated vaccine would start sometime in mid-October, if not “a little bit later than that.”

“As soon as it’s given the go-ahead [from the FDA],” the president added, before noting that some 100 million doses of the vaccine were likely to be distributed by the end of 2020.

Despite the fact that the US government is outlining a vaccination program, a [Gallup poll](#) released early last month found that 35% of Americans would be reluctant to get a dose of a COVID-19 vaccine, even if it was approved by FDA and was provided at no cost.

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Bungled US Pandemic Response a 'Tremendous Attack on American People' - Academic

If the US public really knew the extent to which its government has bungled its response to the COVID-19 pandemic, its political legitimacy would suffer a “devastating blow,” an expert told Sputnik on Wednesday. That is one reason why China, which responded correctly, is increasingly demonized by Washington.

John Ross, a Senior Fellow for the Chongyang Institute at the Renmin University of China and an award-winning columnist, told [Radio Sputnik's By Any Means Necessary](#) that the US government's failure to put people before profits - and the corresponding mass death and economic catastrophe that has followed - stands in stark contrast to China's response, which took just six weeks to tame the deadly virus.

“Essentially China is functioning perfectly normally from the health point of view ... they had a couple of spasmodic outbreaks which are tiny by US standards,” Ross told hosts Sean Blackmon and Jacquie Luqman.

“In the US, of course you have this terrible situation: there are going to be 200,000 deaths, whereas in China there are less than 5,000 deaths in total,” he added.

When the COVID-19 outbreak began in China in early January, the country quickly implemented lockdown measures, exhibiting its preparedness in responding to pandemics, he said. However, some US states were slow to implement lockdown measures while widespread testing in the US was delayed in March after the first round of test kits were made in a contaminated Atlanta lab.

“China took its lockdown measures in Wuhan and Hubei [Province] when it was detected there was a new type of coronavirus on January 23. It then took 13 days for the number of cases in the country to reach a peak and it took 43 days, that is from January 23, [to reach] the first day in which the number of cases was zero. That means China succeeded in smashing the virus to the ground in six weeks,” Ross explained.

US President Donald Trump, on the other hand, has repeatedly focused on the economy and job numbers. During a July press conference, Trump highlighted the “roaring economy,” claiming that it is “coming back extremely strong.”

“We have some areas where we're putting out the flames or the fires and that's working out well,” [he added](#).

In his upcoming book “Rage,” journalist Bob Woodward revealed that Trump knowingly downplayed the danger posed by COVID-19 in the early days of the outbreak. On February 7, in one of Trump's 18 interviews with Woodward that form the core of the journalist's new book, Trump called COVID-19 “deadly stuff.”

“Trump was very ecstatic about the performance of the stock exchange because a number of billionaires became extremely rich out of what has happened in the US ... the aim of what has been done in the US is to terrorize the population,” Ross explained.

“You're going to have a lot of people who are going to be laid off, you're going to have a lot of people who are going to be fired and rehired at worse contracts and it's going to increase profit.

This is a tremendous attack on American people. The difference is, in China, the government went out of its way to safeguard the people," Ross noted.

"The American ruling establishment cannot allow the truth about what really happened in the coronavirus to be understood by the American people. If it was known that hundreds of thousands of Americans - that is, if the truth was known, that hundreds of thousands of Americans have died needlessly, that 20 million Americans have lost their jobs needlessly due to the incompetence of the US government or its capitalist system, this would be a devastating blow within the US," Ross added.

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Pyongyang May Resume Submarine-Launched Missile Tests Amid Soured Negotiations - Seoul by [Evan Craighead](#)

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea's (DPRK) ongoing repairs to one of its shipyards signal the possible resumption of underwater ballistic missile testing, according to recent remarks issued by the top general of South Korea's air force.

Citing Won In Choul, Chief of Staff of the Republic of Korea Air Force and nominee for chairman of Seoul's Joint Chiefs of Staff, the [Associated Press reported](#) on Wednesday that North Korea may soon begin carrying out new submarine-launched ballistic missile (SLBM) tests upon completion of repairs to its northeastern Sinpo shipyard.

Won noted that the South Korean military will keep an eye on the submarine-building shipyard, which was severely damaged by a recent typhoon.

Won's published comments were based on remarks delivered to South Korean lawmaker Kang Dae Sik. His warning also comes amid stalled nuclear agreement talks between Washington and Pyongyang.

South Korean state-run outlet Yonhap News Agency previously issued a [report on September 9](#) based on comments made by Markus Garlauskas, a former US intelligence officer who specialized in North Korea and assisted Washington in matters regarding the region for over two decades.

"Another big element we need to think about is that additional weapons testing is probably just a matter of time," he said during a [virtual United States Institute of Peace seminar](#) entitled "A New Direction for US Policy on North Korea."

"North Korean state media has been very clear that Kim [Jong Un] has threatened that there's going to be a new strategic weapon reveal, and that he no longer feels bound by his previous pledges not to test ICBMs and nuclear weapons," he added. "And so if you take all those assessments, it paints a pretty, pretty unpleasant picture."

[Sputnik reported in October 2019](#) that Pyongyang had carried out its first SLBM test in years. North Korean leader Kim Jong Un issued "warm congratulations" to the researchers who participated in the development and vertical launch of the Pukguksong-3 projectile.

"The successful new-type SLBM test-firing comes to be of great significance as it ushered in a new phase in containing the outside forces' threat to the DPRK and further bolstering its military muscle for self-defense," the state-run Korean Central News Agency noted at the time.

The EU [slammed the launch](#) as "yet another provocative action" committed by North Korea, and the US State Department [issued an open call](#) for Pyongyang to cease such tests.

"We call on [North Korea] to refrain from provocations, abide by their obligations under UN Security Council Resolutions, and remain engaged in substantive and sustained negotiations to do their part to ensure peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula and achieve denuclearization," a State Department spokesperson said.

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Iranian Nationals Charged Over Alleged Cyber Campaign Targeting Computers in US, Europe, Middle East

by [Evan Craighead](#)

The 10-count indictment handed down on Tuesday accused 30-year-old Mehdi Farhadi and 34-year-old Hooman Heidarian - both Iranian nationals - of carrying out a "coordinated cyber intrusion campaign."

The US Department of Justice (DoJ) [issued a release](#) on Wednesday confirming that the duo had been charged with computer hacking, fraud, and aggravated identity after allegedly targeting and hacking into computers in New Jersey and other parts of the US. A variety of information was lifted from the systems reportedly accessed.

According to the release, federal authorities believe Farhadi and Heidarian "stole hundreds of terabytes of data, which typically included confidential communications pertaining to national security, foreign policy intelligence, non-military nuclear information [and] aerospace data." The list also included information on human rights activists, financial and "personally identifiable" data pertaining to victims and the intellectual property, such as "unpublished scientific research."

"In some instances, the defendants' hacks were politically motivated or at the behest of Iran, including instances where they obtained information regarding dissidents, human rights activists, and opposition leaders." the release detailed, citing the Tuesday indictment.

However, there were also reported occasions in which Farhadi and Heidarian sold off the hacked information and data via the black market "for private financial gain."

The DoJ claimed the duo's coordinated cyber intrusion campaign was not limited to the US, but also included locations in Europe and the Middle East. Israel and Saudi Arabia were explicitly named.

"These Iranian nationals allegedly conducted a wide-ranging campaign on computers here in New Jersey and around the world," Craig Carpenito, US attorney for the District of New Jersey, said in a quoted statement published in the release. "They brazenly infiltrated computer systems and targeted intellectual property and often sought to intimidate perceived enemies of Iran, including dissidents fighting for human rights in Iran and around the world."

Farhadi and Heidarian, now considered fugitives by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, were each charged with "one count of conspiracy to commit fraud and related activity in connection with computers and access devices; unauthorized access to protected computers; unauthorized damage to protected computers; conspiracy to commit wire fraud; and access device fraud; and five counts of aggravated identity theft."

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Scientists Isolate Tiny Antibody Component Which May Be 'Safe and Effective' COVID-19 Treatment
by [Evan Craighead](#)

Researchers at the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine have successfully isolated the smallest biological molecule yet found that "completely and specifically neutralizes" SARS-CoV-2, the virus which causes COVID-19.

The University of Pittsburgh announced in a [Monday news release](#) that an antibody component "10 times smaller than a full-sized antibody" proved useful in university scientists' construction of a new drug for potential use as a therapeutic and prophylactic treatment against SARS-CoV-2, called Ab8.

The full study, "High Potency of a Bivalent Human VH Domain in SARS-CoV-2 Animal Models" is available in the peer-reviewed [scientific journal Cell](#).

"Ab8 not only has potential as therapy for COVID-19, but it also could be used to keep people from getting SARS-CoV-2 infections," study co-author John Mellors, chief of the Division of Infectious Diseases at the University of Pittsburgh and University of Pittsburgh Medical Center, explained in the release.

The other co-author is Xianglei Liu, a member of the medical school's [Center for Antibody Therapeutics Laboratory](#). Researchers from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, the University of Texas Medical Branch at Galveston, the University of British Columbia and the University of Saskatchewan assisted in evaluating Ab8.

"Antibodies of larger size have worked against other infectious diseases and have been well tolerated, giving us hope that it could be an effective treatment for patients with COVID-19 and for protection of those who have never had the infection and are not immune," Mellors added.

The study tested the drug's impact on mice and hamsters infected with the virus, as well as those not infected. Researchers found that the antibody component's size increased the likelihood of it diffusing into tissues and subsequently neutralizing the virus.

"Importantly, it does not bind to human cells - a good sign that it won't have negative side-effects in people," the release emphasized.

"The COVID-19 pandemic is a global challenge facing humanity, but biomedical science and human ingenuity are likely to overcome it," Mellors expressed.

"We hope that the antibodies we have discovered will contribute to that triumph."

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Kanye West Allegedly Asked 2020 Campaign Staff to Stop Having Sex Before Marriage
by [Victoria Teets](#)

Kanye West, the billionaire hip-hop artist and fashion designer turned Christian revivalist, has reportedly requested that staffers working on his US 2020 presidential bid abstain from sex outside of marriage.

According to a Wednesday [New York Times report](#), West, who is married to reality TV star Kim Kardashian West, asked that his political campaign aides "refrain from 'fornicating' outside of marriage, according to people aiding his candidacy."

In addition to his stance on extramarital sex, West wants to bring back prayer in schools and provide religious groups with greater government support, the Times reported.

While West only began his run for the presidency in July as the Birthday Party candidate, he noted in both public comments and in conversation with Times reporters that he believes he will win the office, stating that he is not running for president, but "walking," according to the Times. While his late entry to the contest means he won't be on the ballot in states including Florida, Texas or Michigan, voters in places such as Colorado, Minnesota and Iowa will be able to cast ballots for him.

Despite his confidence in his campaign for the White House, West has offered relatively few details on his actual platform.

Per the report, the topic West brought up the most during his discussions with the Times was abortion. Although West claims he isn't a supporter of any efforts to "ban or stop or point fingers" regarding women's right to choose, his recent comments both publicly and to the Times show that he is still vehemently opposed to the practice.

In late July, West broke down in tears at his first political event in North Charleston, South Carolina, revealing that before their marriage, he and Kardashian West contemplated aborting their first daughter, North.

West said that his own father had wanted his mother to abort him, and that he realized he had "almost killed" his daughter.

West claims he wants to create "stipends for families that need support" and "orphanages that are really high-level desirable for people to go to," as well as supporting "the redesign of communities and cities in general to be supporting of families." Furthermore, West mentioned a plan to create something called Birthday Lake, which he described as an "eco-village" where visitors could "safely experience pregnancy and birth," noted the Times.