

Friday 10/02/20

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Photos: France to Return Three Nazi-Looted Fauvist Paintings to Heirs of Jewish Collector by [Gaby Arancibia](#)

The French government indicated Thursday that it will be returning three paintings to the heirs of renowned Jewish gallery owner René Gimpel, whose prized works were looted during World War II by Nazi officers.

The three works at the center of the theft were painted between 1907 and 1910 by Fauvist painter Andre Derain and were acquired by Gimpel in Paris during the sale of art dealer Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler's collection in 1921. Gimpel had galleries in Paris, London and New York.

At present, the paintings are housed at two French institutions - two are at the Modern Art Museum in Troyes, and the third is located at the Cantini Museum in Marseille. Though the paintings have been renamed throughout the years, they are currently known as "Paysage à Cassis," "La Chapelle-sous-Crécy" and "Pinède à Cassis," [ARTnews reported](#).

The French state's decision came as a result of an appeals court ruling on Wednesday in Paris that overturned a prior decision by a lower court that the government did not have to return the works. The lower court previously ruled that there were a variety of uncertainties regarding the canvas paintings, such as differing names and the lining of the works, that brought into question the claim by Gimpel's heirs.

However, upon review of the evidence, the appeals court ultimately wrote in its ruling that there are "precise, serious and concordant indications" that the paintings were indeed looted and "whose sale is null."

Corinne Hershkovitch, a lawyer for Gimpel's heirs, [told reporters](#) that the outcome was "great" and that the team is "very happy to be recognized." Hershkovitch had previously indicated that the names and fits of the paintings failed to match the ledger from the 1921 sale because Gimpel renamed them for marketing purposes and simply relined the works.

Nearly a year after the German invasion of Poland, Gimpel, who would eventually become a member of the French Resistance, fled Paris for the French Riviera in October 1940, according to [French daily Le Figaro](#). He was later arrested in 1944, at which time many of the works in his collection were confiscated.

Gimpel was eventually deported to the Neuengamme Nazi concentration camp in northern Germany. He died in January 1945, a few months before the end of the war.

Although Gimpel's heirs claimed a win with the Paris court's ruling, their fight is not yet over, as they are still attempting to recover other works from his collection.

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Kitten Powers Down After Being Placed in Harness - Video Club

California-based kitten Archie recently put one of his fluffy paws down and let his silly human know that harnesses would be a complete no-go during outings.

Footage obtained by video licensor ViralHog shows the slightly annoyed feline immediately dropping to the floor after being placed inside the evil contraption. The persistent human is seen repeatedly trying to get Archie to stand on all fours, to no avail.

Legend has it that Archie to this day has zero interest in the baby blue harness.

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'You're Doing It to Yourselves': Deepfake US Election Ads Featuring Putin, Kim Pulled From Websites

by [Morgan Artyukhina](#)

A series of ads featuring digital likenesses of Russian President Vladimir Putin and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un purporting to urge Americans to "save the election" have been pulled from various websites.

An ad campaign by RepresentUs, a US nonprofit group that [pushes anti-corruption measures](#) and supports lobbying overhaul, has been pulled from several social media websites over fears it could deceive the public. The ads feature two foreign leaders commonly held in American politics to be dictators as well as attempting to subvert the US electoral process: Putin and Kim - or rather, digital recreations of the two world leaders.

"America, you blame me for interfering with your democracy, but I don't have to. You are doing it to yourselves," a digital Putin says in one video, standing behind a lectern bearing the Russian double-eagle coat of arms. "Polling stations are closing, you don't know who to trust, you are divided. There are strings we can pull, but we don't have to. You are pulling them for us."

In another video, a digitally recreated Kim tells viewers in a confusingly Spanish-sounding accent: "Democracy is a fragile thing, more fragile than you want to believe. If the election fails, there is no democracy. I don't have to do anything. You're doing it to yourselves. The people are divided. Your voting districts are manipulated. Voting locations are closing, so millions cant vote."

"It's not hard for democracy to collapse. All you have to do is nothing," the ersatz Kim continues, smirking.

"Democracy lives or dies with you," the ad says at the conclusion of the fake speech. "This footage is not real, but the threat is."

However, the videos only got limited attention before being pulled from purchased ad time by several websites, including YouTube, and several TV networks, such as CNN, Fox News and MSNBC, [according to The Hill](#).

"Our policies are meant to keep advertisers from running ads that are fundamentally edited to distort reality (like deepfakes, or photoshopped images)," Google spokesperson Charlotte Smith told the publication. "We removed this ad in accordance with this policy."

However, some celebrities have still hopped behind the campaign, including [American actress Amy Schumer](#) and [Australian singer Sia](#), both of whom tweeted about it on Tuesday.

[In a Tuesday statement, RepresentUs co-founder](#) and President Joshua Graham Lynn said, "For decades, America has been gerrymandered, votes have been suppressed and voters purged, money has taken over our political system."

"In 2020, we're seeing it all come home to roost. By featuring two leaders who have a vested interest in the collapse of our democratic system, we are putting the American people face-to-face with just how fragile our democracy really is. We hope it inspires Americans to come together to fight for this one issue that unites us all," Lynn continued.

"Deepfakes are an entirely new kind of threat to democracy and the integrity of the media. This ad exposes the threat for all to see," RepresentUs co-founder and CEO Josh Silver also said in the release.

While the anti-Trump sections of the US intelligence community and think tank apparatus that help shape US policies have long maintained, against verifiable proof and common sense, that Russia ordered interference with the 2016 US presidential election in order to get Donald Trump elected president, accusations about attempts on the 2020 election have been few and far between. Some much publicized reports [based on what Grayzone reporter Ben Norton called "comically thin evidence"](#) have attempted to point fingers at obscure websites like PeaceData, which Norton demonstrated is more credibly tied to the Pentagon, not the Kremlin.

Periodic reports about plans by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) to attempt to interfere in the November 3 election have also appeared in US media, but again, little real, material evidence has been presented. In December 2019, Japan's Public Security Intelligence Agency [issued a warning that Pyongyang could try to interfere](#), and in June, similar comments by an American academic turned into a series of media reports claiming the same.

"I fully expect North Korea to test its own capabilities to see what it can get away with by hacking into the US election system," Sung Yoon Lee, the Kim Koo-Korea Foundation professor in Korean Studies at the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University, [told Fox News on June 17](#). "North Korea's cyber abilities are simply one of the best in the world; it would be surprising if North Korea did not test its abilities during the election."

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US Navy Establishes First Training Squadron for Stingray Tanker Drones It Doesn't Have by [Morgan Artyukhina](#)

On Thursday, the US Navy officially "stood up" its first squadron to operate MQ-25 Stingray aerial refueling drones. The unmanned aerial vehicles will one day be based on aircraft carriers, but right now, the service doesn't even have a prototype Stingray, just a demonstrator.

[According to Navy documents obtained by The Drive](#), the US Navy established Unmanned Carrier Launched Multi-Role Squadron 10 on Thursday. The unit is based at Naval Base Ventura County in southern California and will primarily serve as a training unit to supply the fleet with capable drone operators, according to the documents.

Once operational, the drone will be able to significantly extend the range of a carrier's air wing - a valuable commodity when trying to exert control over contested seas. It will take over this role from specially modified versions of the F/A-18F Super Hornet.

However, at the present the Navy doesn't have a single MQ-25; since last September, the Navy has been flying a T1 demonstrator aircraft. Defense contractor Boeing is building four Engineering Development Model [prototypes for the Navy under an \\$84.7 million April contract](#). The first is expected to be delivered next year and the last by 2024, the year the Navy hopes to begin using the Stingray.

The Navy plans to eventually [buy 72 Stingrays at a cost of roughly \\$13 billion](#).

In June, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) [warned that if several aircraft carriers then docked for repairs](#) didn't finish their scheduled upgrades that will allow them to use the MQ-25 before they put to sea again, it could delay the Stingray program by as much as three years.

"Program officials stated that, among other things, the Navy's potential inability to maintain its schedule commitments could require modifications to the contract that would impact the fixed price terms," [the GAO warned in a June 3 report](#). The aircraft carriers USS Carl Vinson and USS George H.W. Bush both require special control and networking equipment to be installed so they can fly the drone from their flight decks.

"Specifically, the Navy faces limited flexibility to install MQ-25 control centers on aircraft carriers. If the Navy misses any of its planned installation windows, the program would have to extend MQ-25 development testing by up to 3 years," the report stated, noting that "such a delay could necessitate a delay to initial capability and result in a cost increase."

[According to Breaking Defense, the Carl Vinson's work was completed](#) on schedule before the ship returned to duty in San Diego in August, but the Bush will remain in Virginia for upgrades until June 2021.

Naval Base Ventura County, where the Stingray training squadron was established, is also home to the Navy's first [MQ-4 Triton surveillance drone unit](#), at the base's Point Mugu installation.

Point Mugu is also where the Navy and US Air Force recently wrapped up joint drills demonstrating the ability of MQ-9 Reaper drones to support maritime patrol and amphibious assault missions. [As Sputnik reported, personnel at the "Agile Reaper" exercises wore](#) special arm patches showing a Reaper flying over a map of China and bearing a "Grim Reaper" icon under the wing - something Beijing decried as an "arrogant provocation."

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Biden Offers Prayers to Trump Family, Says He's Had 2 Negative COVID-19 Tests Today
by [Morgan Artyukhina](#)

Following news the US president had contracted the COVID-19 novel coronavirus, Democratic presidential nominee Joe Biden sent Donald Trump his best wishes from the campaign trail. Biden, three years Trump's elder, tested negative for COVID-19 twice on Friday.

"Sending my prayers for the health and safety of the first lady and the president of the United States," Biden told the audience at a campaign rally in Grand Rapids, Michigan, on Friday. Early Friday morning, the White House announced [Trump and his wife, Melania, had tested positive for SARS-CoV-2](#), the virus that causes COVID-19, after Hope Hicks, a close adviser to the president, tested positive hours earlier.

On Friday, Sean P. Conley, [Trump's personal physician, said Trump was taking an "antibody cocktail"](#) made by Regeneron Pharmaceuticals and that the 74-year-old head of state was fatigued with a fever. His wife, 50-year-old Melania, has a mild cough and headache, and the rest of the first family has tested negative.

On Friday evening, [Trump relocated to Walter Reed National Military Medical Center](#) in Bethesda, Maryland, where he will stay in a private presidential suite for several days that will allow him to continue working in close proximity to medical staff.

In his stump speech in the manufacturing town on Friday, 77-year-old Biden used the circumstance of Trump's illness to make the case for stricter measures to combat the spread of the virus, which Trump has been ambivalent about at best.

"This is not a matter of politics," Biden said, but "a bracing reminder that we have to take this virus seriously."

"We can save 100,000 lives in the next 100 days according to the head of the CDC if everyone wears a mask in public," Biden said, citing various experts, including Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Director Robert Redfield, with whom Trump has butted heads over preventative measures.

"So be patriotic: it's not about being a tough guy, it's about doing your part. Wearing a mask is not only going to protect you, but it also protects those around you: you mom, your dad, your brother, your sister, husband, wife, neighbor, coworker. Don't just do it for yourself, do it for the people you love, people you work with," Biden said.

At the first presidential debate on Tuesday, during which Trump stood just feet from Biden, prompting fears of cross-infection leading to Biden's Friday tests, the president made a jab at Biden's constant wearing of masks.

"I think masks are okay," [Trump told debate moderator and Fox News journalist Chris Wallace](#). "You have to understand - I mean, I have a mask right here. I put a mask on when I think I need it ... I don't wear masks like him, every time you see him he's got a mask. He could be speaking 200 feet away from and he shows up with the biggest mask I've ever seen."

More than 208,000 Americans have died from COVID-19 and more than 7 million have contracted the illness. A startling report by the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME) at the University of Washington last month [predicted that number could double to 410,000 dead](#) by the end of the year, noting that the number falls considerably if basic safety measures such as wearing masks are used by 95% of people, but skyrockets if social distancing mandates are lifted too early.

Meanwhile, at the presidential debate, [Trump promised voters that a vaccine was just weeks away](#). Last month, Trump's Coronavirus Task Force revealed that [a vaccine could be ready as](#)

[early as mid-October](#), that 100 million doses could be distributed by the end of the year and that every American who wishes to be vaccinated can be by April of next year.

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White House: Trump to Stay at Military Hospital for 'Next Few Days' After COVID-19 Diagnosis by [Morgan Artyukhina](#)

After testing positive on Friday for SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, US President Donald Trump has made a "precautionary" trip to Walter Reed National Military Medical Center in Bethesda, Maryland.

White House Press Secretary [Kelly McEnany announced on Friday that Trump](#) would be "working at the presidential offices at Walter Reed for the next few days."

The president [reportedly made the trip via Marine One](#), a specialized Sikorsky VH-3D Sea King helicopter.

[Early on Friday morning, 74-year-old Trump announced](#) he and his wife, 50-year-old first lady Melania Trump, had tested positive for SARS-CoV-2 after Hope Hicks, a close adviser to the president, also tested positive.

According to his personal physician, Trump is suffering from fever and fatigue, while Melania is presenting very mild symptoms. The president is [also taking an "antibody cocktail" along with several vitamin](#) supplements.

The president's suite at Walter Reed is expansive, including a kitchen, secure conference room and its own intensive care unit (ICU). The White House chief of staff and Trump's physician also have their own accommodations on the campus. [NBC reporter Scott MacFarlane noted the suites](#), however, are run by the White House, not the Department of Defense, meaning Walter Reed administrators do not have unrestricted access to them.

The sprawling medical facility, formerly known as Bethesda Naval Hospital, sits across the street from the National Institutes for Health (NIH) campus, the US' nerve center for research into the respiratory illness. The hospital has taken care of several US presidents over the years, including Ronald Reagan, who temporarily passed his powers of office to his vice president, George H.W. Bush, in 1985 before receiving surgery to remove polyps from his colon.

However, White House spokesperson Judd Deere made clear to reporters on Friday that Trump had "absolutely not" transferred his powers to Vice President Mike Pence during his stay at Walter Reed.

If Trump Survives, 'He Will Try to Use That Politically'

Jim Kavanagh, a political analyst and contributor to CounterPunch and ThePolemicist.net, told [Radio Sputnik's By Any Means Necessary](#) on Friday that Trump's diagnosis was "ironic," given how "nonchalant" the president has been about COVID-19.

Kavanagh noted Trump has been "talking about it contradictory ways all the time. And again, it's all about him, all about him, all about him, and now it's gotten to him."

"My main takeaway is that we have this chaotic health care system, chaotic leadership, which even at its best has to deal with the fact that you have no real public health care system, and you have a chaotic mess of a health care system. And certainly, whatever one thinks of the virus in general, it is absolutely clear it is dangerous for people in Trump's age group, in Trump's physical condition. These are the people that need to be the most protected, and he, being among that group, he's been one of the stupidest, to be as nonchalant as he's been about it."

"It's very interesting to think about how this might proceed. In terms of his health, [UK Prime Minister] Boris Johnson had this, and he was very sick. I mean, he said it could've gone either way. Other leaders have had it. I think the Russian prime minister [Mikhail Mishustin] had it and didn't fare so badly. As you say, they're going to get the best care, they're going to get the best tests, you know, whatever can be done can be done."

"I doubt he's going to die from it," Kavanagh predicted. "If he survives that, which he's probably going to do, he will try to use that politically on his own behalf and say 'See, I survived, everybody can survive.'"

"On the other hand, I think politically, just the fact that he's come down with it after treating it as dismissively as he has is going to reflect bad, it's going to work badly for him politically,"

Kavanagh said. "I think this is a second big hit after his performance in the debates, and I don't think he's going to be able to turn it to his advantage."

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Video: Trump Thanks Supporters for Well Wishes in First Statement Since COVID-19 Diagnosis by [Morgan Artyukhina](#)

Prior to his departure from the White House for Walter Reed hospital on Friday, US President Donald Trump filmed a video thanking people for their support after he and first lady Melania Trump were diagnosed with COVID-19.

"I want to thank everybody for the tremendous support," Trump said in the video posted on Twitter, which was filmed in the Oval Office. "I'm going to Walter Reed Hospital, I think I'm doing very well, but we're going to make sure that things work out. The first lady is doing very well. So thank you very much, I appreciate it, I will never forget it."

Two of those well-wishes came from [his rival in the 2020 presidential election, Democratic nominee Joe Biden](#), and from Chairman of the State Affairs Commission [of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea \(DPRK\) Kim Jong Un](#), who once called Trump a "dotard," [meaning an old person, especially one who has become physically weak](#) or whose mental faculties have declined.

Earlier on Friday, the White House announced [the Trumps were heading to Walter Reed National Military Medical Center](#) in Bethesda, Maryland, for several days. The president maintains an extensive suite on the hospital campus that will allow him to continue to work while remaining close to medical staff. Donald and Melania are the only members of the family who have tested positive for SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19.

Sean P. Conley, the president's physician, [reported Trump was taking an "antibody cocktail"](#) and was suffering from fatigue and fever.

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Massive 'Swarm' of Tremors Rattles California, Raises Concerns of Powerful Quake

Hundreds of earthquakes continue to take place across the Salton Sea area in Southern California, with more than 200 tremors reported this week, according to the US Geological Survey (USGS)

Since Thursday alone, [more than 100 tremors](#) have been reported in California.

According to the latest USGS update, a swarm of earthquakes southeast of the Salton Sea began on September 30.

There were 13 magnitude 3 or larger earthquakes recorded on October 1, whereas on the day prior, there were 48 magnitude 3 or larger quakes.

"The largest earthquake that has occurred, as of this release, is a [magnitude 4.9 at 5:31 PM PDT on Sept. 30th](#). This earthquake and the associated swarm are located in an area of diffuse seismic activity between the San Andreas fault in the north and the Imperial fault to the south," [the USGS noted](#).

The USGS has also outlined several possible scenarios for the coming week in regards to earthquake activity in the California area.

Under the most likely scenario, earthquakes will continue, "possibly including earthquakes up to magnitude 5.4." However, under this scenario, the rate of earthquakes in the swarm will decrease over the next seven days.

"Some additional moderately sized earthquakes (magnitude 4.5 to 5.4) may occur, which could cause localized damage, particularly in weak structures. Smaller magnitude earthquakes (magnitude 3.0+) may be felt by people close to the epicenters," the USGS explained.

According to [Michigan Technological University](#), earthquakes with magnitudes between 2.5 and 5.4 are felt but only cause minor damage.

In another, less likely scenario, a larger earthquake - up to a magnitude of 6.9 - could occur.

"Earthquakes of this size could cause damage around the area close to the earthquakes that have already occurred and would be followed by aftershocks that would increase the number of smaller earthquakes per day," the USGS warned.

In the least likely scenario, a much larger earthquake, with a magnitude of 7 or higher, could take place in the next seven days. If such an earthquake occurred, it would severely impact communities and would most likely be followed by multiple aftershocks.

In addition to earthquakes, California is also battling wildfires. According to [Weather.com](#), about two dozen major wildfires were burning across the state on Friday.

The Glass Fire burning in the counties of Napa and Sonoma is currently the biggest blaze, having ravaged more than 93 square miles of land and destroyed nearly 600 buildings. As of Friday morning, the fire was only 6% contained.

The [US National Weather Service \(NWS\)](#) on Friday also issued a heat advisory for the San Francisco Bay Area, warning of high temperatures that will lead to increased risk of heat-related illness.

"With wildfires burning around the region, smoke and haze will also continue to impact the San Francisco Bay Area and Central Coast," the NWS warned.

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Trump Given 'Antibody Cocktail,' 'Experts' to Determine 'Next Best Steps' After COVID-19 Diagnosis

US President Donald Trump has received a dosage of US biotech company Regeneron's "antibody cocktail" following his positive COVID-19 diagnosis, Sean P. Conley, the president's physician, said on Friday.

According to Conley, Trump, 74, received an 8-gram dose of the "antibody cocktail" infusion as a precautionary measure with no issues. In addition to the antibodies, Trump has been taking zinc, vitamin D, famotidine, melatonin and aspirin.

Famotidine is an antacid and antihistamine.

"As of this afternoon, the president remains fatigued but in good spirits. He's being evaluated by a team of experts, and together we'll be making recommendations to the president and the first lady in regards to next best steps," a statement by Conley reads.

The release also notes that first lady Melania Trump is experiencing a cough and headache and that the remainder of the first family has tested negative for SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19. [The New York Times reported](#) earlier Friday that Trump is experiencing mild, cold-like symptoms.

The antibody cocktail developed by Regeneron is a combination of two monoclonal antibodies that block the infectivity of SARS-CoV-2.

The company [released data from a trial](#) investigating the medication's efficacy on September 29. The trial found that the treatment reduced viral levels and quickened the relief of symptoms in patients infected with the virus but not ill enough to be hospitalized.

"After months of incredibly hard work by our talented team, we are extremely gratified to see that Regeneron's antibody cocktail REGN-COV2 rapidly reduced viral load and associated symptoms in infected COVID-19 patients," said George D. Yancopoulos, president and chief scientific officer of Regeneron, in the release.

Vox reporter Alex Ward on Friday [tweeted](#) that national security adviser Robert C. O'Brien has ordered all White House staffers to wear masks in common areas.

The order comes after a senior White House official said earlier Friday that masks will still not be mandatory at the White House, noting the facial coverings are a "personal choice," [the Associated Press reported](#).

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Trump Camp Failed to Notify Biden Officials About Potential COVID-19 Exposure - Reports

US President Donald Trump's campaign did not contact Democratic nominee Joe Biden's campaign to notify them of potential exposure to COVID-19 after the president revealed Friday that both he and his wife, Melania, have contracted the disease.

"PBS NewsHour" correspondent [Yamiche Alcindor](#) and CNN's [Sarah Mucha](#) both tweeted Friday that there was no communication from the Trump campaign to alert the Biden campaign of potential exposure.

"There was no contact from the Trump campaign or the White House to alert the Biden campaign of possible exposure. The campaign learned of the situation from the news reports, a Biden campaign aide tells me," Alcindor noted.

The Trump campaign allegedly waived such communications despite the fact that the president and Biden were merely feet apart during Tuesday night's presidential debate, during which Trump mocked Biden for wearing masks.

"When needed, I wear masks. I don't wear masks like him," [Trump said of Biden](#). "Every time you see him, he's got a mask. He could be speaking 200 feet away from them, and he shows up with the biggest mask I've ever seen."

In addition, Trump's family members all removed their masks during the presidential debate held in Cleveland, Ohio.

Although Trump's children, Ivanka, Donald Jr. and Eric, all wore masks while entering the debate auditorium, they removed them when they sat down. Similarly, the first lady [removed her mask after getting seated as well](#).

During the debate, Biden criticized Trump's response to the pandemic and his aversion to mask-wearing.

"He's been totally irresponsible the way he's handled social distancing and discouraging people to wear masks," [Biden noted](#).

In addition to the first lady, Trump aide Hope Hicks has also tested positive for the virus.

Following Trump's positive COVID-19 test, Biden, Ivanka, Jared Kushner, Vice President Mike Pence, second lady Karen Pence, US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and White House Chief of Staff Mark Meadows all [tested negative](#) for SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19.

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England Bans Single-Use Plastic Straws, Stirrers & Cotton Buds

England's ban on single-use plastic straws and other disposable plastic items went into effect Thursday.

The policy, initially set to go into force in April, was delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Under the ban, businesses cannot legally sell or supply plastic straws, stirrers or cotton buds, [the BBC reported](#).

However, people with medical conditions or disabilities may still be provided plastic straws by bars, restaurants and hospitals, if necessary.

According to the [UK Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs](#), the UK uses an estimated 4.7 billion plastic straws, 316 million plastic stirrers and 1.8 billion plastic-stemmed cotton buds every year.

In addition, around 10% of cotton buds used in the UK are flushed down toilets and can end up in bodies of water.

“The ban on straws, stirrers and cotton buds is just the next step in our battle against plastic pollution and our pledge to protect our ocean and the environment for future generations,” UK Environment Secretary George Eustice told [Sky News this week](#).

“We are already a world leader in this global effort. Our five-pence charge on single-use plastic bags has successfully cut sales by 95% in the main supermarkets, we have banned microbeads, and we are building plans for a deposit return scheme to drive up the recycling of single-use drinks containers,” Eustice added.

Some US cities, including Seattle and Washington, DC, have also banned single-use plastic straws. Seattle [enacted its ban in 2018](#), while the US capital [followed suit in 2019](#).

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Photos: Taiwan Deploys Jets, Air Defenses After Chinese Plane Enters Island Nation's Defense Zone

by [Evan Craighead](#)

Taiwan says Republic of China Air Force (ROCAF) fighter jets were forced to scramble after a Chinese medium-range transport aircraft entered the country's air defense identification zone (ADIZ), an area that has been repeatedly violated by Beijing in recent months.

The Ministry of National Defense (MND) of the Republic of China revealed in a Thursday social media memo that air defense systems were activated and ROCAF fighter jets scrambled after a Shaanxi Y-8 of the People's Liberation Army Air Force (PLAAF) entered Taiwan's southwest ADIZ.

“No mater [sic] what happened, we will Keep #protectourcountry firmly,” the MND said in a Thursday tweet.

Similar occurrences have become somewhat commonplace in recent months. Following a September 21 incident involving 37 Chinese aircraft, [Taipei highlighted](#) that it has the right to “self-defense and to counterattack.”

China has maintained that it views Taiwan as a breakaway province, and while the island has its own government, the “One-China policy” states that there is only one sovereign China. The US has acknowledged the policy while also [approving over \\$15 billion in arms sales](#) to Taiwan since 2010.

Lockheed Martin [was awarded a \\$62 billion defense contract](#) on August 14 for the production of 90 F-16 Foreign Military Sale (FMS) aircraft - [66 of which are slated for purchase by Taiwan](#). The formal agreement, if carried out, would be Washington's first advanced fighter jet sale to Taiwan since 1992.

Beijing has been incredibly vocal regarding its disapproval of the deal throughout its development.

Hua Chunying, a spokesperson for China's Foreign Ministry, responded to the August 2019 announcement of the potential sale, [noting at the time](#) that the aircraft delivery would result in "strong reactions, and the US will have to bear all the consequences."

The People's Liberation Army (PLA) conducted a [series of exercises](#), including live-fire drills, near the Taiwan Strait in September to "protect its sovereignty," Chinese Defense Ministry spokesperson Ren Guoqiang [asserted on September 18](#).

Ren also slammed Washington's relationship with Taipei, accusing the two governments of "stepping up collusion, frequently causing disturbances."

The defense official asserted that "using Taiwan to control China" or, in the case of the ROC, attempting to "rely on foreigners to build oneself up," would be unsuccessful.

"Those who play with fire will get burnt," Ren promised.

Beijing's threats have recently been accompanied by the increased PLAAF aircraft presence near Taiwan. Taiwanese Foreign Minister Joseph [Wu told reporters on September 22](#) that the provocations are "virtually a daily occurrence."

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Redacted Grand Jury Recordings for Breonna Taylor Case Released Amid Federal Probe by [Evan Craighead](#)

The recent release of grand jury records on the Breonna Taylor case has highlighted a number of new questions surrounding both the police operation that killed Taylor and Kentucky Attorney General Daniel Cameron's overall handling of the case.

Cameron's office [released redacted versions](#) of some 20 hours' worth of audio files from the grand jury proceedings on Friday.

This came as a court-ordered response to the [Monday filing of a motion](#) which accused the attorney general of misleading the public following the announcement of charges on September 23, which resulted in the arrest of ex-Louisville Metro Police Department (LMPD) Det. Brett Hankinson on three counts of first-degree wanton endangerment.

Cameron was afforded a two-day extension in releasing the documents on Wednesday, despite requesting a seven-day delay.

Despite obtaining a "no-knock warrant" from Jefferson Circuit Judge Mary Shaw, LMPD officers allegedly knocked and made their presence known upon arriving at Taylor's home on March 13, according to accounts from inside the department.

"We were asked repeatedly ... during the briefing that this was a, what I like to call, a soft target," LMPD Det. Myles Cosgrove said, [as reported by WAVE](#). "We were asked ... to please

knock and announce, and to use our maturity as investigators to get into this house ... to not basically hit the door. Even though they had a no-knock warrant signed.”

Kenneth Walker, Taylor’s boyfriend, claimed that he did not hear authorities announce themselves.

The NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, which is a separate entity from the NAACP, has declared that it will be conducting its own review of the recordings.

Cameron’s release comes alongside the FBI and US Department of Justice’s joint probe “into all aspects of the death of Breonna Taylor.”

The LMPD Professional Standards Unit is also investigating the no-knock raid for any possible policy violations. Det. Joshua Jaynes, the LMPD officer who sought the search warrant for Taylor’s apartment, is one of six cops at the center of the probe, according to department spokesperson Sgt. Lamont Washington.

“Were drugs money or paraphernalia recovered from apartment 4? ... The answer to that is no,” testified Herman Hall, an investigator with the Kentucky attorney general’s office.

“They didn’t go forward with executing the initial search warrant that they had for Breonna Taylor’s apartment.”

During an interview with investigators, Cosgrove said that his “brain was kind of, like overloaded” after the three cops initially barged into the apartment. He went on to claim that he had tunnel vision, as if he was looking through “a periscope or binoculars.”

“I still see these vivid white flashes, and I don’t see darkness anymore but I am seeing this vivid flashing, and I’m starting to see the bigger picture,” the officer recounted.

LMPD body camera footage published by Vice News on Monday showed Cosgrove and Hankinson following the shooting.

It appears as if both officers are violating LMPD standards and procedures, which state that officers involved in a critical incident should be “isolated from all non-essential individuals for the remainder of the initial investigation.”

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Tokyo Seeks Eighth Record-High Defense Budget for F-35, Hypersonic Tech, Space Ops
by [Evan Craighead](#)

The Japanese Ministry of Defense has put forth a \$55 billion budget request for fiscal year 2021 that seeks the procurement of additional F-35 variants, expanded hypersonic weapons research and electromagnetic warfare units.

Japanese defense officials requested a record \$55 billion for the annual defense budget on Wednesday - the eighth consecutive year their request to the Ministry of Finance has reached a record high.

The budget pertains to fiscal year 2021, which begins in April 2021.

Research is one focus of the proposal, with some \$113.6 million requested for the development of technologies like radar and mission systems integration for Japan’s sixth-generation fighter jet project, along with \$555.8 million requested for other parts of the effort

An estimated \$218.6 million is also sought for hypersonic weapons program research.

“The budget request also includes funding for less traditional defense, such as the research and operation of space and cyber units, as well as for new electromagnetic warfare units,” [Defense News reported](#).

This would come as a followup to Tokyo’s May launch of its Space Operations Squadron - a unit of the Japan Air Self-Defense Force that is “tasked with monitoring and protecting Japanese satellites from enemy attacks or space debris.”

The defense ministry’s request comes weeks after the US State Department greenlighted the potential \$23.11 billion sale of 105 “F-35 Joint Strike Fighter aircraft and related equipment” to Japan. [The breakdown provided by Tokyo](#) called for 63 F-35A variant aircraft and 42 F-35B variant aircraft.

At least \$308.5 million and \$249.8 million of the budget have been designated for four additional F-35As and two more F-35Bs, respectively.

Tokyo’s total procurement of the Joint Strike Fighters would notably make Japan the biggest F-35 operator outside of the US. [Two Izumo-class helicopter destroyers](#) of the Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force are presently undergoing upgrades to allow the vessels to transport F-35Bs, which possess short takeoff and vertical-landing capabilities.

Some \$218.6 million is earmarked in the budget for necessary upgrades during the coming fiscal year. The retrofit process includes an augmentation of the vessel’s lip and flight deck to accommodate the stealth aircraft.

The Wednesday proposal served as the first defense budget request issued by the new government of Japanese Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga.

The matter now awaits approval from the country’s Ministry of Finance.

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Big and Beautiful: ‘Fat Bear Week’ Pre-Hibernation Contest Held at Alaskan National Park
National Park Service/Reuters
by [Victoria Teets](#)

For those already fed up with the US presidential election, fret not, for there's another contest you may want to turn your eyes to as netizens attempt to determine the “thickest” bear in one of America’s national parks.

Big is definitely beautiful as the public participates in voting for the brown bear carrying the most pounds before hibernation in Alaska’s Katmai National Park with the annual Fat Bear Week competition, which began Wednesday.

[The Guardian reports](#) the event’s website lists 12 contenders - including last year's champ, Holly, nicknamed the "Queen of Corpulence"; Otis, a two-time winner and "master of patience and efficiency"; and a bear with the appropriate name of Chunk. Voting is taking place this week on the heavyweight contenders, who have been separated into March Madness-style brackets. The winner will be selected on October 6, or Fat Bear Tuesday.

Friday's round of voting features a faceoff between bear 151, known by the US National Park Service (NPS) as "big bootied" Walker, and bear 856, a contender that has the advantage, the NPS said, of "overbearing obesity."

Voters can make their choice by viewing the six webcams set up around the Brooks River, where the bears have been gorging themselves on salmon for months.

"Their winter survival depends on accumulating ample fat reserves before entering the den," the contest website says. "Katmai's brown bears are at their fattest in late summer and early fall after a summer spent trying to satisfy their profound hunger."

As a result of a pre-hibernation process called hyperphagia, it is currently impossible for the bears to feel full, meaning they can easily pack on hundreds of pounds, the Guardian noted. Some of the portly predators will be weighing in at more than 1,000 pounds by mid-October. Around a third of a bear's body weight can be lost during hibernation.

This contest proves people still enjoy voting!