

Thursday 10/15/20

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'It's Always a Risk': Research Station Goes Down in Collapse of Canadian Milne Ice Shelf
by [Gaby Arancibia](#)

A team of scientists recently provided additional insight into the August collapse of the Milne Ice Shelf - the last intact ice shelf in the Canadian Arctic - and revealed that in its demise, the massive chunk of ice also took down a valuable research station.

Researchers [confirmed in early August](#) that the ice shelf, which was previously located in the Qikiqtaaluk Region of Nunavut, Canada, had entirely collapsed into the Arctic Ocean after having lost more than 40% of its ice mass in a span of two days in July.

At the time, Derek Mueller, a researcher who had studied the ice shelf, [noted in a blog post](#) after the collapse was confirmed that the entire "camp area and instruments were all destroyed in this event."

"It is lucky that we were not on the ice shelf," he noted.

Mueller, who studied a water channel that flowed beneath the Milne, sat down alongside fellow leading ice shelf experts Adrienne White and Luke Copland for an in-depth interview [published by The Guardian](#) for a Wednesday article.

Of the trio, Wilson was the first to realize the events that had unfolded in the Canadian Arctic after reviewing radar satellite images that clearly showed that the calving event was taking place.

"I was really surprised," White said, recalling her immediate reaction to the event. "We think of these as semi-permanent features. But the breakup of these ice shelves is really quite inevitable at this point; along the coast of northern Ellesmere Island, we're seeing open water and warmer temperatures almost consistently every summer."

Mueller noted that the event wasn't entirely unexpected, especially considering that several other ice shelves had broken off throughout the years. "So it wasn't a question of if for this particular ice shelf. It was a question of when," he said.

In regards to the research station that was lost to the Arctic Ocean, Mueller remarked that the incident was just "one of those things" that was always a possibility.

"We need the data year-round and we can't stay there year-round, so it's always a risk," he admitted. "You could put a weather station on a tripod on a glacier and it could fall over. There's lots of instruments floating around the Arctic that people [had] put out."

"We got two full years of data from ours, so we count ourselves lucky in that sense."

Although the calving event could have been deadly for the researchers had any been at the station at the time, Copland stated that the development will not dissuade the group from continuing their studies in the area.

"Moving forward, we're still planning fieldwork, but being very careful and planning around safety," he indicated, adding that the research may be "shifting towards [studying] satellite images."

Mueller noted that since half of the ice shelf is still visible, the team is likely to set up shop elsewhere in the region.

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Friendly Goose Flies Alongside US Cyclist

An officer with Ohio's Pepper Pike Police Department recently received quite the welcome surprise when he spotted a friendly goose flying alongside a local cyclist.

Shared on the department's Facebook page, the post indicates that the incident unfolded over the weekend, and that the sociable bird goes by the name "Goose-tav."

"This is one of our residents and his friend, Goose-tav. Don't try this at home," the officer says as the cyclist is seen flapping his arms in an apparent effort to mimic and encourage the goose. Checkmate, Maverick.

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US Army Pushes for Missile to Reach Moscow From Germany, as Discarded INF Treaty Sought to Prevent

by [Morgan Artyukhina](#)

US Army leaders are looking to field a new ground-to-ground missile with a range of more than 900 miles. Since the US left the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty in August 2019, it has pursued several such weapons, which violate the treaty's peace-promoting parameters.

Brig. Gen. John Rafferty, director of the US Army's Long-Range Precision Fires (LRPF) Cross-Functional Team, said recently that an intermediate-range missile capable of hitting targets between 500 and 1,500 kilometers (310 and 930 miles) away would be a serious asset in a future conflict with Russia or China.

For perspective, 930 miles is the distance from Moscow to the German-Polish border, or from Okinawa to Dalian.

"What a dilemma that would create for our adversary," [Rafferty said on September 29 at the 2020 Army Fires Conference](#). "How we would change the calculus in a second, if we could deliver this kind of capability out there."

While the LRPF chief gave no indication the missile was actually in development, the Pentagon [has pursued numerous other weapons systems](#) with similar ranges over the last two years, since Washington announced it was withdrawing from the 1987 INF Treaty. One weapon, a Tomahawk cruise missile with a 1,000-mile range modified to be fired from a ground-based location, [was test-fired barely two weeks after the treaty formally lapsed](#) in August 2019.

The United States and then-Soviet Union signed the treaty in 1987 after the US stationed Pershing II ballistic missiles in Europe. The missiles had the capacity to [close the roughly 1,000-mile gap between West Germany and Moscow](#) in between six and eight minutes, greatly increasing the risk of nuclear war by giving inadequate time for Soviet forces to verify an attack was underway. The treaty banned the two powers from building or using land-based missiles armed with both conventional and nuclear warheads with ranges of between 500 and 1,500 kilometers.

Rafferty said developing LRPFs is the Army top modernization priority, because it “enables access at the strategic level and it enables combined arms maneuver at the tactical level.” Other similar weapons in the works are [the Precision Strike Missile \(PrSM\), an updated projectile for HIMARS](#) rocket artillery with a maximum range of 500 kilometers, and an ultra-long-range artillery piece that can fling shells some 70 kilometers away that has been dubbed the Extended Range Cannon Artillery (ERCA).

The PrSM has already been through three successful tests, but Rafferty said the weapon’s maximum range has not yet been truly tested. “We’ll go to Vandenberg Air Force Base and we’ll test it out into the [Pacific] ocean and see how far it will go,” he told the conference. The ERCA could begin prototype testing with an artillery battalion by 2023, he also noted.

While LRPFs have been the Army’s top priority for several years, the Pentagon formally remained within the confines of the INF Treaty, even though Washington was already seeking to dismantle the agreement. [Sputnik reported in March 2019 - five months before the treaty lapsed](#) - that the Pentagon had placed funding for several INF Treaty-violating missile systems in its fiscal year 2020 budget, and [by May of that year had penned more than \\$1 billion in new contracts](#) for INF Treaty-violating missiles.

However, even before that, [Russia had called attention to the dangers of the Aegis Ashore system](#), a missile guidance system taken from a warship and placed at a land base in Deveselu, Romania, noting it could be used to launch offensive weapons. Washington claimed the system was only configured for intercepting incoming missiles and brushed off Moscow’s fears.

According to US Defense Secretary Mark Esper, the US was [forced to exit the INF Treaty in order to compete with Russia](#), which he said has violated the treaty for years with its Iskander short-range ballistic missile system. [Moscow has long denied the system has a range](#) banned by the treaty and has accused Washington of using Iskander as an excuse to torpedo the pact.

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Video: China Tests Launching Suicide Drone Swarm From Truck, Helicopter
by [Morgan Artyukhina](#)

China’s People’s Liberation Army (PLA) recently tested launching suicide drones from a variety of platforms, including dropping them from a helicopter and launching them from the back of a truck fitted with dozens of launchers.

The China Academy of Electronics and Information Technology (CAEIT) recently tested launching suicide drones in several different ways, according to new footage of the drills.

In the September test, tubular drones with spring-loaded folding wings were launched from a large box launcher on the back of a Dongfeng Mengshi 6x6 truck. The rectangular launcher has 48 tubes arranged in four rows of 12, giving it the appearance of a multiple rocket launcher. The footage also shows a drone of the same type being dropped from a helicopter. In both launches, the drone's wings burst from the breakaway casing, and the craft took to the skies after being fired.

In one scene, close to a dozen of the drones can be seen swarming in the sky. In a combat situation, the devices would be able to loiter above the battlefield until a target appears - hence their other name of "loitering munition." The final part of the video shows a drone homing in on a target.

Little information about the drill is available, but the drones seen in the film seem very similar to the CH-901, one of two kinds of loitering munitions the PLA said earlier this year it was developing. [According to the Global Times, the CH-901 is 1.2 meters long](#), weighs 9 kilograms, can fly up to 150 kilometers per hour and can loiter in the skies for two hours. However, these could be modified versions or a totally different system.

CAEIT is part of the China Electronics Technology Group Corporation, a state-owned firm that [adapts civilian electronics for military applications](#). In May 2018, the company set a new record by coordinating [a swarm of 200 fixed-wing drones at once](#). [Yicai reported](#).

Suicide drones have [topped the Pentagon's list of concerns](#) since dozens of the devices paralyzed the Saudi oil industry during a pair of attacks in September 2019 that were claimed by the Yemeni Houthi movement, but blamed by US intelligence on Iran. Washington has set about creating several close-range anti-air systems to take on drones, including vehicle-mounted systems [like the proposed Direct Fire Defeat System](#), which would be fitted on US Marine Corps Joint Light Tactical Vehicles, and the [Interim Maneuver Short-Range Air Defense \(IM-SHORAD\)](#), a modified Stryker armored vehicle carrying anti-air missiles.

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'Big Impact on Discourse': Twitter Polices Black Americans' Politics in Botnet Takedown -
Journo
by [Morgan Artyukhina](#)

Twitter recently took down several dozen accounts it says were impersonating Black supporters of US President Donald Trump and hinted they might have been foreign-controlled. Two journalists told Sputnik the story's prominence owes mostly to Democratic insecurity about Black voters looking outside their party for political solutions.

[The Washington Post reported on Tuesday](#) that Twitter had taken down dozens of accounts after they posted messages proclaiming their support as Black Americans for Trump and other Republicans that went viral.

Darren Linvill, lead researcher for the Clemson University Media Forensics Hub, told the Post he had found evidence of "foreign origins" of the alleged bot network, including Russian Cyrillic alphabet characters in online records of the accounts. [The Cyrillic alphabet is, of course, not](#)

[from Russia](#) nor solely Russian, having been invented in the ninth century AD in then-Byzantine-controlled Bulgaria and being used today by some 50 different languages across Eurasia.

Eugene Puryear, host at [Breakthrough News](#) and author of "Shackled and Chained: Mass Incarceration in Capitalist America," and Jim Kavanagh, editor of [The Polemicist](#), told [Radio Sputnik's Political Misfits](#) on Thursday that blaming the diversity of political persuasions in the Black community on outside influence - and specifically on Russians - is an old trick designed to shepherd Black people into voting Democrat.

"It's not surprising that we've seen consistently through the 2016 election through today a very particular focus around the issue of racism, because there's a very particular need by the people who are pushing these narratives to prevent things from becoming ungovernable," Puryear told hosts Michelle Witte and Bob Schlehuber.

He recalled that during the 2016 election season, one of the most direct accusations about "Russian bots" on social media was that they were "manipulating Black people ... even though the actual impact of this was zero-to-infinitesimal, in terms of the actual reality, despite the fact that America has had 400 years of extreme anti-Black racism that no one needs to stoke or write a meme about" to arouse people's anger against the US system.

"Political uprisings of Black people - whether it's the Civil War, whether it's Reconstruction, whether it's Civil Rights, whether it's right now - can shake the core of the US system and can awaken much broader mass movements of progressive people and have done so consistently across history," Puryear told Sputnik.

"So I find it very convenient that the forces who are often being dinged at these protests by the Black liberation movement - the forces of 'institutionalized racism,' the security state in and of itself, and the politicians whose policies have been so devastating to the community - get behind one narrative that 'well, they're just being stoked by Russia.'"

"Anyone who knows anything about America - anything, I mean I've traveled the world and people who know very little know this, know that racism is endemic to this country. No internet activity, no malign foreign actor or whatever you want to call them, has to do anything - or even if they do do anything, will really make any big difference in that. These are internal domestic issues that are deeply rooted in history, culture, social realities, politics and economics, they aren't going anywhere until they actually get solved," Puryear said.

However, he noted that this narrative has an important effect: "it makes people fearful to come out and to join different things, because 'well is this being manipulated by Russia, do I want to be a part of that?' So it means the Black community, in and of itself, is faced with a serious choice that can result in political demobilization, and two, it allows people to question the legitimate claims being made by the people in these movements who don't want to toe the line and have the Joe Biden-Kamala Harris Democratic Party line, because they can be easily dismissed as 'well maybe they're Russians, maybe they're this, and even if they aren't, they're being manipulated by all these other things and they don't really know what's going on.' I think that has a big impact on the discourse."

This, Puryear said, flattens not only the discourse around racism, but also popular perceptions of the Black community, casting some 44 million people as politically homogeneous, all supporters of mainstream Democrats. [For example, a Pew poll published last month](#) found that

Black support for Republicans has remained constant for the last 30 years, with between 10% and 11% of Black Americans registered as Republicans and identifying as conservative. Kavanaugh recalled that [even Harris had repeated the line](#) that “Black people were fooled by Russian disinformation,” saying in July 2019 that her own now-failed presidential bid was being targeted by Russian bots.

He also noted that Democrats opportunistically “divorce the issue of race from class,” such as when they wanted to shut down Sen. Bernie Sanders’ (I-VT) appeals to the multiracial working class, which they said were racist.

“When you look at every ethnic group in this country,” Kavanaugh said, “every ethnic group is divided by class. In every ethnic group, 1-2% of the people have most of the wealth of that ethnic group, you know? So this is a way of diverting attention from class issues, which cut across racial and ethnic divides and are very important ... They want you to focus on what they want you to focus on at the moment.”

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University of Oxford Develops Rapid, ‘High-Accuracy’ COVID-19 Antigen Test

Scientists at the University of Oxford have developed a rapid COVID-19 test that they say can identify the presence of the disease in less than five minutes.

According to a report on the test published Wednesday on [preprint server MedRxiv](#), the test can detect SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, with “high accuracy.”

“Our method quickly detects intact virus particles,” professor Achilles Kapanidis, who was involved in the study and development of the test, [told Reuters](#), adding that the test is “simple, extremely rapid, and cost-effective.”

Oxford’s rapid diagnostic test directly detects the presence of virus antigens, rather than antibodies or nucleic acids, like many other medical tests. Antigens are typically present on the outside of pathogens, any agents that can cause disease.

The researchers are hopeful that the test could be used at airports, music venues and other businesses.

In addition, the university hopes to start product development in early 2021 and have an approved testing device available six months later. The university is currently seeking investment to accelerate the process of converting the test into an integrated device, Reuters reported.

According to health officials, such antigen tests can help mitigate the spread of the disease, even if a vaccine is developed.

“A significant concern for the upcoming winter months is the unpredictable effects of co-circulation of SARS-CoV-2 with other seasonal respiratory viruses,” Dr. Nicole Robb, who was also involved in the study, told Reuters.

“We have shown that our assay can reliably distinguish between different viruses in clinical samples, a development that offers a crucial advantage in the next phase of the pandemic,” she added.

The University of Oxford is not the only organization to have developed a rapid antigen test to detect COVID-19.

In May, the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) [issued an emergency use authorization](#) (EUA) to Quidel Corporation, a US manufacturer of diagnostic health care products, for its Sofia 2 SARS Antigen Fluorescent Immunoassay test.

In late August, US company Abbott Laboratories also received FDA authorization for its [15-minute antigen test](#).

According to the FDA, each category of diagnostic test for COVID-19 plays a different role. Polymerase chain reaction (PCR) tests are a molecular diagnostic testing technique that identify viral genetic material and can be used to diagnose an active COVID-19 infection. Although PCR tests are “incredibly accurate,” according to the FDA, analyzing their results is time-consuming. “One of the main advantages of an antigen test is the speed of the test, which can provide results in minutes,” the FDA explains.

However, the downside is that antigen tests may not successfully detect all active infections, since they are not as sensitive as molecular PCR tests.

“This means that positive results from antigen tests are highly accurate, but there is a higher chance of false negatives, so negative results do not rule out infection,” the FDA explains.

C-SPAN Suspends Steve Scully Indefinitely After He Admits to Lying About Twitter Hack
American cable and satellite television network C-SPAN placed its political editor Steve Scully on indefinite administrative leave Thursday after Scully admitted to lying about his Twitter account being hacked earlier this month after addressing former White House Communications Director Anthony Scaramucci in a questionable tweet.

Scully, who was supposed to moderate the now-scrapped second presidential debate between US President Donald Trump and Democratic nominee Joe Biden, recently admitted to the network that his October 8 tweet, which read “@Scaramucci should I respond to trump,” was in fact released by him. Scaramucci, once one of Trump’s most outspoken supporters, has since become one of the president’s most public critics.

“For several weeks, I was subjected to relentless criticism on social media and in conservative media outlets regarding my role as moderator for the second presidential debate including attacks aimed directly at my family. This culminated on Thursday, October 8 when I heard President Trump go on national television twice and falsely attack me by name,” Scully said in a statement released by C-SPAN.

“Out of frustration, I sent a brief tweet addressed to Anthony Scaramucci. The next morning when I saw that this tweet had created a new controversy, I falsely claimed that my Twitter account had been hacked,” Scully continued, admitting total responsibility for his behavior. He also asked for forgiveness from his professional colleagues in the media and at C-SPAN, where he has worked for the past 30 years.

C-SPAN also released its own statement Thursday confirming that Scully, who has presided over C-SPAN’s presidential coverage since 1992, made the network aware of this new information on Wednesday.

“We were very saddened by this news and do not condone his actions,” the network commented.

“During his 30 years at C-SPAN, Steve consistently demonstrated his fairness and professionalism as a journalist ... Starting immediately, we have placed Steve on administrative

leave. After some distance from his episode, we believe in his ability to continue to contribute to C-SPAN,” the network added.

Trump weighed in on the latest development in a Thursday tweet, stating that Scully’s admission of guilt reveals that the debate was “rigged.”

“I was right again! Steve Scully just admitted he was lying about his Twitter being hacked. The Debate was Rigged! He was suspended from @cspan indefinitely. The Trump Campaign was not treated fairly by the ‘Commission’. Did I show good instincts in being the first to know?” Trump tweeted.

According to a [report by the Sun](#), citing a biography published by George Washington University, Scully served as an intern for Biden for one month in 1978 when Biden was a US senator for Delaware.

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‘Reprehensible Behavior’: US Elites Privately Briefed About COVID-19 Dangers in February

Documents obtained by the New York Times reveal that the US elite were receiving private warnings about the effects of COVID-19 as early as February, yet another example of the wealthy and powerful being tipped off to the crisis before the public, Ted Rall, author and syndicated editorial cartoonist, told Radio Sputnik.

Senior members of US President Donald Trump’s economic team privately met with board members of the Hoover Institution think tank on February 24 to discuss the effects of the virus on the American economy, the [New York Times reported](#). One day later, Larry Kudlow, the director of the National Economic Council, told Hoover Institution members that although the virus in the US was contained at the time, “we just don’t know” about the future.

Earlier that day, however, Kudlow told the American people on [CNBC](#) that the virus was contained in the US, saying it was “pretty close to airtight.”

Rall, who is also a columnist, told [Political Misfits hosts Michelle Witte and Bob Schlehuber](#) on Thursday that the details kept from the American public is reason enough to call for most meetings to be open to the masses.

“The elites are different from you and me. They get insider information, and we don’t,” Rall said. “They think we don’t deserve to know what’s going on ... I have long believed there should be no such thing as a private meeting in government. Every single meeting should be public unless it’s very top national security kind of concern, once in a blue moon ... and this is why.”

“It reminds me a lot of the behavior of the Wall Street banks during the 2007-2009 meltdown, where the CEOs of big banks and insurance companies were telling the public and their employees that there was nothing to worry about ... when at the same time, they were, of course, personally short-selling or dumping their portfolios wholesale and heading for the hills. And they knew the truth, which was they were in big trouble,” Rall added.

The Times also obtained access to a document written by a hedge fund consultant who was at the three-day meeting of Hoover’s board.

“What struck me,” the consultant wrote, according to the Times, was that almost every official he heard from spoke of the virus “as a point of concern, totally unprovoked.” Interviews with people who received copies of the consultant’s document or were briefed on parts of it revealed that investors in New York and other elite traders had information from the administration as early as February that company stock prices would soon fall. Some investors started stocking up on essential household items, while others strategically altered their investment trading.

“It’s fraud ... it should be illegal. It’s disgusting, reprehensible behavior, and it happens all the time. They really should be a codification in our culture and in law that makes this punishable by jail time,” Rall argued.

“So far, the rich are having one hell of a run,” he added.

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Pompeo Claims US-North Korean Diplomacy ‘Successful’ Despite Pyongyang’s Recent ICBM Display
by [Evan Craighead](#)

US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo asserts that the world should be more concerned about the missile tests of China, rather than those of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), despite recent footage showing Pyongyang's new intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM).

“How concerned are you about this ICBM? How much of a threat do you think Americans should feel from it? And are you still confident that the diplomacy launched by you and by President Trump with North Korea has been successful in reducing the threat?” asked a [reporter following a Wednesday address](#) by the secretary of state.

“Yes,” Pompeo responded, only answering the last question.

“Yeah, but what’s your concern about the missiles-” asked the reporter, who was then interrupted by laughter from the secretary of state.

“It’s important to know that when a nation builds out its missile program, the most important thing they do to make sure that it’s actually functional is to test those missiles,” Pompeo noted. He emphasized that Beijing “conducted more missile tests last year than the rest of the world combined.”

“The North Koreans, however, last year did exactly zero intercontinental ballistic missile tests. The same held true for the year before that as well,” Pompeo noted.

He went on to declare that while Pyongyang did not completely denuclearize as Washington pushed for during negotiations, the Trump administration’s actions have “certainly led to reduced risk from the United States vis where we would have been had we continued on the path that the previous administration had engaged in.”

US Secretary of Defense Mark Esper, however, appears to take the DPRK’s ballistic missile program more seriously.

“We agree that North Korea’s nuclear and ballistic missile programs remain a serious threat to the security and stability of the region and the world,” said [Esper on Wednesday](#), prior to a meeting with South Korean Defense Minister Suh Wook.

The US officials' comments came just days after Pyongyang debuted its new ICBM during a military parade commemorating the 75th anniversary of the founding of the nation.

"We will continue to build our national defense power and self-defensive war deterrence," North Korean leader Kim Jong Un said at the time, vowing to not use the nation's military power preemptively, [Reuters reported](#).

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Joe Biden Dodges Quarantine After Campaign Staffer Tests Positive for COVID-19
by [Evan Craighead](#)

A crew member on the campaign team for Democratic presidential nominee and former US Vice President Joe Biden has tested positive for the COVID-19 novel coronavirus. Despite the news, the campaign has revealed the 77-year-old nominee will not quarantine.

"Around noon on Thursday, October, 15th, we learned - as part of our contact tracing of the crew member on [Democratic vice-presidential nominee Sen. Kamala Harris' (D-CA)] plane that tested positive for COVID last night - that an administrative member of the Aviation company that charters Vice President Biden's aircraft tested positive for COVID-19," the campaign's [Thursday statement read](#).

"Vice President Biden was not in close contact, as defined by the [US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention], with this individual at any time. In fact, the Vice President did not even have passing contact: this individual was over 50 feet from VP Biden at all times, entered and exited the aircraft from a rear entrance, and both the individual and the Vice President wore masks for the entire flight. Given these facts, we have been advised by the Vice President's doctor and the campaign's medical advisors that there is no need for the Vice President to quarantine."

Harris announced earlier Thursday that she was recently informed about her staffer's positive diagnosis. The Democratic vice-presidential nominee contended that she was not in close contact with the individual in question, was "not showing symptoms" of the novel coronavirus and had received two negative results from COVID-19 tests taken this week.

"Neither of these individuals had any contact with Vice President Biden, with Sen. Harris or any other staff member since testing positive or in the 48-hour period prior to their positive test results," Campaign Manager Jen O'Malley Dillon expressed to reporters on Thursday, the [Associated Press reported](#).

At the same time, Harris has moved to suspend travel for a handful of days "out of an abundance of caution."

"We worry about her. I'm very concerned about her," US President Donald Trump said of Harris during an outdoor rally in North Carolina on the same day, according to the AP.

"Masks, no masks, everything, you can do all you want, but you know, you still need help," he later said to attendees of his crowded rally.

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'Spends Like a Drunken Sailor': US Lawmaker Rips Trump in Private Phone Call - Audio by [Evan Craighead](#)

Sen. Ben Sasse (R-NE) claims US President Donald Trump is "deficient" in certain American values and, as a result, engages in a number of unconventional practices while occupying the White House, including treating the presidency "like a business opportunity" while kissing "dictators' butts."

During a private call with constituents this week, Sasse was asked by an unidentified individual to provide an explanation as to why he feels the need to criticize Trump "so much."

Before answering the question, Sasse noted that he and Trump did agree on the judicial appointment of more originalists regarding the Constitution, including US Supreme Court nominee Judge Amy Coney Barrett of the 7th Circuit Court of Appeals.

However, Sasse admitted there are "a lot" of areas in which he and Trump differ.

"These aren't just mere policy issues. I'm not at all apologetic for having fought for my values against his in places where I think his are deficient - not just for a Republican, but for an American," he explained in audio [obtained by The Washington Examiner](#).

"The way [Trump] kisses dictators' butts; the way he ignores that the Uighurs are in literal concentration camps in Xinjiang right now," Sasse detailed. "He hasn't lifted a finger on behalf of the Hongkongers. I mean, I have a very different foreign policy. It isn't just that he fails to lead our allies."

"The United States now regularly sells out our allies under [Trump's] leadership," Sasse declared in the private call with constituents.

The Republican lawmaker also highlighted that prior to Trump's 2016 presidential campaign, the president was a Democrat. However, Trump has since "adopted traditionally Republican positions that he used to reject for the majority of his life when he was funding Democratic candidates."

Sasse also called out the US president's mistreatment of women and claimed Trump "spends like a drunken sailor."

"He mocks evangelicals behind closed doors. His family has treated the presidency like a business opportunity. He's flirted with white supremacists," he added before slamming Trump's delayed and insufficient response to the COVID-19 novel coronavirus pandemic.

"If young people become permanent Democrats because they've just been repulsed by the obsessive nature of our politics, or if women who were willing to still vote with the Republican Party in 2016 decide that they need to turn away from this party permanently in the future," Sasse noted, worrying that Trump could drive away prospective GOP voters.

Trump has previously slammed Sasse, who has [repeatedly voted against the Republican line](#), as someone who goes "rogue" and "plays right into the hands of the Radical Left Dems."

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Biden Campaign Announces Thursday Coronavirus Test Was Negative
by [Evan Craighead](#)

Democratic presidential nominee and former US Vice President Joe Biden has revealed his most recent COVID-19 novel coronavirus test returned negative results for the contagious disease.

Citing a campaign statement, Reuters confirmed on October 15 that the Democratic presidential nominee had tested negative for the novel coronavirus.

Earlier Thursday, Biden's campaign revealed "an administrative member of the Aviation company that charters Vice President Biden's aircraft tested positive for COVID-19."

A staffer for Democratic vice-presidential nominee Sen. Kamala Harris (D-CA) also tested positive for the novel coronavirus, [according to Harris](#).

While the Democratic vice-presidential nominee had, [as of Thursday morning](#), received two negative tests this week and was not showing symptoms at the time, Campaign Manager Jen O'Malley Dillon told reporters that Harris will be suspending travel for a handful of days "out of an abundance of caution."

"Neither of these individuals had any contact with Vice President Biden, with Sen. Harris or any other staff member since testing positive or in the 48-hour period prior to their positive test results," Dillon noted, as [reported by the Associated Press](#).

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Research Finds COVID-19 Exposure 'Virtually Non-Existent' on US Commercial Jets
by [Evan Craighead](#)

As folks begin to plan their holiday travel amid the COVID-19 pandemic, a new US government-backed study has led United Airlines to boldly claim that COVID-19 exposure aboard its aircraft is "virtually non-existent" when face masks are worn.

[Research published Thursday](#) by United Airlines and the US Department of Defense argued if passengers are masked, there is a 0.003% chance that particles from a traveler will enter the breathing space of another passenger seated next to them.

Moreover, "99.99% of those particles left the interior of the aircraft within six minutes," United Airlines chief communication officer Josh Earnest [told ABC News](#). "It indicates that being on board an aircraft is the safest indoor public space, because of the unique configuration inside an aircraft that includes aggressive ventilation, lots of airflow."

Testing lasted eight days and involved inflight and ground tests on Boeing 777-200 and 767-300 airframes, according to the study.

The research used mannequins equipped with aerosol tech that replicated human breathing and coughing. Some 180 million particles, amounting to thousands of coughs, were dispersed during each test.

The mannequins used in the study were wearing triple-ply, surgical-grade face masks supplied by the airline.

This comes weeks after United Airlines' chief executive said that employees, on average, had reported lower COVID-19 infection frequency [than the general public](#).

"At United, but also at our large competitors, our flight attendants have lower COVID infection rates than the general population, which is one of multiple data points that speaks to the safety on board airplanes," claimed United Airlines CEO Scott Kirby to the outlet.

[USA Today reported Thursday](#) that United Airlines had lost \$1.8 billion in the third quarter of 2020, which ended on September 30. Some 13,000 employees were furloughed, and passenger revenue reportedly plummeted 84% after the airline decided to reduce its seat capacity by 70%.

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Rock 'n' Rolling Case Total - Political Cartoon

US President Donald Trump's campaign played the ominous hit "In the Air Tonight" during a rally this week in Iowa, which has seen more than 103,000 COVID-19 cases.

During his Wednesday Des Moines, Iowa, rally, Trump's campaign pumped Phil Collins' "In the Air Tonight" through speakers for attendees. It seemed to be in breathtakingly poor taste, considering the grim fact that Iowa has the fourth-highest COVID-19 infection rate in the US, with 61 senior-care facilities reporting outbreaks and the state seeing 1,180 new cases [on Wednesday alone](#). More than 1,500 people have died in Iowa due to the coronavirus, [according to state government data](#).

Additionally, Minnesota officials have tied at least 16 COVID-19 cases to Trump's [September 18 outdoor rally at an airport in Bemidji](#). Four of those infections were reported by protesters at the event, according to Kris Ehresmann, Minnesota's infectious disease director.

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Hundreds Quarantined, Dozens COVID-19-Positive After New York Birthday Party
by [Victoria Teets](#)

A recent birthday party in New York has been dubbed a "super-spreader" event by officials, as 37 people tested positive for COVID-19 after attending the event and hundreds were forced to quarantine.

The “sweet 16” birthday party occurred on September 25 at the Miller Place Inn in Miller Place in Long Island, New York. The venue has since been slammed with more than \$12,000 in fines, as 37 people who attended the event tested positive for COVID-19 and 81 have been forced to quarantine, reported [ABC7](#). Officials said the number of guests exceeded the state maximum of 50, and not all of them wore masks.

“This was an egregious violation and should serve as a stark reminder of the consequences that exist for flouting COVID-19 protocols,” said Suffolk County Executive Steve Bellone in a [statement released by the county](#) on Tuesday.

“These rules and regulations exist for a reason - to keep New Yorkers safe - and we all have an obligation to act responsibly.”

Bellone stated that the health department contacted the hosts of the event and asked for a copy of the guest list, which was provided voluntarily. “Once health officials received the list, which comprised 81 guests, including 49 students and 32 adults, the department quarantined the entire guest list and entered the contact information into the county’s contact tracing system,” the county statement detailed.

The Miller Place Inn has been fined \$10,000 for not adhering to New York executive orders regarding COVID-19 restrictions and an additional \$2,000 for violating the Suffolk County Sanitary Code. The venue was also charged with operating a food establishment in an unsanitary condition.

The penalties and charges related to the party come soon after the reporting of a number of COVID-19 cases throughout the Sachem School District to the Suffolk County Department of Health Services beginning on September 30, Bellone’s statement noted. The department’s contact tracing has linked those cases to the birthday party.

Following the positive tests, 334 people associated with the event through contact tracing were required to quarantine, with 270 remaining under restrictions as of Tuesday.