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Photos: US Man Unearths Massive 9-Carat Diamond While Visiting State Park
by [Gaby Arancibia](#)

Kevin Kinard, a frequent visitor at Arkansas' Crater of the Diamonds State Park, recently revealed that he managed to discover a 9-carat diamond during his latest visit to the park's 37.5-acre plowed search field.

The find, which was described in detail in a [Wednesday news release issued by the park](#), marks the second-largest diamond unearthed since the Crater of Diamonds officially became an Arkansas State Park in 1972.

Kinard revealed that he made the shocking discovery on September 7, when he and his friends ventured out to the park after [Tropical Storm Laura dumped buckets of rain on the region](#).

Although the group began by wet sifting for diamonds, Kinard's efforts didn't last long, and he instead opted to do some surface searching.

"I only wet sifted for about 10 minutes before I started walking up and down the plowed rows. Anything that looked like a crystal, I picked it up and put it in my bag," he said in a statement accompanying the release.

When he ventured over to the southeast portion of the plowed search field, Kinard came upon quite the find - unbeknown to him at the time, of course. It wasn't until a few hours later, when the group stopped at the Diamond Discovery Center, that a park official notified him that he had found a 9.07-carat diamond with a brandy-toned brown color.

"It kind of looked interesting and shiny, so I put it in my bag and kept searching. I just thought it might've been glass," Kinard said, later noting that he "honestly teared up when they told me" he found a diamond.

Kinard, a 33-year-old who works as a bank branch manager, has regularly returned to the site ever since his first visit on a second-grade field trip.

"I was in complete shock," he added. "It weighs 9.07, and I found it on 9/7. I thought that was so unique!"

Honoring his friends, Kinard eventually named the gem the Kinard Friendship Diamond.

The top three diamond colors found at the Crater of Diamonds are white, brown and yellow, and as of Wednesday, a total of 246 diamonds have been registered with the park in 2020. The release states that one to two gems are found by visitors each day.

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Presidential Chaos - Political Cartoon

US President Donald Trump recently stunned reporters and netizens alike after he refused to commit to a peaceful transfer of power in the event that he loses his 2020 reelection bid. Trump's eyebrow-raising stance came up during a [Wednesday White House briefing](#), when instead of committing to peaceful transfer, the president told reporters that Americans were just "going to have to see what happens."

The remark is part of Trump's continued attack on the integrity of mail-in ballots, and came on the same day that the commander-in-chief stated he wanted to quickly fill in the vacant seat on the US Supreme Court, as he believed the battle over the results of the election [would ultimately end up at the nation's highest court](#).

One might think Trump is taking inspiration from the notable "The Wolf of Wall Street" scene in which Leonardo DiCaprio's character refuses to part ways with his fraudulent brokerage company. The show goes on, eh?

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Silly Cat Slams Into Wall Face-First in Late-Night Moth Chase - Video Club

Ajax, a cat living it up in Lewisville, Texas, recently learned that not all openings during a chase are meant to be taken advantage of - especially when it comes to a moth attaching itself to a wall.

Video obtained by video licensor ViralHog captures Ajax and his sibling Baldr in the middle of a late-night chase of a pesky moth. However, unfortunately for Ajax, the chase saw him plowing face-first into a wall.

"Ajax was a little too eager to get that moth and dove face-first into the wall," the cat's owner told ViralHog. "He may have failed at that attempt but you can see in the end that they just kept chasing that thing all around the room and into the rest of the house."

It's unclear if Ajax ever did get his revenge.

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Photos: US Marine Corps F-35Bs Fly Off UK's Queen Elizabeth Carrier in NATO's Largest Drills by [Morgan Artyukhina](#)

A squadron of US Marine Corps (USMC) F-35B stealth aircraft have set sail aboard the United Kingdom's HMS Queen Elizabeth aircraft carrier, part of a set of certifications ensuring the jets can take off using the carrier's bow ramp. The warship is set to perform its first tour of duty next year.

The NATO alliance will soon have another carrier strike group with which to project power around the globe, as the United Kingdom's new flagship moves to speed up certification of the warship's bow ramp in preparation for its first tour of duty in 2021.

According to [a Wednesday news release by the USMC](#), 10 of its F-35B Lightning II stealth aircraft deployed to the United Kingdom were aboard the HMS Queen Elizabeth when the warship set sail from Portsmouth, England, the day prior. The squadron, nicknamed "The Wake Island Avengers," joined a UK Royal Navy squadron of F-35Bs nicknamed "The Dambusters" to form the largest single deployment of fifth-generation fighters anywhere on the globe at the moment.

In photos from the drills, the flight deck of the 65,000-ton carrier sports at least 14 of the stealthy fighters, which are of a special design allowing them to perform short takeoffs as well as vertical takeoffs and landings by pointing their engine thrust downward.

In contrast to US and French aircraft carriers, but similar to many other nations' carriers, the Queen Elizabeth uses a bow ramp to lift jets into the sky instead of a launch catapult. USMC pilots use the F-35B's vertical takeoff and landing abilities to fly from their own amphibious assault ships, which are too short to launch jets horizontally.

Commodore Steve Moorhouse, who commands the Queen Elizabeth's strike group, said in the release that once the warship has its full complement of 24 to 36 F-35s, which will be "the largest air group of 5th generation fighters assembled anywhere in the world," the carrier strike group will put "real muscle back into NATO."

[A statement by the UK Royal Air Force noted](#) the present deployment is the largest air wing London has fielded at sea since that of the HMS Hermes in 1983.

The carrier is joined by a half-dozen UK Royal Navy destroyers, frigates and auxiliary ships that will take part in the Joint Warrior annual exercise [held by NATO off the coast of Scotland between October 4 and 15](#). Until then, the carrier will be drilling in the same waters.

Where the Queen Elizabeth will go on its first deployment continues to be up in the air, but [most statements point to the South China Sea or western Pacific](#) region in 2021. The USMC has [previously stated its F-35 pilots will accompany](#) the warship on that voyage as well.

"This is the Special Relationship in action," Robert Wood Johnson, Washington's ambassador to the United Kingdom, said in the USMC news release. "Our forces train, fight, and win - side by side - to protect our two countries."

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Chinese Soldier Handed 'Early Retirement' for Sharing Army Secrets on Unregistered Cellphone

by [Morgan Artyukhina](#)

A Chinese soldier has been kicked out of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) after he shared military secrets with friends and family via an unauthorized cellphone.

The PLA's Eastern Theater Command announced on WeChat on Tuesday it had discharged a soldier after learning of numerous conduct violations, including disclosing military secrets to family and friends.

[According to the report, a soldier by the surname Chen](#) bought a second-hand smartphone, which is against PLA regulations, and used it to send military-related photos over messaging apps such as WeChat. He also reportedly disclosed his status as an active-duty soldier when playing games on the phone.

At an "education conference" attended by his entire brigade, Chen was required to write a confession and self-criticize. Afterward, the brigade's Communist Party of China committee decided to give Chen an "early retirement," booting him from the service. His commanding officer also received an administrative warning.

After the education conference, the brigade held several class discussions to reinforce the lessons from Chen's punishment.

"Major officials in the army must strengthen the sense of responsibility and concentrate on the army's various tasks, and never have one second of negligence," PLA instructor Zhang Peng was quoted as saying in the story.

Song Zhongping, a Hong Kong-based military commentator, [told the South China Morning Post](#) that cellphones can easily spread a lot of sensitive information about soldiers, including their whereabouts.

"During the internet age, a mobile phone is a platform for all kinds of information and even secrets, so it's necessary to tighten the rules of using smartphones," he said.

However, despite its strictness, the PLA has relaxed its rules surrounding cellphones in recent years. In 2018, Beijing began allowing soldiers to use mobile phones on civilian networks during personal time, while on leave and during holidays, times that had previously required explicit permission, [according to China News Service](#).

However, the new regulations also require soldiers to register their phones as well as social media accounts, and they note that soldiers should refrain from giving sensitive data to service providers, including social networks, new media platforms and online shopping websites. Educational activities were held across the Chinese military in the past week to raise awareness about protecting soldiers' privacy and the nation's secrets.

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Second US Navy Hornet Fighter Jet Makes Emergency Landing at Virginia Base in As Many Weeks

by [Morgan Artyukhina](#)

Another US Navy F/A-18 Super Hornet has been forced to suddenly land at Naval Air Station (NAS) Oceana. In just two weeks, two of the advanced, carrier-based jets have suffered engine fires.

According to the Naval Safety Center, a two-seater F/A-18F Super Hornet experienced an engine fire on Monday while flying along the southeastern Virginia coast, forcing it to return to NAS Oceana in Virginia Beach.

"The aircraft landed safely at NAS Oceana without incident. An aviation mishap investigation has been initiated to determine the cause of the incident," Cmdr. Jennifer Cragg, a spokesperson for Naval Air Force Atlantic, [told Military.com on Wednesday](#). "There were no injuries."

Two weeks prior, an almost identical incident occurred involving a different F/A-18F. Cragg said that "it is too early to speculate the causal factors for the in-flight engine fire" in the two jets, but that investigations were underway.

US Navy aircraft commonly have two engines to increase their ability to survive such incidents when out at sea, and the Hornet is no exception, able to limp back to base on a single engine if the other suffers a problem. A notable exception to this rule is [the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter, which has just one engine](#).

It hasn't been a good summer for US aviation. In July, [Sputnik reported that in the previous 60 days](#), seven different US fighter jets had crashed across the various service branches, including another F/A-18F and some stealthy F-35 and F-22 aircraft. [Military.com likewise noted that the Navy saw](#) a third engine fire earlier this month when a Marine Corps CH-53E Super Stallion helicopter was forced to make an emergency landing at Marine Corps Air Station New River in North Carolina.

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Fines for Deutsche, Other Money Launderers 'Just a Cover' as Big Banks 'Critical to US Empire' by [Morgan Artyukhina](#)

International banks like Deutsche Bank can be periodically revealed to break financial regulations and even get fined for it, but they're rarely punished meaningfully since they're essential to the functioning of the US capitalist empire, an economist told Sputnik on Thursday. A recent [report by the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists](#) revealed a vast network of money laundering centered on Deutsche Bank, Germany's largest bank, based in Frankfurt am Main. The report noted thousands of suspicious activity reports and [tens of billions of dollars in fines paid](#) by Deutsche Bank [for its money-laundering practices](#) over the last three years alone.

Dr. Jack Rasmus, who teaches economics and politics at St. Mary's College of California and is the author of the book "The Scourge of Neoliberalism: US Economic Policy from Reagan to Trump," told [Radio Sputnik's Political Misfits](#) on Thursday that banks like Deutsche make far more money from their illegal financial practices than the fines levied against them take away, so they just regard fines as "the cost of doing business."
'A Global Network'

"This is what these banks are reporting to the government; you can be sure that there are probably as large a magnitude - this was \$2 trillion - probably not even reported," Rasmus told hosts Michelle Witte and Bob Schlehuder.

"But the thing that amazes me is that they feel it's OK to report because the governments actually do nothing about it," he noted.

"Now, the biggest violator here, obviously, is Deutsche, which has a reputation as a global, sleazy, money-laundering institution, par none here. Deutsche takes money from drug dealers and the whole network of gray and black money, Russian oligarchs and so forth, and it's well-known that it was [the only place Donald Trump could go and get any loans](#) anymore, because he bilked all the other banks. So there's this connection, I'm sure, between Deutsche and Trump and probably some of the worst Russian oligarchs who moved to the West."

"It's not just Deutsche. [Goldman Sachs and its Malaysia scam with the 1MDB](#) [1 Malaysia Development Berhad] situation is part of it," Rasmus told Sputnik. "This is a global network of capitalist financial institutions. They're all connected to each other, and the money flows through many of them to each other, because it's the same investors that are behind the scenes of the banks."

"It's not just the banks as individuals - there are these deals being made on behalf of private, capitalist financial speculators. Who are these people? That's the real story. But we, of course, don't get to know that, because that's buried in this general report of how much money may be involved here, and it's more than \$2 trillion, I'm sure," he added.

Too Big to Fail

"Government, the US government in particular, tolerate this. Once in a while they do a little sting, like [how] [JPMorgan Chase just had to pay a billion dollars to the \[US\] government](#), because the governments just want to keep it within reasonable bounds. But the government needs the banks, they need [them], politically, for sanctions, because it's [through] US banks that the US government checks on who's violating the US sanctions. It uses these banks to do it and the SWIFT international money payment system," Rasmus noted, adding SWIFT is "the key to identifying who's violating the sanctions to allow the US to slap more sanctions on them." Some of the examples he gave include Venezuela, Iran and Germany, all of which the US has threatened to sanction the trading partners of, including individual companies.

"The banks are critical to the US political empire and economic empire and control," he added.

"The big banks control so much of the economy, and all these banks are so interconnected - in other words, they own and buy each other's loans and bonds and so forth - if the government went after one of them, it would raise a concern of the security of the financial securities that they all hold and trade with each other."

"There would be no drug problem in the United States ... [if there was no money laundering in the United States](#)," Rasmus emphasized. "The banks only want money, and they'll take it from anywhere that they can get it."

"The government's got to make it look like 'well, we're trying to control this,' but both sides know that that's just for public consumption, that all these financial regulations about money laundering and so forth are just a cover," he said.

"The fines are just the cost of doing business. I'm sure JPMorgan made billions more than the fine it paid," Rasmus noted, adding that banks issued "fines" don't actually write the US

Treasury a check, but rather suffer estimated losses via forced reductions in their interest rates on loans and similar schemes. "That's how the game is played."

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US Man Dies After Eating Multiple Bags of Black Licorice for Several Weeks

A Massachusetts construction worker died after eating around a bag and a half of black licorice every day for a few weeks, doctors revealed in a case report published Thursday.

According to a [report by AP](#), the 54-year-old man's heart stopped working while he was having lunch at a fast food restaurant. Although emergency responders did CPR on the man, he died the following day.

Although the man died last year, the case was outlined this month in the [New England Journal of Medicine \(NEJM\)](#).

Black licorice contains glycyrrhizic acid, which can cause extremely low potassium as well as imbalances in electrolytes, minerals that have an electric charge and affect the blood's pH level and the amount of water in the body. In this particular case, researchers found that the man had extremely low levels of potassium, a condition which is linked to high blood pressure, heart disease and stroke.

"Even a small amount of licorice you eat can increase your blood pressure a little bit," said Dr. Neel Butala, a cardiologist at Massachusetts General Hospital who was one of the authors of the NEJM report.

According to the [US Food and Drug Administration \(FDA\)](#), eating 2 ounces of black licorice a day for at least two weeks could cause irregular heart rhythm, also known as arrhythmia, in people 40 and older.

"It's more than licorice sticks. It could be jelly beans, licorice teas, a lot of things over the counter. Even some beers, like Belgian beers, have this compound in it," Dr. Robert Eckel, a University of Colorado cardiologist and former American Heart Association president, told AP. Currently, the FDA allows up to 3.1% of a food's content to contain glycyrrhizic acid; however, many licorice and candy products don't outline how much glycyrrhizic acid is contained per ounce.

In a statement to AP, Jeff Beckman, a spokesperson for the Hershey Company, which makes Twizzlers licorice twists, said that "all of our products are safe to eat and formulated in full compliance with FDA regulation." Beckman also noted in his email that all foods, including candy, "should be enjoyed in moderation."

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Trump Signs 'Historic' Order Outlining Administration's Health Care Plan

US President Donald Trump on Thursday signed what he referred to as a "historic executive order" outlining his administration's health care plan.

"We've really become the health care party - the Republican Party," Trump said during the plan's unveiling.

Under the new executive orders, which are part of his "America First" health care plan, people with pre-existing conditions will be protected.

"The new Democrat lie is that they will cover pre-existing conditions – but in truth, their socialist takeover, economic shutdown, and coverage for illegal immigrants will collapse our economy, and make our health care system totally insolvent," [Trump said Thursday](#).

The Affordable Care Act, also known as Obamacare, already includes provisions to protect people with pre-existing conditions, dictating that health insurance plans cannot deny anyone coverage due to such a condition.

Trump's plan, the orders for which he signed in North Carolina, also directs Congress to pass legislation to prevent surprise billing by January 1.

Surprise billing occurs when a person goes to an in-network hospital but still ends up paying hefty medical bills because the health care providers in the hospital are out of network.

"My plan expands affordable insurance options, reduces the cost of prescription drugs, ends surprise medical billing, increases fairness through price transparency, streamlines bureaucracy, accelerates innovation, strongly protects Medicare, and always protects patients with pre-existing conditions," Trump said.

"Under our plan, you will have the freedom to shop for the option that is right for your family. These options include new affordable choices that cost up to 60 percent less than Obamacare. We are also offering Association Health Plans that allow small businesses to pool together and offer more affordable policies to their employees," Trump added.

Trump's plan will also provide Medicare beneficiaries a \$200 voucher they can use to pay for prescription drugs.

Trump unveiled his health care plan as Democratic presidential nominee Joe Biden has voiced [making health care a focal point of his campaign policies](#), especially following the death of Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg.

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'Vote Him Out!': Trump Met With Boos While Paying Respects to Ruth Bader Ginsburg - Videos

While paying respects to the late Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg at the top of the US Supreme Court Building's steps on Thursday, US President Donald Trump was met with booing and a chorus of "Vote him out" and "Honor her wish" chants by a nearby crowd.

Trump, wearing a dark blue face covering while standing next to first lady Melania Trump, paid his respects to Ginsburg, whose body is lying in repose for the second day at the Supreme Court. While he was doing so, protesters standing across the street from the nation's highest

court chanted that Trump should honor Ginsburg's dying wish and not replace her until a new president is voted in.

In the days before Ginsburg's death on September 18, the late justice told her granddaughter Clara Spera: "My most fervent wish is that I will not be replaced until a new president is installed," [NPR reported](#).

However, despite Ginsburg's wishes, Trump is expected to announce his nominee for her seat on Saturday and has urged that his choice be confirmed by the US Senate before the November election.

Democrats have strongly opposed Trump's plans, demanding that whoever is elected on November 3 be the person to fill the vacancy.

In a [September 18 statement on Twitter](#), Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-NY) said: "The American people should have a voice in the selection of their next Supreme Court Justice. Therefore, this vacancy should not be filled until we have a new president."

During a briefing Thursday afternoon, White House Press Secretary Kayleigh McEnany said the crowd's response while Trump was paying his respects was "appalling, but certainly to be expected when you're in the heart of the swamp," [The Hill reported](#). She also noted that Trump is often met by supporters during his travels across the United States.

Ginsburg's casket, currently displayed on the Supreme Court Building's steps, will be moved to the US Capitol on Friday. Other politicians have paid their respects to the late justice, including [US Vice President Mike Pence](#) and his wife, as well as the [Clintons](#).

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America's 'Failed Economic System' Solely Protects Rich During Pandemic - Economist

Dr. Richard Wolff, an economist and professor at the New School in New York, told Sputnik that his new book, "The Sickness Is the System: When Capitalism Fails to Save Us from Pandemics or Itself," shows how the US response to COVID-19 demonstrates the utter failure of the country's elites to address public health crises.

"It's not China that failed to prepare for this virus, and it's not China that failed to contain it here in the US. That's a 100% US disaster," Wolff told [Radio Sputnik's By Any Means Necessary](#) hosts Sean Blackmon and Jacquie Luqman on Thursday.

"The book is designed to explain to people how and why it was this system that broke down - not only in terms of failing to manage the virus, but on making the whole virus worse by having us collapse the economy with tens of millions of people losing their jobs, losing their incomes, wrecking their families' finances. I mean this is a catastrophe that is mostly about a failed economic system, and that's what this book tries to show," he explained.

A Tuesday report published in the Washington Post revealed that the US Congress handed the Pentagon \$1 billion in March to respond to the pandemic. However, most of that money has been paid to defense contractors and used to boost the shipbuilding industry as well as fund satellite, drone and space surveillance technologies, and not spent on pandemic-related expenses such as masks.

"We are not as a nation at this point threatened militarily by anyone. No one has the military power the US does. I want to remind people the US spends more on the military than the next nine countries put together spend, and that includes China, Russia, Britain and half a dozen others. What does endanger us is the public health disaster of this pandemic. So if money should be moving, it should be moving away from the military - where we are not threatened - to the pandemic, where we are," Wolff added.

The \$600 weekly unemployment benefit bonus that was signed into law by US President Donald Trump in March as a provision of the CARES Act expired at the end of July. In August, Trump bypassed Congress and signed an executive order and three memoranda on COVID-19 relief. The measures include a federal eviction ban, relief for student borrowers, a payroll tax suspension and a \$400 weekly unemployment benefit bonus - \$300 from the federal government and \$100 paid by state governments - to replace the one that had expired. However, these unemployment benefits have [already ended in some states](#).

"Over the last six months, the richest people in America, the CEOs, the big shareholders, have gotten much, much richer at the same time that over 60 million of our fellow American citizens have had to go get unemployment compensation because they lost their jobs and their income - a system that makes the already richest people richer," Wolff said.

"We still give corporations the support they need. The Federal Reserve is still lending money to big corporations. The government treasury is still supporting large businesses, but the help to the mass of people that were turned out of their jobs here, unlike Europe, that's what got stopped. That is so unjust," Wolff added.

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US Navy Declassifies 300 Probe Docs on USS Thresher Implosion After Monthslong Delay
by [Evan Craighead](#)

After a monthslong delay, the US Navy has released its first batch of unclassified probe documents tied to the 1963 implosion of the USS Thresher (SSN-593), which killed all 129 shipyard personnel and crew aboard.

Wednesday marked the long-awaited release of the [first 300 documents](#) from the Navy probe into the April 10, 1963, implosion of the first-in-class, nuclear-powered Thresher, [the Associated Press reported](#).

The test dive event, classified as the deadliest submarine disaster in US history, took place some 220 miles off the coast of Cape Cod in Massachusetts after the commanding officer gave an evaluation of the vessel, greenlighting additional construction at the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard in Kittery, Maine.

However, he did voice concerns about the nuclear submarine's complexity and possible vulnerabilities within its auxiliary salt water system.

"He stated, 'In my opinion, the most dangerous condition that exists in Thresher is the danger of salt water flooding while at or near test depth,'" the Navy report said.

According to the released, redacted documents, the crew aboard encountered what is believed to be their first “minor difficulty” after descending more than 800 feet (244 meters) below the surface. A garbled message from the personnel detailed that the crew was attempting to empty the nuclear submarine’s ballast tanks in order to return to the surface.

Moments before the Thresher disintegrated, Navy personnel in a rescue ship overheard details about “test depth” from the submarine’s crew. Despite the passing of nearly six decades, the Navy moved to not include details related to the test depth in its Wednesday release.

“The loss of Thresher was a defining event for the submarine service,” said Rear Adm. William Houston, director of the Undersea Warfare Division, N97, in the Office of the Chief of Naval Operations, as reported by AP.

[Sputnik reported in February](#) that US District Judge Trevor McFadden had ordered the Navy to finish an internal review of 300 documents regarding the Thresher disaster by April 30 and publicly release the redacted versions to the public by May 15.

The district judge also required the service to continue reviewing the estimated 3,600 total documents in batches of 300 and release a new batch on the 15th of each month.

“Normally, I defer to the government, but I can’t say I have a lot of confidence in how this looks now,” McFadden said at the time, also ordering the Navy to provide a status report on the documents every 60 days.

However, the ongoing COVID-19 novel coronavirus pandemic allegedly delayed the release of the documents.

Retired Capt. James Bryant, who was a commander of a Thresher-class submarine, initially requested the release of the documents under the Freedom of Information Act. After that move proved ineffective, he took the matter to court, arguing that there was information those in the service could learn from the then-completely classified documents.

According to the service’s analysis, the released documents offer no explanation for the sinking of the vessel, which rests on the ocean floor at a depth of 8,500 feet (2591 meters).

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US Town Rejects Appeal to Rename Swastika Jurisdiction
by [Evan Craighead](#)

New York’s Black Brook town council has moved to not rename its jurisdiction of Swastika, arguing that the word’s original Sanskrit definition of well-being trumps the modern view of the word and symbol.

“Swastika was named by the founders of the area who settled there,” Black Brook town supervisor Jon Douglass [explained to NPR](#).

“I think that’s probably, maybe some viewpoint that it’s associated with hate. But then I believe there are others that do not associate it with hate,” he said. “Did the Hindus and the [Buddhists] and all them, did they erase it from their religious history because of the Germans?”

Prior to Adolf Hitler's co-opting of the clockwise swastika symbol, both the clockwise and counter-clockwise versions of the symbol held positive connotations in several religions, including Buddhism, Hinduism and Jainism.

Neo-Nazi organizations in the West, like many seen at the infamous ["Unite the Right" rally](#) in Charlottesville, Virginia, in August 2017, have continued to use the symbol as a representation of white supremacy and anti-Semitism.

However, not everyone who travels through the upstate New York town of Black Brook thinks the same.

Michael Alcamo, a resident of New York City, New York, told NPR that it was "jarring" to come across a brown road sign that included the name "Swastika" during his recent bike trip in the state.

"I think it should be obvious that the town should update its name and should pick a name that is not so offensive to so many Americans and so emblematic of intolerance, hate and tyranny," he asserted, noting that there were veterans of World War II buried nearby.

It was Alcamo reaching out to county officials in August that brought about the September 14 vote.

"I didn't expect a quick, unanimous vote to reject the proposal," the cyclist told NPR.

The town supervisor expressed that the council has maintained that the jurisdiction's name should only be changed at the request of immediate residents, rather than the view of those living outside Black Brook.

"There was concern that due to the Germans and everything that people may have a different outlook on the name," Douglass explained.

"And some of the residents that were from that area actually fought in World War II and refused to change the name just because Hitler tried to tarnish the meaning of swastika."

The Black Brook town council's decision comes a little over a year after Colorado's Cherry Hills Village moved to rename its Swastika Acres subdivision to Old Cherry Hills.

"I think it's important for our community to bring some closure to this issue," said councilman Dan Sheldon, who spearheaded the 2019 renaming effort, [as reported by the Denver Post](#). "The community has cried out for this to be changed."

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US' West Coast Winemakers Fear Widespread Industry Losses Over Smoke-Tainted Grapes by [Evan Craighead](#)

As wildfires continue to scorch the US West Coast, area winemakers are bracing for possible production and revenue hits due to the rejection of grapes that have been tainted by heavy smoke.

John Aguirre, president of the California Association of Winegrape Growers, recently spoke with [the Associated Press](#) and asserted the 2020 wildfires in California, Oregon and Washington are "without question the single worst disaster the wine-grape growing community has ever faced."

While the verdict is still out on the severity of crop damage, Aguirre told the outlet that the smoke-tainted wine he sampled was accompanied by a tasting card that compared the libation's flavor to "fecal plastic."

"We did a lot of grape sampling," California-based winemaker Noah Dorrance [told the San Francisco Chronicle](#) last month, "and just with the juice, you could already taste and smell this ashy, barbecued flavor, kind of like a campfire."

Gregory Jones, director of Linfield University's Evenstad Center for Wine Education and one of the industry's top authorities on climate change and its impact on winemaking, explained that there is a major difference between "smoky wine" and "fire-smoky wine."

"This issue is a very complex issue ... and there are some things we know and many things we don't know about this issue. What is clear is that the historical use of the term 'smoky' with wine has been tied to red wines that have spent some time aging in oak barrels, which in turn imparts an aromatic characteristic of 'smokiness' to the wine," he said, as [reported by Oregon's Portland Tribune](#).

"Aspects of how far the smoke travels, the smoke's composition, the level in the air that the smoke is at, the timing during the vintage, and how long it lasts all play a role in whether any smoke impact might occur to the wines."

While Oregon's pinot noirs may not suffer, this is [not the first time](#) West Coast winemakers have been confronted with industry dilemmas due to climate change.

"Unfortunately, climate experts are telling us this is going to be a problem," said Anita Oberholster, a grape and wine chemistry expert at the University of California, Davis, reported AP.

"And so we need to do better. We need to do loads more research."

At the same time, grape growers and wineries may find themselves in a position where they need to band together and form something like the [Oregon Solidarity project](#), a 2019 initiative launched by four Oregon wineries interested in procuring grapes set to be abandoned after they were found to have been tainted by smoke from the 2018 Klondike Fire.

The project ultimately [produced three types of wine](#) - a chardonnay, a rosé and a pinot noir - from the once-rejected grapes.

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Charging Officers for Taylor's Death Would 'Indict System' That's 'Broken From Top to Bottom' by [Evan Craighead](#)

Kentucky Attorney General Daniel Cameron announced on Wednesday that only one officer, former Det. Brett Hankison, would be indicted in connection to the March 13 shooting death of Breonna Taylor, a 26-year-old Black woman. One expert tells Sputnik the emerging details on evidence provided to the grand jury proves "the whole system is broken."

Eugene Puryear, host of [BreakThrough News](#) and author of the book "Shackled and Chained: Mass Incarceration in Capitalist America," told Radio Sputnik's [By Any Means Necessary](#) on Thursday that the details surrounding Taylor's case present the "perfect example of what people

are saying in the streets about how it's the system" that needs changing and "not just the individual officers."

US President Donald Trump spoke glowingly of Cameron as he quoted him before abruptly leaving a [Wednesday news conference](#) for an ["emergency" phone call](#).

Sunny Hostin, a former federal prosecutor, [argued on Thursday](#) that it does seem possible that an "indictment could have happened here against the officers," because the prosecutor "controls the facts given to the grand jury."

She further highlighted that Cameron, despite his appointment as attorney general, "has zero criminal trial experience."

"If you are to be the top prosecutor of a state, you have to have that kind of experience. And when I look at this case and this indictment, it reeks of someone that doesn't have that experience," she argued. "And his explanation yesterday, quite frankly, didn't make sense to someone like me."

There has also been outrage over the fact that wanton endangerment charges were only leveled against Hankinson over gunshots that entered a home belonging to a white family, despite the fact that officers' bullets were also fired into Taylor's home, as well as the home of a Black neighbor.

"They had wanton endangerment for the white neighbor's apartment, the bullets going there. But not for the bullets going into Breonna Taylor's body. Nor ... for the bullets that went into the Black neighbor's apartment above Breonna," attorney Ben Crump, who is representing Taylor's family, [said on Thursday](#).

Federal Bureau of Investigation ballistics analysis revealed that of the 20 shots fired by officers, the bullet that killed Taylor was fired by Det. Myles Cosgrove, who, along with Sgt. John Mattingly, avoided an indictment on Wednesday.

"To really indict these officers for murder would be to indict a system that allows the police to come, on basically no evidence, [and perform] a secret raid," Puryear told hosts Sean Blackmon and Jacquie Luqman.

He detailed that this system allows officers, who are "armed to the teeth" and not made to announce themselves, to "wantonly shoot all over the place, kill somebody," possibly kill others in nearby apartments and "just get away with it."

It's worth noting that Hankinson was removed from the Louisville Metro Police Department on June 23. [According to his termination letter](#), the officer exhibited "extreme indifference to the value of human life" when he "wantonly and blindly" fired into Taylor's apartment back in March. Puryear argued that the single indictment of wanton endangerment lets the public know "that's the only element" of the no-knock raid that may result in accountability.

"It lets you know right there that the whole system is broken, from top to bottom," he stated.

He concluded by pointing out that prior to Cameron's speech about how "justice is not often easy" and "does not fit the mold of public opinion" on Wednesday, he followed a different tune at the Republican National Convention.