

Wednesday 10/07/20

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.

Videos: US Gulf Braces for Hurricane Delta After Powerful Cyclone Strikes Mexico
by [Gaby Arancibia](#)

Forecast to strike the US Gulf Coast on Friday, Hurricane Delta has prompted a series of storm surge and hurricane warning alerts across the region, as residents quickly work to secure their homes and prepare for the worst while the cyclone nears the coastline.

The US National Hurricane Center (NHC) [announced in an Wednesday update](#) that the powerful storm was churning off the northern coast of the Yucatan Peninsula after having struck the popular Mexican tourism region.

With maximum sustained winds of 100 mph, the Category 2 hurricane is presently moving in a northwestward direction at a pace of 17 mph. Its current hurricane-force winds extend outward up to 30 miles from the cyclone's center, whereas its tropical storm-force winds reach out up to 125 miles.

NHC forecasters anticipate Delta will strengthen and become a major hurricane once it moves through the southern and central portions of the Gulf of Mexico; however, Delta is expected to undergo "some weakening" on Friday. At present, Delta is set to make landfall in the US sometime late Friday into Saturday morning.

Areas from High Island, Texas, to Grand Isle, Louisiana, have been placed under a hurricane watch, and "dangerous" storm surges between 1 and 11 feet may arise depending on the time of Delta's arrival to the coast, the hurricane agency has stated.

"The deepest water will occur along the immediate coast near and to the east of the landfall location, where the surge will be accompanied by large and dangerous waves," reads the NHC's latest notice, which adds that the storm will produce upwards of 12 inches of rain in some areas of the Mississippi Valley.

Ahead of Delta's landfall on the US Gulf Coast, Alabama Gov. Kay Ivey ordered mandatory evacuations for all visitors and tourists located in Orange Beach, Gulf Shores and Dauphin Islands, including the unincorporated towns of Ono Island and Fort Morgan.

As Louisiana is expected to take the brunt of the storm, Gov. John Bel Edwards called on residents "[to be ready for whatever it may bring.](#)" So far local Louisiana officials have issued recommended evacuations in Port Fourchon, which supports offshore oil and gas operations in the Bayou State.

However, before parting ways with Mexico, Delta is forecast to bring a "life-threatening storm surge" of between 6 and 9 feet in some areas along the northern and eastern portions of the Yucatan Peninsula.

Delta made landfall on the peninsula, just south of the resort town of Cancun, early Wednesday, bringing with it maximum sustained winds of 110 mph that toppled nearly 100 trees and knocked down power lines along the coast, [the Associated Press reported.](#)

Between the Mexican states of Quintana Roo and Yucatan, roughly 39,000 individuals were evacuated to storm shelters. No injuries or deaths caused by the storm have been reported. Since landfall, the Mexican government has called off tropical storm warnings along the eastern coast of the Yucatan Peninsula.

Throughout Wednesday, Delta is expected to generate strong swells around land areas in the northwestern Caribbean Sea. "These swells are likely to cause life-threatening surf and rip current conditions," concludes the latest NHC update.

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.

Curious Raccoon Undertakes Deep Toilet Bowl Inspection - Video Club

Rosy, one of two rescued raccoons living it up in Tennessee, recently demonstrated that one can have fun with water anywhere - even if it's the water in a toilet bowl.

Video filmed by Tennessee resident Heather Long captured the curious raccoon diving headfirst into the one her home's toilet bowls without a care in the world, as her sibling scurries away after the pair are caught by Long.

"They are like toddlers on crack, we call them crackcoons," Long [told video licensor Storyful](#), explaining that the pair came into her care after they were abandoned by their mother. "Never a dull moment ... They love water. Even from the toilet."

Honey, it may be time to raccoon-proof the toilet!

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.

US Space Force Announces Contracts for First 8 'Wide Field of View' Missile Early Warning Satellites

by [Morgan Artyukhina](#)

The US Space Force's Space Development Agency (SDA) awarded two contracts on Monday to build eight satellites for its upcoming infrared missile detection constellation. However, these are just the first in what could become a vast network of thousands of satellites in orbit.

[On Monday, the SDA awarded information technology firm](#) L3Harris Technologies a \$193.6 million contract and private space company Space Exploration Technologies Corp. (SpaceX) a \$149.1 million contract, each to build four satellites with a wide field of view (WFOV) overhead persistent infrared (OPIR) sensor, which the SDA is calling "Tracking Layer Tranche 0."

"The satellites will be able to provide missile tracking data for hypersonic glide vehicles and the next generation of advanced missile threats," [SDA Director Derek Tournear said in a Pentagon release](#) on Monday. [He also told Space News on Monday](#) that both firms are required to deliver their satellites by September 2022.

In June, [Tournear said on a Missile Defense Advocacy Alliance broadcast](#) that the first eight satellites would pioneer the concept of a WFOV sensor, as present missile early warning satellites use narrow fields of view due to their less sophisticated technology. This constellation will start out at 20 satellites after the first eight are proven, but could eventually grow to as many as 200.

[As Sputnik reported, the existing Space-Based Infrared System](#) (SBIRS) satellites are geared toward spotting ballistic missile launches, during which the rocket engines put out huge amounts of heat that stands out from the background temperature of the Earth. However, with the advent of hypersonic glide vehicles, which have short rocket burns compared to traditional ballistic missiles, [this method makes it harder to spot their launch](#) - and basically impossible to spot them once they “go cold” and begin their high-speed glide towards their target.

[According to The Drive, SpaceX’s satellite will be derived](#) from its Starlink project, envisioned as [a huge network of broadband internet satellites](#) that orbit much closer to the Earth than a typical satellite, giving people on the ground a much stronger signal but covering a much narrower field of view. The design for L3Harris’ satellite is as yet unknown.

The Tracking Layer will, in turn, be part of a larger network of detection satellites called the Hypersonic and Ballistic Tracking Space Sensor (HBTSS), presently being developed by the SDA, Missile Defense Agency (MDA) and Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA), which are described as having a “medium field of view.”

[C4ISRNET reported in June the HBTSS project](#) was chronically underfunded, and [a March report by the Center for Strategic and International Studies](#) think tank blasted the MDA and Congress for zigging and zagging on funding the project, saying “it is unclear that SDA plans to move out [that is, begin the effort] on hypersonic and ballistic missile tracking at the speed of relevance.”

Meanwhile, [York Space Systems and Lockheed Martin are working](#) on a related project, a much larger network of communications satellites that could include hundreds of pieces. The two firms received contracts in August to build a total of 20 satellites for this “Transport Layer” project.

[According to The Drive, this network might be](#) intending to share information via laser communication instead of radio waves, which would be more reliable as well as immune to jamming or interception - [key concerns of the Space Force](#).

This, in turn, could plug into other layers that track mobile launchers and other targets and could grow as large as 1,000 space-based devices.

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.

Qatar Files Formal Request to Obtain F-35 Jets From US - Report
by [Morgan Artyukhina](#)

Persian Gulf state Qatar has formally requested to purchase advanced F-35 stealth aircraft from the United States. If permitted, Qatar would become the second Middle Eastern state to use the jets after Israel.

On Wednesday, [Reuters reported, citing sources close to the deal](#), that Doha had issued a formal request to obtain the fifth-generation fighter jet. The US State Department refused to confirm or deny the deal, saying it will not do so before the offer is formally presented to Congress.

US President Donald Trump [has said he "would have no problem with" selling](#) the F-35 to Gulf states, but noted on September 15 that "some people do, they say ... maybe they go to war." If approved, the deal could alter the balance of military power in the Gulf and significantly strain US relations with both Saudi Arabia and Israel, Washington's two strongest allies in the region. Riyadh and Doha have been at loggerheads since 2014, when Saudi King Salman [decreed the Muslim Brotherhood to be a terrorist organization](#) and accused Doha of supporting the group. In 2017, Saudi Arabia and two close allies, Egypt and the United Arab Emirates, cut trade ties with the Gulf state, and Riyadh has even drawn up plans [to locate a huge nuclear waste dump](#) on their mutual border.

While the UAE and Bahrain have both recently signed peace deals with Israel in exchange for normalizing political relations, Qatar has yet to do so - [although such a deal is rumored to be in the works](#). Like the other two states, Qatar is home to extensive US military installations and thus pliable in the hands of US foreign policy, which under US President Donald Trump has sought to rally global support for Israel.

[Abu Dhabi has also sought to buy the F-35](#) in the wake of the peace deal.

Turkey would have become a second operator of the F-35 in the Middle East, but the US Congress ended that possibility by removing Ankara from the F-35 program after Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan refused to part with Russian-made S-400 air defense systems, which the Pentagon warned could compromise the F-35's radar-avoiding abilities. Interestingly, Qatar is seen as Ankara's most reliable ally in the region, and their political and military ties have grown as Doha's relationship with Riyadh has waned.

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.

Fauci: US COVID-19 Death Toll May Hit 400,000 'If We Don't Do What We Need To' in Fall, Winter

Dr. Anthony Fauci, one of the leading members of the White House coronavirus task force, warned on Tuesday that without adequate prevention measures, US deaths from COVID-19 could double in the fall and winter months. As of Wednesday, the grim figure stands at roughly 211,000 dead.

"The models tell us if we don't do what we need to in the fall and winter, we could have 300,000-400,000 COVID-19 deaths," Fauci, who heads the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID) at the US National Institutes of Health (NIH), [said in a Tuesday web event hosted by American University](#).

However, Fauci warned that this won't be the long-anticipated second wave of COVID-19 discussed in the spring and summer months, but rather just "a resurgence of the wave we began with."

[According to data from the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) (CDC), the US has not registered fewer than 13,000 new COVID-19 cases per day since March 24, when the initial outbreak in the United States was still accelerating, hitting a low of 13,284 per day on May 17. The daily low in reported deaths was 175 on September 7; the last time it was that low was on March 23, and the average has remained far higher. On October 6, the seven-day moving average was 694 deaths per day.

Fauci blasted political division over responses to the pandemic, such as debates over lockdowns, school closures, social distancing guidelines and mask-wearing, many of which have been called into question on a national stage by US President Donald Trump.

"When you have a public health crisis, everybody's got to be pulling together in the same direction ... You can't have divisiveness and rancor in public health messages, it gets in the way of getting the job done," Fauci said. "When you make public health measures an oppositional position, you've essentially lost the game."

"You can't be critical of the people" who refuse to follow guidelines, Fauci counseled. "Try to appeal to the part of them that can rationalize ... Just look at the statistics ... That is a reality."

"Maybe 50% of you hate me because you think I'm trying to destroy the country, but listen to me for six weeks or so and do what I say, and you'll see the numbers go down," Fauci said.

At his campaign rallies across the country, Trump has made enforcement of such measures extremely lax and urged his conservative base to force local politicians to "open up" their states once more. He has also criticized wearing masks to prevent the spread of SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, taking the issue to the debate stage, as when he criticized Democratic rival Joe Biden for wearing a mask at their debate last week.

"I wear masks when needed. I don't wear masks like him, every time you see him he's got a mask. He could be speaking 200 feet away and he shows up with the biggest mask I've ever seen," Trump told debate moderator and Fox News host Chris Wallace on September 29 about Biden. Three days later, Trump publicly revealed he had tested positive for SARS-CoV-2 and [spent several days at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center](#), across the street from the NIH campus in Bethesda, Maryland.

Trump returned to the White House on Monday, but has remained in social isolation in the residential wing of the mansion since.

Interestingly, the NIAID chief dissented from Trump's lofty promises of a COVID-19 vaccine coming in just a matter of weeks, saying he did not expect one to be approved by the Food and Drug Administration and widely available before the spring of 2021 - [the same answer CDC Director Robert Redfield gave last month](#).

Scott Atlas, a Hoover Institute senior fellow and adviser on Trump's coronavirus task force, [has said that if a US vaccine is approved by mid-October](#), 100 million doses could be ready by the end of the year and some 700 million doses by April 2021.

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.

US to Reduce Troop Numbers in Afghanistan to 2,500 by Early 2021 - O'Brien
by [Morgan Artyukhina](#)

White House national security adviser Robert O'Brien said on Wednesday that the pace of the US withdrawal from Afghanistan could leave as few as 2,500 troops in the Central Asian country by early 2021.

"When President Trump took office, there were over 10,000 American troops in Afghanistan. As of today there are under 5,000, and that will go to 2,500 by early next year," O'Brien told an audience at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, on Wednesday, [Reuters reported](#).

O'Brien's comments mark the lowest definitive number given by a Trump administration official about troop number reductions in Afghanistan since US President Donald Trump's comments in early August, when he said there would be [roughly 4,000 troops in Afghanistan by November](#), when the US presidential election is being held.

[Last month, David Helvey, the assistant secretary of defense](#) for Indo-Pacific security affairs, told the House Oversight and Reform Subcommittee on National Security that "if conditions warrant, per the US-Taliban agreement," all US troops could be withdrawn from Afghanistan by May 2021.

In February, the US signed a peace agreement with the Taliban Islamic militant group that has formed the foundation for the US withdrawal. US troops have occupied Afghanistan since October 2001, when they invaded to overthrow the Taliban, then the government in power, in retaliation for the Taliban's allowing terrorist group al-Qaeda to operate bases and training facilities in the country. The month prior, al-Qaeda had run its terrorist attacks against the World Trade Center in New York City and the Pentagon in Arlington, Virginia, that killed more than 3,000 people, out of the Afghan camps.

However, the civil war in Afghanistan continues, as the Afghan government was not party to the US-Taliban deal. Negotiations have continued in Doha, Qatar, between the government and the Taliban, with [Afghan President Ashraf Ghani flying to Doha earlier this week](#) for meetings with leading diplomats.

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.

Taliban-Kabul Talks May Stall as 40 Years of War Have 'Broken Down Idea of a Nation' in Afghanistan

by [Morgan Artyukhina](#)

As talks between the Afghan government in Kabul and the Taliban rebel group continue in Doha, Qatar, one expert recalls to Sputnik that there are many forces working against a peace deal, including the negotiators' lack of knowledge about anything but war.

Nearly seven month since the US arrived at a tentative peace deal with the Taliban, [setting the stage for its own withdrawal](#) and for Kabul to also make peace with the Taliban, the two Afghan parties are finally sitting down in Doha, which hosted the previous negotiations.

Significant obstacles stand in the way of such a deal, including [the precise ways in which any power-sharing agreement](#) would play out in terms of Islamic law, but also the Taliban's long-standing rejection of the Kabul government as a puppet of the United States. The militant group was ousted from rule in October 2001 by a US invasion following the September 11

attacks in the US, which were masterminded by al-Qaeda terrorists in training camps high in the Afghan mountains.

Brian Downing, a political-military analyst and author of "The Military Revolution and Political Change" and "The Paths of Glory: Social Change in America from the Great War to Vietnam," told [Radio Sputnik's Political Misfits](#) on Wednesday that a comprehensive peace deal may not be possible, and the US may eventually have to simply cut and run after 19 years of fighting in the country.

"All sides - there's really more than two sides, here - are pretty tired of the war," Downing told hosts Bob Schlehuder and Michelle Witte.

"I think it's dragging on for two reasons: first, Donald Trump has signaled, rather carelessly, an eagerness to get out, and that's not exactly a good position to have going into negotiations. Second, I think there are people in the Taliban who feel that they can reconquer most of the country and that a peace agreement would simply be a concession - too big a concession - to the other powers inside Afghanistan," he said.

"Remember, they never conquered the whole country. Even at the heyday, at the apex of their power 20 years ago, there was always resistance in the north from the Tajiks and other people - the Northern Alliance as they were called back then - and they were supported externally by Iran and Russia," Downing said.

However, Downing cautioned, "I wouldn't expect anything in the next few months. There's typically a lull in the fighting as winter sets in, but paradoxically, the region has been hit by warmer weather in the last few years, and so the fighting doesn't go down as much."

"Even if there is some sort of peace agreement, I have to wonder if those more radical elements in the Taliban will abide by it. There are some, as I said, who want to reconquer the whole country or as much as they can. There are others who are internationalist in scope: they want to take the Islamist revolution outside of Afghanistan and build relations with Islamist groups in Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, elsewhere, and that's a great concern to Iran and Russia. They both worry a great deal about the spread of radical Islam" into neighboring areas or their own countries, Downing noted.

"I think both sides, all sides, are kind of gearing up for a less-than-honorable, a less-than-complete peace agreement," Downing predicted. "A lot of those northern people I mentioned have their own militias, they have their own weapons caches, they have political ties with foreign powers that will back them in the case of a resurgent Taliban trying to conquer the whole country - and connected to that, a collapse of the Kabul government ... I am giving the worst-case scenario."

"It could work out. The Taliban wants reconstruction aid, they're not going to get any reconstruction aid from abroad if they continue the war, but I do think the United States wants out," Downing said. "The Trump administration periodically says that we have to end the unwinnable wars around the world, and the American military is pretty sick of this war. Supposedly the generals were stunned when they were told 19 years ago that we were going to stay in Afghanistan and try to build a new economy there, a new democratic framework there."

"To my way of thinking, what the US could do is simply announce to regional powers - Russia, Iran, China and Pakistan - that 'there's nothing more we can do. This is your backyard.' China

has invested heavily in Afghanistan, in the mineralogical wealth; Iran has good ties with many people in Afghanistan, especially in the north and the Shia in the center.”

“Russia has always had, oddly enough, pretty good ties with some people in the north - as I said, they supported them against the Taliban - and even during the war of the ‘80s, the Russian military got a grudging respect from the Tajiks. There were ceasefires, and the Russian military wanted to make ... a Tajik north autonomous region separate from Kabul,” he noted.

“But I think if the United States announces to those four powers, ‘We’re done here, it’s your ball of wax now,’ they could impose incentives and threats that would keep a modicum of stability there and maybe even a good measure of stability there,” he predicted.

Downing said that nearly 40 years of warfare in Afghanistan have “broken down the idea of a nation,” solidifying tribal and local identities. “They don’t trust the government outside in Kabul - which, it’s very corrupt. The Taliban is seen as more honest.”

He recalled the wisdom of [historian and war correspondent Bernard Fall](#), who wrote several books about the wars in Vietnam in the 1950s and 1960s and observed that a government losing to an insurgency isn’t being out-fought, it’s being out-governed.

“Another cultural thing is [a lot of young people know nothing about peace](#). You say a millennial is shaped by 9/11, well the younger people, people under 40 in Afghanistan know nothing about peace and everything about war, and they don’t really like the idea of having a humble occupation like a herder or a farmer, something like that. They want to carry a Kalashnikov. That’s where the glory is; that’s what some people are attracted to in Afghanistan. Not everyone, of course, but enough to cause trouble, looking forward,” he said.

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.

Trump Returns to Oval Office for COVID-19 Stimulus Talks Days After Positive Diagnosis

US President Donald Trump has returned to the Oval Office to participate in COVID-19 stimulus talks and discuss hurricane relief options, as Hurricane Delta is expected to move toward the US Gulf Coast over the next few days.

The president has returned to the Oval Office just a few days after testing positive for COVID-19, White House Deputy Communications Director Brian Morgenstern told pool reporters.

Morgenstern has also [refused to reveal](#) when Trump's last negative test was, telling reporters: "I don't know when he last tested negative ... We're not asking to go back through a bunch of records and look backwards."

Trump also confirmed Wednesday via Twitter that he had just been briefed on Hurricane Delta. The president revealed he had tested positive for the novel coronavirus last Friday. After spending three nights at the Walter Reed National Military Medical Center, Trump returned on Monday to the White House despite his physician, Dr. Sean P. Conley, stating earlier that day that Trump was [not "out of the woods yet."](#)

Trump on Tuesday halted talks with Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin and House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) on a new coronavirus relief package, weeks before the election. One day

after shutting down negotiations, Trump called on Congress to pass relief for airlines, as well as for small businesses through the Paycheck Protection Program.

On Tuesday evening, Trump also tweeted about a bill that would provide stimulus checks to the American people.

In a statement issued earlier Tuesday, Pelosi said that the White House is ["in complete disarray."](#)

"Today, once again, President Trump showed his true colors: putting himself first at the expense of the country, with the full complicity of the GOP Members of Congress. Walking away from coronavirus talks demonstrates that President Trump is unwilling to crush the virus," Pelosi added.

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.

'Suddenly It Lifted Off': Tesla Model Y Roof Flies Off as Driver Hits US Highway - Video

A California family recently revealed that their new Tesla Model Y turned into a convertible over the weekend after the roof suddenly blew off the vehicle while they were driving home immediately after purchasing it.

"Suddenly, there was a lot of wind; it sounded like there was a window open," Nathaniel Chien, 19, said in an interview with [Business Insider](#) regarding the Sunday mishap. "And then suddenly it lifted off."

Nathaniel's 63-year-old father, Walter Chien, was sitting in the back seat trying to figure out the Tesla app when he noticed the roof had blown off.

"I looked up and the roof was gone," Walter told the outlet.

When the family first picked up the car from the Dublin, California, Tesla service center, Walter said he noticed there was a gap on the front hood, with one side appearing wider than the other, and arranged to get the issue repaired. Nathaniel also noticed a creaking from the roof when they drove the car.

"You expect this kind of problem, but you don't expect the roof to come off," Walter said.

According to the family, the roof blew off while they were driving at around 70 mph on Interstate 580. However, no one was injured by the detached glass piece; the Chiens made sure to let the California Highway Patrol know about the incident.

"None of us knew how to react," Nathaniel explained. "We didn't scream or anything. There was an initial panic, and then we drove in a shocked silence all the way back."

Since the incident, the family has returned the new Model Y to the Tesla service center. The staff at the center apologized for the incident, offered to service the car for free and to provide the family with a rental during the repair process. The service representatives also said that "either the seal on the roof was faulty or they somehow just forgot to seal the roof on entirely," Nathaniel [told The Verge](#).

However, the Chiens declined to have the car serviced, deciding to return it for good.

On Monday, Walter said that he spoke to a Tesla representative who said that "everything was done correctly" when making the car.

"To me, that was more concerning," Chien told the Business Insider.

This is not the first time Tesla has had quality troubles, with many users reporting issues specifically with the Model Y, which was released in 2019, according to a report by Electrek. In a recent survey of consumers by researcher JD Power, Tesla scored the worst among major carmakers, according to a [report by the Wall Street Journal](#).

The findings revealed that Tesla vehicles were found to have 250 problems per 100 vehicles, compared to the industry average of 166 problems per 100 cars.

In early 2019, the Tesla Model 3 sedan was also [stripped of its "recommended" status](#) from product reviewer Consumer Reports after many owners reported issues with loose body trim and glass defects.

According to Tesla's website, the Tesla Model Y is "designed for safety."

"Like every Tesla, Model Y is designed to be the safest vehicle in its class. The low center of gravity, rigid body structure and large crumple zones provide unparalleled protection," [the company writes on its website](#).

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.

Video: CNN Reporter Fends Off Raccoon Moments Before Going Live at White House

Wednesday morning was atypical for CNN's "New Day" morning show, as the network's Joe Johns was captured on tape getting into a skirmish with a raccoon on the White House lawn right before going live on air.

In a video tweeted by "New Day" anchor Alisyn Camerota, the network's senior Washington correspondent can be seen attempting to shoo the approaching animal away.

"There he is!" Johns says, before throwing an unidentified object at the animal.

"Frickin' raccoons, man. God, again! This is the second time! Jesus ... It always comes around right around when I'm about to go on TV," Johns can be heard saying, while yelling at the raccoon.

This is not the first time reporters have had confrontations with raccoons on the White House lawn. CBS News White House correspondent Paula Reid reported late last month that a raccoon ["attacked multiple news crews."](#)

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.

Video: Trump Says It Was 'Blessing From God' That He Caught COVID-19

US President Donald Trump on Wednesday said it was a "blessing from God" that he caught COVID-19.

"This was a blessing in disguise. I caught about it, I heard about this drug. I said, 'Let me take it.' It was my suggestion, I said, 'Let me take it and it was incredible the way it worked,'" Trump said

in a video statement, referring to the antibody cocktail he received, developed by US biotechnology company Regeneron.

"It was incredible the way it worked, incredible. And I think if I didn't catch it, I would be looking at that like a number of other drugs. But it really did a fantastic job," Trump added.

"I want to get for you what I got, and I'm going to make it free - you're not going to pay for it. It wasn't your fault this happened. It was China's fault, and China is going to pay a big price [for] what they've done to this country ... This was China's fault, and just remember that," the president added.

"To me, it wasn't therapeutic - it just made me better, OK. I call that a cure," Trump also said in his statement, reiterating that he believes a COVID-19 vaccine will be available "right after the election."

Trump has previously stated that a [vaccine could be available by mid-October](#) and that the US would have distributed 100 million doses of the vaccine by the end of 2020.

In his statement, Trump also said he is working to get emergency use authorizations for drugs he received for COVID-19 treatment.

The president was treated at the Walter Reed National Military Medical Center for three days after declaring on Friday that he had contracted the novel coronavirus. He was discharged from the hospital Monday evening.

While hospitalized, Trump received Regeneron's antibody treatment, antiviral drug remdesivir and dexamethasone, a steroid used to treat inflammation. He also took over-the-counter medications, namely zinc, aspirin, Vitamin D, melatonin and Pepcid, an antacid.

Trump on Wednesday [returned to the Oval Office](#) to partake in COVID-19 stimulus talks and discuss hurricane relief options, despite his COVID-19 diagnosis.

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.

Moderate to Severe COVID-19 Infections May Reduce Fertility in Men - Study

Israeli researchers have found that some men infected with the COVID-19 novel coronavirus may experience reduced fertility.

A new study led by Dr. Dan Aderka, head of the Gastrointestinal Cancer Service at Sheba Medical Center in Ramat Gan, Israel, detected the virus in the sperm of some 13% of screened male COVID-19 patients. Researchers also detected a 50% decline in sperm volume, concentration and motility in patients with moderate cases of the disease - even 30 days following their initial diagnosis.

He explained to the Jerusalem Post that post-mortem tests of a dozen male novel coronavirus patients revealed moderate to extreme changes in the subjects' testicular cells, which produce testosterone - the primary sex hormone responsible for sperm division and multiplication.

Testicular cells also support sperm development.

Aderka detailed that COVID-19 specifically binds to the ACE2 receptors and destroys the Sertoli and Leydig cells, which support sperm maturation and produce testosterone, respectively.

“As normal sperm maturation takes 70 to 75 days, it is possible that if we are doing a sperm examination two and a half months after recovery, we may see even more reduced fertility,” said the Israeli doctor to the Jerusalem Post.

“It could be even more detrimental.”

The full study is slated to be published in the international journal Fertility and Sterility. Due to the virus appearing relatively recently, it remains unknown whether the reduction in fertility is reversible or permanent.

“Interestingly, an enzyme called TMPRSS2 assists the virus in binding to the ACE receptor, facilitating its internalization into the cells,” noted Aderka, suggesting that TMPRSS2 - which is activated by testosterone - could be the focus of further research.

“This phenomenon may explain the higher COVID-19 morbidity and mortality of men compared to women,” he told the Post, adding that it also may explain the lower morbidity and mortality of children, whose testosterone levels are low.

The Israeli doctor’s research also backed study findings by Chinese scholars Weiguo Zhao and Shixi Zhang, who reported that “SARS-CoV-2 can be present in the semen of patients with COVID-19, and SARS-CoV-2 may still be detected in the semen of recovering patients.”

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.

Ex-Jail Employees Charged for Allegedly Blasting 'Baby Shark' on Loop at US Detention Center by [Evan Craighead](#)

Two ex-detention officers and a supervisor at Oklahoma’s Oklahoma County Jail allegedly subjected prisoners to hours of the children’s tune “Baby Shark” on loop.

Oklahoma County District Attorney David Prater announced on Monday that an array of misdemeanor charges had been issued to three former Oklahoma County Jail employees: 21-year-old Gregory Cornell Butler Jr., 21-year-old Christian Charles Miles and 50-year-old Christopher Raymond Hendershott, [The Oklahoman reported](#).

An investigation revealed that, during November and December of 2019, at least four inmates were secured to a wall and handcuffed behind their back by Butler and Miles, while being forced to listen to “Baby Shark” on loop at a loud volume. Some were held in the room for as long as two hours.

Butler and Miles have been charged for their alleged mistreatment of prisoners, and Hendershott, their supervisor, allegedly knew about their actions on November 23 but “took no immediate action to either aid the inmate victim or discipline the Officers,” investigators alleged. “This appeared to have led to the Officers continuing to mistreat inmates.”

The charges refer to Miles and Butler’s actions as “inhuman” discipline, The Oklahoman noted. “It was unfortunate that I could not find a felony statute to fit this fact scenario,” Prater said. “I would have preferred filing a felony on this behavior.”

Miles confirmed to an investigator that he and Butler “systematically worked together and used the ... attorney booth as a means to discipline inmates and teach them a lesson because they

felt that disciplinary action within the Detention Center was not working in correcting the behavior of the inmates,” according to an affidavit.

Oklahoma County Sheriff P.D. Taylor told The Oklahoman that Miles and Butler have both resigned, and Hendershott retired.

“We don’t tolerate it,” Taylor said of the mistreatment. “We always did an excellent job policing ourselves.”

[The lyrics to “Baby Shark”](#) include the incessant repetition of “doo, doo, doo, doo, doo, doo.” It currently has 6.7 billion views on YouTube.

[Sputnik reported in July 2019](#) that officials in West Palm Beach, Florida, used “Baby Shark” to push homeless individuals away from the city’s Lake Pavilion.

“Music is also played overnight on a loop by our pavilion to discourage congregating and, if appropriate, to encourage people to seek safer, more appropriate shelter through the many resources that are available,” read a statement provided by a West Palm Beach spokesperson.

[CBS News likened](#) the city’s tactics to those used by American interrogators to “torment prisoners in the war on terror in Iraq, Afghanistan and Guantanamo Bay.”

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.

Facebook to Cease Running US Political Ads After 2020 Election Polls Close
by [Evan Craighead](#)

Facebook has declared that it will temporarily halt the allowance of political advertisements on Facebook and Instagram following the November 3 US presidential election.

“While ads are an important way to express voice, we plan to temporarily stop running all social issue, electoral, or political ads in the US after the polls close on November 3, to reduce opportunities for confusion or abuse,” the [company said on Wednesday](#). “We will notify advertisers when this policy is lifted.”

“We know this election will be unlike any other,” Facebook product manager Sara Schiff said on a call with reporters, [as reported by CNBC](#). “We are continuing to build on efforts that promote authoritative information about the election.”

Schiff noted the temporary ban on political advertisements is slated to last about a week, but is subject to change.

Facebook announced on October 1 that it would not allow new political ads to run on Facebook and Instagram in the week prior to the presidential election. The website will also link posts attempting to announce an early victory to official vote counts provided by Reuters and the National Election Pool.

“When polls close, we will run a notification at the top of Facebook and Instagram and apply labels to candidates’ posts directing people to the Voting Information Center for more information about the vote-counting process,” the company reiterated on Wednesday.

“But, if a candidate or party declares premature victory before a race is called by major media outlets, we will add more specific information in the notifications that counting is still in progress and no winner has been determined.”

Nick Clegg, Facebook's vice president for global affairs and communications risk management, [told the Financial Times that the company](#) is prepared to "restrict the circulation of content" on its Facebook and Instagram platforms if the November 3 election devolves into chaos and unrest.

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.

Trump Says All US Troops in Afghanistan Will Be 'Home By Christmas'
by [Evan Craighead](#)

The remaining American troops deployed to Afghanistan "should" be "home by Christmas," declared US President Donald Trump on Wednesday - the 19th anniversary of the US invasion of the Central Asian country.

Trump took to social media Wednesday evening to announce that despite recent news, the American people should expect a December 25 return of the "small remaining number" of US troops deployed to Afghanistan.

Earlier Wednesday, White House national security adviser Robert O'Brien [claimed that there would only be a substantial decrease](#) in deployed troops by early 2021.

"When President Trump took office, there were over 10,000 American troops in Afghanistan. As of today there are under 5,000, and that will go to 2,500 by early next year," he told attendees of an event at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, [Reuters reported](#).

[Prior to October 7](#), David Helvey, the official performing the duties of assistant secretary of defense for Indo-Pacific security affairs, had expressed that the service would be "conducting prudent planning to withdraw to zero service members by May 2021."

O'Brien highlighted "Americans need to come home," while stressing that "Afghans themselves are going to have to work out an accord, a peace agreement," with the Taliban.

Reuters noted that [dozens of Afghan civilians](#) have been killed in recent weeks. At the same time, peace talks in the Qatari capital of Doha have stalled.

Political-military analyst Brian Downing [told Radio Sputnik's Political Misfits](#) on Wednesday that "all sides" involved in current Afghan affairs "are pretty tired of war."

"I think it's dragging on for two reasons: first, Donald Trump has signaled, rather carelessly, an eagerness to get out, and that's not exactly a good position to have going into negotiations," he told hosts Bob Schlehuder and Michelle Witte.

"Second, I think there are people in the Taliban who feel that they can reconquer most of the country and that a peace agreement would simply be a concession - too big a concession - to the other powers inside Afghanistan."

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.

'Dangerously Incompetent': US Medical Journal Castigates Trump Administration Over COVID-19 Response
by [Evan Craighead](#)

A scathing editorial in the prestigious New England Journal of Medicine (NEJM) claims the COVID-19 novel coronavirus pandemic has tested the current US administration and that "our leaders have failed that test."

"Why has the United States handled this pandemic so badly?" [asks the editorial](#), signed by 35 editors, 34 of whom are American citizens, [according to the New York Times](#).

"We have failed at almost every step. We had ample warning, but when the disease first arrived, we were incapable of testing effectively and couldn't provide even the most basic personal protective equipment to health care workers and the general public."

Along with being the oldest continuously published medical journal, the NEJM is also regarded as one of the most prestigious peer-reviewed medical publications.

The editorial does not mention US President Donald Trump by name, but notes that "our leaders" in the US have "taken a crisis and turned it into a tragedy."

"When it comes to the response to the largest public health crisis of our time, our current political leaders have demonstrated that they are dangerously incompetent," the editorial states. "It should be clear that we are not a political organization," said Dr. Eric Rubin, the editor-in-chief of the NEJM, to the Times. "But pretty much every week in our editorial meeting there would be some new outrage."

At the same time, the journal did not announce an explicit endorsement for Democratic presidential nominee and former US Vice President Joe Biden.

American popular science magazine Scientific American, which has been around for 175 years, announced on September 15 that it felt "compelled" to make its first-ever endorsement of a presidential candidate, coming out in favor of Biden.

The publication also directly spoke of the US president and his approach to science.

"The evidence and the science show that Donald Trump has badly damaged the US and its people - because he rejects evidence and science," the magazine's editors wrote.

"The most devastating example is his dishonest and inept response to the COVID-19 pandemic, which cost more than 190,000 Americans their lives by the middle of September," they said. On Wednesday, the death toll was more than 211,000, according to [data collected by the Times](#). Trump's opposition to science has been on full display since he was discharged from Walter Reed National Military Medical Center on Monday.

"Now I'm better, and maybe I'm immune," [he said](#), speaking of his recent diagnosis of COVID-19 in a video published via his personal Twitter account. Upon his return to the White House, [he told Americans](#) not to let the virus "dominate" them, adding, "Don't be afraid of it."