

Wednesday 10/28/20

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US Dow Plunges 943 Points as COVID-19 Cases Spike, Countries Issue Lockdowns
by [Gaby Arancibia](#)

US stocks plummeted Wednesday as investor fears over spiking COVID-19 cases across the nation and abroad reignited concerns of a stunted economic recovery, prompting massive sell-offs amid the pandemic.

At closing, the Dow Jones Industrial Average index fell by 943.24 points, marking its third day of losses for the week thus far. The S&P 500 sank by 119.65 points, and the Nasdaq Composite dove into red territory with a 426.48-point decline.

Extending their losses, companies such as Delta Air Lines and Royal Caribbean Cruises Ltd. each saw their stocks devalued by nearly 5% as the travel and leisure sector has endured an uphill battle at recovering from pandemic-rooted setbacks.

Crude oil prices fared no better, falling nearly 6% and extending their three-week lows.

Unlike many of the Asian indices, the European markets [experienced similar steep declines](#) during the day's trading, with sell-offs largely driven by indications that [both Germany and France would be imposing new lockdown restrictions](#) in an effort to curb recent COVID-19 spikes.

German officials announced later Wednesday that a [partial lockdown would be imposed](#) to combat the respiratory illness. French President Emmanuel Macron followed by [ordering a nationwide lockdown to curb the spread of COVID-19](#).

According to [Worldometer](#), Germany has reported more than 477,000 COVID-19 cases, whereas France has documented upwards of 1.1 million.

Echoing the pandemic's early days, reports of new COVID-19 cases, hospitalizations and deaths have also seen a massive surge in the US. [Data compiled by Johns Hopkins University](#) indicates that the US has documented an average of over 70,000 daily coronavirus cases over the last week, with related hospitalization rates undergoing an uptick.

The university's latest report notes the US has a 6.19% test positivity ratio, and that new COVID-19 cases are increasing in Texas, Wisconsin, California, Florida and Illinois. In fact, Illinois' governor recently ordered that [bars and indoor dining be closed](#) in several regions of the state until further notice.

With cases on the rise and no economic stimulus in sight, the situation will likely lead to more lockdowns across the US, [CNBC's Jim Cramer said Wednesday](#) on the outlet's morning business show "Squawk Box."

"It's very hard to buy a lot of stocks when you see these numbers," Cramer said, before noting that "it's a shame too, because with stimulus, we'd be very tempted to own some of these stocks."

“The lockdowns without the stimulus equals what we’re seeing, and I think it’s a shame because had there been stimulus, we would then be focusing on earnings, and the earnings are actually pretty darn good,” he added.

At present, the US is leading the world with over 8.8 million recorded cases of the deadly virus, [according to Johns Hopkins University](#).

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US War in Yemen Worse Under Trump Than Bush, Obama Combined - Report
by [Morgan Artyukhina](#)

A new report by a British nongovernmental organization (NGO) has found that in Yemen, the four years of Donald Trump’s presidency were by far the most violent of the past three US administrations, and might have totaled more operations than his two predecessors combined. In the weeks after Trump took office in January 2017, he vastly accelerated the US war in Yemen, which was ostensibly part of a larger, global fight against al-Qaeda and affiliated terrorist groups. Despite the Pentagon’s strategic shift toward “great power confrontation” with Russia and China in the years since, the US war in Yemen has continued unabated, and the scale possibly exceeds both the years of former US Presidents George W. Bush and Barack Obama combined.

Airwars, an NGO connected to the University of London, has issued a damning new report revealing the scope of the war, waged by the world’s wealthiest country against one of its poorest.

“This new Airwars dataset and analysis, published on the eve of the 2020 presidential election, sheds fresh light on the most recent period of US direct action in Yemen, the term in office of President Donald Trump - a period in which the Executive has sought to portray itself as reducing US military involvement abroad; but has also significantly reduced both the restrictions imposed on, and transparency for, direct action in Yemen and elsewhere,” [the researchers say in the report](#).

According to their report, under Trump, the US has carried out some 230 alleged and declared “kinetic actions” in Yemen, including both airstrikes and ground raids by US troops. Forty of those have allegations of civilian harm, including the alleged deaths of between 86 and 154 civilians. A shocking 40% of those alleged deaths are associated with ground raids, even though they account for between 1.5% and 3% of US operations in Yemen.

By comparison, between 2002 and 2017, the US carried out roughly 150 operations in Yemen, although Airwars notes it’s possible some CIA operations from that time remain unknown.

An Undeclared War

The US war in Yemen against al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula has taken place under the auspices of the 2002 Authorization for the Use of Military Force Against Terrorists (AUMF), passed in the wake of the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks in the United States. Like several other locations around the globe, including Somalia, Libya and Pakistan, the US actions

in Yemen were undeclared wars, a front of the War on Terror where Washington's commitment to following international rules of war became fuzzy at best.

In these "undeclared war zones," [rules implemented by the Obama administration](#) during its own expansion of operations there required a "near certainty" of a terrorist's presence at the proposed strike site, as well as the absence of potential civilian casualties. However, in March of 2017, a little more than a month after taking office, Trump designated Yemen's Abyan, Shabwa and al-Bayda Governorates to be "areas of active hostilities," greatly easing the ability of US Central Command to order attacks in those areas, Airwars notes.

Between March 2 and March 6, 2017, [the US carried out more than 40 airstrikes in Yemen](#).

Before the year was out, the US had carried out 133 strikes, according to data collected by the Bureau of Investigative Journalism cited in the report. While the years 2018 and 2019 lacked the fervor of 2017, they still outpaced the most active Obama years, with US operations in 2020 declining below that average for the first time.

The change was quickly followed by [a loosening of the Obama-era rules in undeclared war zones](#), particularly the requirement that civilian casualties be minimized. Eventually, this became [a complete indifference to civilian casualties](#), effectively categorizing all persons in the target area as terrorists until proven otherwise. In the case of Somalia, activists with Amnesty International did prove otherwise, [compelling US Africa Command to release quarterly reports](#) on potential civilian casualties.

Eroding Transparency

Airwars calls attention to this dynamic in its report, which is titled "Eroding Transparency." The group points out that while in 2016, the last year of Obama's administration, there were some moves toward greater transparency, such as [requiring the director of national intelligence \(DNI\) to publish](#) an annual unclassified summary of US strikes in undeclared war zones, including assessments of combatant and civilian deaths caused by them, the report on the especially violent 2017 was never published, and [in 2019, Trump reversed Obama's mandate](#), stripping the DNI of this requirement.

Parallel to this is that operations in Yemen have become increasingly clandestine: "while there have been no officially declared US military strikes in Yemen since mid 2019, several dozen claimed US actions have nevertheless taken place," the report notes. "In three incidents, all during 2020, admission of responsibility for actions by US officials in turn indicated that those attacks had been conducted either by the CIA, or were clandestine US military actions." US Central Command has similarly denied carrying out airstrikes in Yemen at a time that journalists have documented dozens of attacks.

Airwars notes that [domestic popular opposition to the US war in Yemen](#), which increased in 2018 and 2019 in terms of both activist protests and [congressional actions attempting to limit US involvement](#) in the horrific Saudi-led war raging since 2015, might have caused the Pentagon to more carefully guard the truth about its activities in Yemen. However, even Congress' resolutions made allowances for operations against al-Qaeda, which are the subjects of the bulk of US actions there anyway.

"As Donald Trump's administration of 2017-2021 draws to a close, US counterterrorism actions in Yemen are demonstrably less transparent and accountable than under his immediate predecessor Barack Obama," the report notes. "The challenge for the next United States administration - assuming that the US continues to target declining terror groups within Yemen -

is to ensure that when things do go wrong for civilians on the ground, that justice and accountability for US errors are properly served.”

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Photos: Western Sahara Rebels Shutter Border Crossing, Demand UN Add Human Rights Mission

by [Morgan Artyukhina](#)

Saharawi demonstrators have shut down a border crossing with Mauritania in order to draw attention to their plight ahead of the United Nations’ renewal of its mission in Western Sahara. The activists demand the UN begin monitoring human rights in the country, which has been occupied by Morocco for 45 years.

For more than a week, protesters have shut down the El Guerguerat border crossing between Western Sahara and Mauritania in a bid to pressure the United Nations to increase its activities in the desert country. A six-month extension of the UN Mission for Western Sahara (MINURSO) is due to be voted on Wednesday, and activists and representatives of the Saharawi people have demanded its purview be extended to include human rights monitoring.

MINURSO was created in 1991 amid a ceasefire between Moroccan forces and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Saguia el-Hamra and Río de Oro (Polisario Front), which had waged a war of liberation ever since Morocco invaded and annexed Western Sahara in 1975 on the heels of the Spanish colonial government’s departure. The peace deal saw the construction of [a massive, 1,700-mile-long sand berm separating the territory](#) into parts controlled by Moroccan forces and by the Polisario Front, with MINURSO tasked with facilitating a referendum on independence that has never materialized.

The annexation got Morocco [kicked out of the African Union for many years](#), but more recently, [some African nations have come around](#) to supporting Rabat’s position, though efforts to [curry favor with world powers such as Russia](#) have met with mixed results. Meanwhile, Morocco has retained control of [Bou Craa, one of the world’s largest phosphate mines](#), in Western Sahara’s north.

Saharawi Voice, a collective of [Saharawi citizen journalists, wrote on Twitter on Monday](#) that “a mixture of frustration, anger and timing has led to the current situation.”

“Saharawi people have grown exhausted after decades of false promises made by successive UN Chiefs, Personal Envoys, Security Council Resolutions, General Assembly Votes and the continued failure of the UN to gather enough pressure on Rabat to act,” they wrote. “MINURSO is one of the few UN Missions that doesn’t even have a human rights monitoring mandate. Meaning that Morocco’s brutal oppression of Saharawi people in the occupied territories is not even documented by the UN Mission for Western Sahara.”

“The little hope that MINURSO will eventually carry out a referendum for Saharawis to decide our fate, lies in the Personal Envoy of the Secretary General for Western Sahara (PESG),” the journalists wrote. “They bring the parties together and facilitate negotiations. They are key to the process.”

[According to Moroccan online outlet Le360](#), Rabat has repeatedly asked MINURSO to end past obstructions at El Guerguerat, which has been a point of conflict for years. Brahim Ghali, president of the Saharawi Republic and secretary general of Polisario Front, [stressed in an October 22 letter to UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres](#) that it is “utterly unacceptable to see MINURSO acting as a ‘traffic police’ in the south-western tip of the Territory, while the Mission itself has repeatedly failed to provide protection to Sahrawi civilians.”

London-based human rights nongovernmental organization [Amnesty International has also thrown its weight behind the Saharawi demands](#), calling on October 22 for the UN to establish a “fully independent and impartial mechanism within the UN peacekeeping mission, with the mandate and resources to effectively monitor human rights abuses in both Western Sahara and the Tindouf camps,” the Saharawi refugee camps across the border in Algeria [that are home to close to 100,000 refugees](#).

“Over the past 40 years of the territorial dispute, serious human rights violations and abuses have been repeatedly committed by both the Moroccan authorities and the Polisario Front. We are calling on the UN Security Council to strengthen the peacekeeping presence in the area by adding a human rights component to its mandate,” Amna Guellali, Amnesty International's deputy regional director for the Middle East and North Africa, said in the statement.

“After the last Personal Envoy, German former president Horst Köhler, resigned over ‘health reasons’ over a year ago the Secretary General has yet to appoint a new PESG. The message this sends is that Saharawis' fate and future are neither important nor a priority for the UN,” Saharawi Voice noted.

“In the coming days, MINURSO is about to be renewed at the Security Council, and there isn't even a Personal Envoy appointed. Morocco's human rights abuses continue on a daily [basis],” they added. “And Rabat's plundering of Saharawi natural resources is alive and well. This, and many other factors have led to Saharawi people being fed-up with the UN's continued failure, and to act where we can. Stopping one of the illegal routes used by Morocco to plunder our homeland is one of them. So here we are.”

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Videos: Hurricane Zeta Makes Landfall as Category 2 Cyclone Along US Gulf Coast
by [Morgan Artyukhina](#)

Hurricane Zeta has made landfall on the Louisiana coast on Wednesday, striking the US Gulf Coast as a Category 2 storm. Zeta is the fifth tropical storm to strike Louisiana this year. According to the US National Weather Service, Zeta has [central sustained winds topping 110 miles per hour](#), as the storm was continuing to strengthen following its passing over Mexico's Yucatan Peninsula earlier this week.

Ahead of the storm's impact, Louisiana Governor John Bel Edwards declared a state of emergency. However, unlike some of the past hurricanes that have struck the area, Zeta's speed of 24 miles per hour means its pounding rains won't last nearly as long as they otherwise might have, National Weather Service [meteorologist Lauren Nash told Nola.com](#).

Still, New Orleans is expected to receive roughly 4 inches of rain, and the National Hurricane Center has warned that the storm's arrival at high tide will make its storm surge all the worse along coastal areas, which could see the sea rise between 4 and 11 feet as the storm passes. Video shot along the Louisiana coast shows blinding rain and winds and a swollen Gulf of Mexico rising over streets and into houses.

In 2020, Louisiana has been struck by five tropical cyclones: Tropical Storm Cristobal, Hurricane Marco, Hurricane Laura, Hurricane Delta, and now Hurricane Zeta. Zeta is the 27th named storm in the 2020 hurricane season - an exceptionally active year, which is why meteorologists began using Greek letters to name them.

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Amid Year of Peace Talks, Afghanistan Records Fewest Civilian Casualties Since 2012
by [Morgan Artyukhina](#)

The United Nations' newest report on the ongoing war in Afghanistan reveals that in the first nine months of 2020, the fewest civilian casualties were reported since 2012. However, the war continues to rage as a lasting peace has so far eluded the Taliban militant group and the central government in Kabul.

[The UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan \(UNAMA\) reported on Tuesday](#) that 2,117 Afghan civilians were killed and 3,822 injured between January 1 and September 30 as a result of violent attacks in the country. While this is roughly 30% less than the same period in 2019, the mission notes Afghanistan remains "among the deadliest places in the world to be a civilian." According to the report, the Taliban, a Sunni fundamentalist militant group ousted from power by the US invasion in 2001 that has continued to resist the US and new Afghan government ever since, was responsible for 45% of civilian casualties. Afghan government troops were deemed responsible for 23% of casualties, and US-led international forces just 2%. The rest, the report says, were either caught in crossfires or killed by one of the other various rebel groups, which include a branch of Daesh that has set up operations in Afghanistan.

The US statistic is notable, since in August 2019 [UNAMA faulted the US for causing more civilian deaths in Afghanistan](#) than the Taliban. Overall, 2019 was an exceptionally bloody year, with the US carrying out the most airstrikes there since 2006, [according to data by US Air Forces Central Command](#).

"While the number of civilian casualties documented is the lowest in the first nine months of any year since 2012, the harm done to civilians remains inordinate and shocking," the report states. "UNAMA reiterates that all parties to the conflict can and must do more to protect civilians from harm by urgently reviewing practices and strengthening mitigation measures, as well as working towards an end to the fighting – the only way to definitively stop conflict-related civilian casualties. UNAMA stands ready to further assist all parties in taking the urgent steps needed." In February, the US and Taliban signed a peace deal that purported to be the beginning of the end of the 19-year-long war, as US troops have begun to withdraw. [US President Donald Trump](#)

[recently promised](#) all remaining US troops in Afghanistan would be home “by Christmas,” and NATO chief [Jens Stoltenberg said last week the alliance’s total forces](#) had dipped below 12,000 in the country.

Despite the deal, [US forces have carried out fresh airstrikes](#) against the Taliban this month, [causing the group to declare the deal](#) to be in jeopardy.

Kabul and the Taliban were expected to begin their own peace talks in March, but [the highly sensitive negotiations only began in September](#) and continue to grind on. Meanwhile, a slew of suicide bombing attacks hit the city of Khost on Tuesday, leading to the deaths of five Afghan police and officials and seven militants. [According to the Associated Press](#), no group has yet claimed responsibility for the attack.

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Video: F-16 Jet Fires Flares at Civilian Plane Near Trump Rally, Viewers Mistake for Fireworks by [Morgan Artyukhina](#)

When a civilian aircraft strayed into forbidden airspace over an election rally for US President Donald Trump in Arizona on Wednesday, a US Air Force F-16 fighter jet was dispatched to warn it off, firing defensive flares to get the pilot’s attention. However, the president and rallygoers thought they were fireworks of some kind.

On Wednesday, Trump traveled to Bullhead City, Arizona, for a political rally less than a week before the presidential election on November 3. While he was there, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) established a temporary flight restriction area (TFR) around the airport where the rally was being held.

“The FAA and NORAD [North American Aerospace Defense Command] typically issue joint statements ahead of time to warn civilian pilots about the restriction - but the message doesn’t always get across,” [Military.com noted](#).

When NORAD detected a civilian aircraft violating that restriction, an F-16 Falcon interceptor was dispatched to warn it off. With radio contact clearly not working, the pilot opted for a more visual method of communication, dropping a line of flares typically used to confuse incoming heat-seeking missiles.

However, the bright display caught Trump’s attention and he stopped in the middle of his rally to direct the crowd’s attention at what he believed to be a fireworks display.

BREAKING: US fighter jet flies over MAGA rally & fires flare—crowd chants "USA! USA! USA!" pic.twitter.com/k1qAavpgSr

— SV News 🇺🇸 (@SVNewsAlerts) [October 28, 2020](#)

“Oh, look at that! Look, look, look! Whoa, look at that, they gave the president a little display,” Trump said during the rally, pointing up at the sky.

As the flares fell and created a curtain of smoke, the thousands of attendees who came to see Trump speak began chanting, “USA! USA! USA!”

[NORAD said in a subsequent tweet on Wednesday](#) that “the aircraft was escorted out of the restricted area by the NORAD aircraft without further incident.”

However, Trump didn't miss the opportunity to taunt the opposition, musing to the crowd how difficult it is to get Democrats to pay for such a display. He was likely referencing American National Football League announcers Troy Aikman and Joe Buck, who got caught [musing on a live mic about the cost to taxpayers of a fighter jet flyby](#) over Raymond James Stadium in Tampa, Florida, on October 20, prior to a game between the Tampa Bay Buccaneers and Green Bay Packers.

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France's Macron Imposes Second Lockdown to Curb COVID-19 Spread

French President Emmanuel Macron will reimpose a nationwide lockdown starting Friday to curb the spread of COVID-19.

In a speech Wednesday, Macron explained that universities will be required to transfer to online teaching and that traveling between regions will be prohibited. In addition, residents will be expected to work from home, and the external borders of the Schengen Area remain closed. "The second wave of the pandemic in France will be more severe and deadly than the first," the French leader said, adding that more than 35,785 people in the country have died since the start of the pandemic, and in the last 24 hours alone, more than 36,000 people have been infected.

In 24 hours Tuesday, health officials say there were more than 500 virus-related deaths, the highest daily figure since April, [France 24 reported](#).

According to Macron, the measures are expected to remain in place until December 1. If the situation improves in 15 days, the country will reconsider opening some shops. In general, however, the measures are expected to remain in effect until new daily infections fall from the current 40,000 per day to about 5,000 per day.

"The government didn't take into account what the first wave was and didn't learn all its lessons," Frederic Valletoux, president of the French Hospital Federation, said Wednesday on France Inter radio, France 24 reported.

This is France's second nation-wide lockdown. The first lockdown was imposed on March 17. Restrictions during the first lockdown lasted until May, [BBC reported](#).

The [latest data by Worldometer](#) shows that there have been more than 1.2 million cases of the virus in France and more than 35,000 deaths as a result.

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White House Lists 'Ending the COVID-19 Pandemic' as Trump Accomplishment

In a news release sent to reporters on Tuesday, the White House Office of Science and Technology listed "ending the COVID-19 pandemic" as one of US President Donald Trump's

first-term accomplishments, despite the fact that COVID-19 cases continue to skyrocket in the US.

According to the [release](#), the Trump administration "has taken decisive actions to engage scientists and health professionals in academia, industry and government to understand, treat and defeat the disease."

However, the rosy outlook does not reflect the current reality plaguing the US.

As of Wednesday, [more than 9 million cases of the novel coronavirus](#) had been reported in the US, with over 232,000 deaths as a result, Worldometer's COVID-19 data states. According to the [COVID Tracking Project](#), there are more than 44,000 people in the US currently hospitalized due to the respiratory disease.

During Wednesday's broadcast of "America's Newsroom" on Fox News, White House Director of Strategic Communications Alyssa Farah admitted that the statement was poorly phrased. "Cases are still rising, and we need the American public to remain vigilant," she explained. "This is the top priority of the president, defeating this virus and rebuilding our economy. But we are rounding the corner, because we think that we will have a vaccine by the end of the year, and because of the president's leadership, we expect that we'll be able to massively deploy that on a large scale to as many as 100 million Americans by the end of the year."

When host Sandra Smith asked Farah whether the president believes the virus has been defeated, Farah responded: "No, absolutely not. That was poorly worded. I think that the intent was to say that it is our goal to end the virus," [Fox News reported](#).

"We are rushing therapeutics. ... We've got remdesivir on the market that people are able to use. We've got monoclonal antibodies, we've got steroids that are able to be used to treat the most vulnerable. We have massive testing and the ability to isolate cases," Farah added.

On Sunday, White House Chief of Staff Mark Meadows said that the Trump administration is "not going to control the pandemic" before a vaccine is available, because COVID-19 "is a contagious virus," [USA Today reported](#).

Throughout the election season, Trump has held rallies drawing thousands of people with minimal social distancing and mask-wearing and has repeatedly downplayed the severity of the disease.

"Covid, Covid, Covid is the unified chant of the Fake News Lamestream Media. They will talk about nothing else until November 4th., when the Election will be (hopefully!) over. Then the talk will be how low the death rate is, plenty of hospital rooms, & many tests of young people," [Trump tweeted Wednesday](#).

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Photos: Scientists Discover 'Mysterious' 500-Meter-Tall Reef at Australia's Great Barrier Reef

Australian scientists have discovered a detached coral reef more than 500 meters high at the northern end of Australia's Great Barrier Reef.

According to a [report by The Guardian](#), the vertical reef, taller than New York's Empire State Building, was found about 130 kilometers off Cape York during a 3D seabed-mapping exercise

by scientists. The scientists were aboard a vessel owned by the Schmidt Ocean Institute (SOI), a non-profit group based in California, which was using an underwater robot to explore the reef. "To find a new half-a-kilometer tall reef in the offshore Cape York area of the well-recognized Great Barrier Reef shows how mysterious the world is just beyond our coastline," [SOI Executive Director Dr. Jyotika Virmani told BBC](#).

"This powerful combination of mapping data and underwater imagery will be used to understand this new reef and its role within the incredible Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area," Virmani added.

According to Tom Bridge of the ARC Center of Excellence for Coral Reef Studies at James Cook University, who was the expedition's principal investigator, the detached reef is the first one found in the region since the late 19th century, when seven such reefs were discovered.

"It's a big reef not to have known about," Bridge pointed out to The Guardian.

"What it highlights is how little we know about a lot of the ocean, even the Great Barrier Reef. The marine park is 344,000 square kilometers – bigger than many European countries – and only about 6 or 7% of that is typical shallow-water reefs," he added.

Although the reef does not appear to have hard corals in its upper section, it has abundant sponges, sea fans and soft corals, which means the area is most likely rich in nutrients, The Guardian reported.

"This unexpected discovery affirms that we continue to find unknown structures and new species in our ocean," Wendy Schmidt, co-founder of the SOI, [said in a news release](#).

"The state of our knowledge about what's in the ocean has long been so limited. Thanks to new technologies that work as our eyes, ears and hands in the deep ocean, we have the capacity to explore like never before. New oceanscapes are opening to us, revealing the ecosystems and diverse life forms that share the planet with us."

A study published earlier this month found that ocean warming has killed half of the coral in the Great Barrier Reef. Climate change is the greatest global threat to such reefs, because high ocean temperatures cause mass coral bleaching events, during which coral polyps expel algae from their tissues, turning white, according to the [US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration](#). Such events can be fatal to coral.

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US Supreme Court Laying Groundwork for 'Electoral Coup' With Wisconsin Ballot Decision -
Journo

The US Supreme Court declined on Monday to reinstate a court order that would have extended Wisconsin's deadline for accepting absentee ballots to six days after the 2020 presidential election, a move that highlights the court's hostility to democracy, Greg Palast, an award-winning investigative reporter, told Radio Sputnik's Political Misfits.

"The Supreme Court, which is extremely hostile to democracy, [is] playing a game. [In] the old days, the Supreme Court had rules, voter intent rules. Whatever it takes to count ballots ... that's what ruled," Palast [told show hosts Michelle Witte and Bob Schliehuber on Wednesday](#).

“And now we have a court that’s going to get worse with [Associate Justice] Amy Coney Barrett, because I’ve listened to some of her speeches over the last few years, and she’s against the court’s interpreting laws by substance, but rather by procedure.”

“The substance is that you get to vote, and your vote gets to count. The procedure is ... your ballot has to arrive on Election Day,” Palast added.

According to a [report by the New York Times](#), the Supreme Court ruling is a victory for Republicans, since Wisconsin is a swing state. US President Donald Trump won the state by around 23,000 votes in 2016.

Following the decision, the Democratic Party of Wisconsin immediately spearheaded a voter-education project to notify voters that absentee ballots have to be received by 8 p.m. local time on November 3.

“We’re dialing up a huge voter education campaign,” Ben Wikler, the state party chairman, [tweeted on October 26](#).

“It’s not that the federal government will be in charge. It’s that Trump will be in charge ... In most state governments, including in virtually every swing state, the Republicans are in charge of the legislatures through massive gerrymandering, as in Wisconsin and Michigan,” Palast told Sputnik.

“It’s a pure political decision. It’s laying the ground for an electoral coup d’etat that’s having procedure and BS and maybe violence determining the election, and not the voters,” he added. According to the [Wisconsin Examiner](#), Wisconsin voters can request an absentee ballot through October 29. To be counted, the ballots must be received at election offices, not just postmarked, by Election Day.

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Video: Faulty Shuttle Service at Trump Rally Leaves Hundreds Stranded in Cold, Several Hospitalized
by [Evan Craighead](#)

Hundreds of US President Donald Trump’s supporters found themselves stranded and forced to endure freezing temperatures for hours following the conclusion of the president’s rally in Omaha, Nebraska, on Tuesday due to a lack of shuttle buses.

The US president wrapped his outdoor rally and departed Omaha’s Eppley Airfield via Air Force One around 9:00 p.m. local time on October 27. While attendees received shuttle bus rides from their vehicles to the airfield, it quickly became apparent that transportation services had hit a snag after the event.

Video footage published on social media by Fox News correspondent Jeff Paul shows an extremely long line of supporters still waiting for a bus at 10:15 p.m. local time.

“Some just gave up and walked from the airfield, back to wherever they parked,” [he noted](#). “It was about 32° [Fahrenheit] out at the time. Many had already spent hours outside as they waited for POTUS to arrive.”

Some 30 attendees were “contacted for medical reasons,” and at least seven individuals were transported to a local hospital, the Omaha Police Department [told BuzzFeed News](#).

The Omaha Scanner provided updates on the situation throughout the night and, at one point, [claimed local authorities](#) “located an elderly party who is frozen cold unable to move with an altered mental status.”

According to the account, 20 empty shuttles were stuck in the “South Economy parking lot” due to heavy traffic. Spotty cell service also hindered police communications.

The Omaha Scanner was eventually able to confirm the event site was virtually cleared around 12:39 a.m. local time Wednesday.

“Is there any place you would rather be than a Trump rally on about a 10-degree [Fahrenheit] evening? ... It's cold out here, but that's OK,” Trump said amid the crowd's “lock him up” chants referencing Democratic presidential nominee and former US Vice President Joe Biden.

“President Trump loves his supporters and was thrilled to visit Omaha last night. Despite the cold, tens of thousands of people showed up for his rally. Because of the sheer size of the crowd, we deployed 40 shuttle buses – double the normal allotment – but local road closures and resulting congestion caused delays,” claimed Samantha Zager, the spokesperson for the Trump reelection campaign, in a [statement provided to The Hill](#).

“At the guest departure location, we had tents, heaters, generators, hot cocoa, and handwarmers available for guests. We always strive to provide the best guest experience at our events, and we care about their safety.”

Trump claimed Tuesday that some 29,000 supporters were in attendance. However, Omaha Airport Authority Chief of Police Tim Conahan said around 21,000 individuals were screened, [according to the Omaha World-Herald](#).

Nebraska State Senator Megan Hunt [slammed Trump](#) as a “con man” while commenting on the situation via Twitter.

“Supporters of the President were brought in, but buses weren't able to get back to transport people out. It's freezing and snowy in Omaha tonight.”

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.

‘Treated Like Criminals’: US Troops in Germany Slam Leadership Amid Mounting Tax-Liability Cases

by [Evan Craighead](#)

Germany-based US military personnel and their families claim American leadership has left them to fend for themselves as the Kusel-Landstuhl tax office seeks to collect income tax from troops and military civilians unable to prove that they intend to return to the US.

German regional tax collectors with the Kusel-Landstuhl office, which oversees an area near the Ramstein Air Base, recently issued a questionnaire to an undetermined number of individuals and families within the American military community.

The document, [obtained by Stars and Stripes](#), raised alarms for many recipients because it requested information that military personnel have been trained to safeguard. Tax officials

specifically requested information on any property owned by service members, whether their children attended a school in Germany, past trips to Germany - including travel dates - and whether and when the recipients lived in a foreign country.

Job histories, real estate holdings and names of associates have also been requested by the officials, according to the outlet.

Impacted military personnel and family members have highlighted that, in addition to their hesitation to divulge sensitive information, the regional tax office's endeavors also come contrary to the NATO [Status of Forces Agreement \(SOFA\)](#), which protects personnel from double taxation.

"German [regional] tax authorities are undermining the [SOFA] treaty," argued Steuerberatung tax consultancy spokesperson Andreas [Kindler earlier this year](#).

However, the regional tax office has argued that, under its interpretation of the agreement, such protections are not applicable for individuals or families with "special ties" to Germany, including marriage to a German, prolonged military tours, property ownership or sending one's child to a school in Germany.

To avoid taxation, service members and civilians must prove they have a "willingness to return" to the US, but there are no exact methods to demonstrate that commitment, leaving German officials to evaluate each case separately, Stars and Stripes reported.

US European Command (EUCOM) spokesperson Lt. Cmdr. Russell Wolfkiel stated that US military personnel and their families need to consult a lawyer, rather than the combatant command.

"We don't see a force protection issue per se," he said, as reported by Stars and Stripes.

Likewise, the US Army Europe - responsible for SOFA-related matters in Germany - has said that it will not participate in individual tax cases.

"I feel like EUCOM should be raising red flags," argued Air Force Master Sgt. Matthew Larsen, who is married to a German and has recently been one of many targeted by the regional tax office.

"We are not getting that support and are basically left to deal with this. We are not hearing anything from anyone at a higher level."

The spouse of a US Army service member echoed Larsen's sentiment, asserting that "the military leadership has no interest in solving this big problem."

"It could jeopardize my spouse's career," she claimed. "We don't know who else could have access to this sensitive information."

"So many families have been targeted already by the tax office and we're talking about a lot of money - money most people don't have," the Army spouse said.

Paola Berdecio, a Department of Defense Education Activity (DODEA) teacher, revealed that she and her husband - also employed as a DODEA educator - left Germany for good after settling a \$180,000 tax bill.

"How we got targeted in the first place is still a mystery," she said. "We were pretty much treated like criminals and were ruined financially."

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Videos: Washington, DC, Protests Persist Outside Police Station After Pursued Man's Death on Scooter

by [Evan Craighead](#)

Demonstrators demanding justice for 20-year-old Karon Hylton have taken to the streets of Washington, DC, for the second night in a row following the young man's death on Monday. Protesters were overheard chanting "Justice for Karon" and similar calls for action as they approached the Metropolitan Police Department's (MPD) 4th District Station. Authorities were seen brandishing pepper-spray canisters while demonstrators pleaded for police to release the body camera footage that documented the moments leading up to Hylton's fatal crash.

The continued protests in DC follow a Friday night crash involving a Revel electric moped operated by Hylton and a vehicle in traveling on Kennedy Street in Northwest DC's Brightwood Park neighborhood.

Citing the MPD, [NBC Washington reported](#) officers attempted to stop Hylton around 10:10 p.m. local time on October 23 after they saw him operating the scooter without a helmet. He then went down an alley and "collided" with a vehicle near the 700 block of Kennedy Street. Police say they administered first aid treatment to the 20-year-old until emergency medical responders made it to the scene. He died in the hospital days later.

"It just amazes me that the cops' story is that they were chasing him for not wearing a helmet, yet they put his life in danger and he died as a result," Daniel Hale, a bystander who saw part of the MPD pursuit, [said to WJLA](#).

Wednesday's demonstrations began with a vigil in remembrance of the 20-year-old, who died the same day his daughter turned 3 months old.

Hylton's mother, who was attacked Tuesday by officers with pepper spray, was one of many seen covering an MPD cruiser with images of her late son.

Demonstrators continued marching in Northwest DC until they reached the 4th District Station. The MPD announced earlier Wednesday that the body camera footage from the incident will be released, although no exact date was mentioned.

Family and others seeking justice for Hylton have demanded concrete, raw video evidence over polished police statements.

Reports yet to be confirmed by authorities have alleged the cop who escalated the incident was MPD Officer Terrance Sutton.

"Officer Terrance Sutton, a.k.a. Tattoo, and the D.C. Metropolitan Police Department must be held accountable for the murder of Karon Hylton. The Hylton family deserves justice, although there's no justice that can bring Karon back," [argued Sharece Crawford](#), at large committeewoman for the DC Black Caucus.

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'Who?' Angry Netizens Admonish NYT as Author of Trump Admin Insider Stories Reveals Identity
by [Evan Craighead](#)

Netizens appear unimpressed and underwhelmed following the unmasking of the so-called "senior official in the Trump administration" behind the tell-all book "A Warning," as well as the 2018 New York Times op-ed that slammed US President Donald Trump's "erratic behavior" and nonexistent leadership qualities.

Former Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Chief of Staff Miles Taylor [penned an open letter](#) to the American public on Wednesday, revealing it was he who anonymously authored the NYT op-ed that called out US President Donald Trump's "amorality" and touted an active "resistance" movement within the administration.

"Trump has been exactly what we conservatives always said government should NOT be: expansive, wasteful, arbitrary, unpredictable, and prone to abuses of power," argued Taylor in his letter.

He described his anonymously published tell-all "A Warning" as "a character study of the current Commander in Chief and a caution to voters that it wasn't as bad as it looked inside the Trump Administration - it was worse."

While Taylor - now a CNN correspondent - appears to now want the notoriety that accompanied his writings, an overwhelming number of netizens had their own criticisms for the man formerly known as "Anonymous" - especially following his outright denial of the matter earlier this year. When I was a contributor to [@CNN](#), I felt I was brought in to tell the truth -- not to lie to CNN's audience. Taylor not only lied to [@andersoncooper](#), he elaborated on the lie in this clip. That is, frankly, shocking.

— Walter Shaub ([@waltshaub](#)) [October 28, 2020](#)

The NYT, which granted Taylor anonymity for his op-ed, was also dragged on social media for listing the former DHS chief of staff as a "senior administration official" when he did not even make it to the DHS leadership website and actually [held the position of deputy chief of staff](#) at the time of the article's publication.

The US president also weighed in on the matter, falsely claiming for a second time that he does not know Taylor and has "never even heard of him." In the same tweet, though, Trump noted Taylor's former employment at Google and current job at CNN - proving [he does in fact know](#) who the former DHS chief of staff is.

Taylor reportedly decided to take a leave of absence from Google until after the 2020 presidential election on November 3.

The Trump appointee, who worked under both former DHS Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen and acting DHS Secretary Chad Wolf, was praised by many after he appeared in a testimonial ad for the group Republican Voters Against Trump and endorsed Democratic presidential nominee and former US Vice President Joe Biden.

Taylor asserted the US president "wanted to exploit the Department of Homeland Security for his own political purposes and to fuel his own agenda" - which did not come as a surprise to many, considering the US president's racist 2016 campaign rhetoric against Mexicans and the [immigration policies of his administration](#).

[Taylor also published an op-ed](#) in the Washington Post in August, claiming the US president was “often talked out of bad ideas at the last moment.”

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Deadly COVID Envy - Political Cartoon

US President Donald Trump was given a full serving of shade Tuesday as former President Barack Obama accused him of being resentful over COVID-19 getting more media coverage than his orange excellency, even as the US death toll continues to climb.

Obama mocked Trump while campaigning at a Florida rally in support of his former vice president, current Democratic presidential nominee Joe Biden. “He’s jealous of COVID’s media coverage,” the former US president [said of Trump to the crowd](#).

Obama scathed his successor’s response to the COVID-19 pandemic, criticizing Trump for his personal disregard for safety and saying that he had turned the White House into a “hot zone” in the wake of outbreaks among his senior staff.

Trump was quick to rage-tweet, of course, instantly bashing Obama’s rally for having “[no crowd](#).” If only the commander-in-chief could focus more of his attention on curbing the spread of COVID-19.

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Biden-Harris Campaign Sign in Iowa Defaced with Swastika
by [Victoria Teets](#)

A campaign sign for the Biden-Harris Democratic ticket challenging incumbent US President Donald Trump has been defaced with a swastika.

The vandalism on the sign supporting former US Vice President Joe Biden and his running mate, Sen. Kamala Harris (D-CA), was discovered in Ankeny, Iowa, on Tuesday.

According to a police report obtained by [the Des Moines Register](#), the candidates’ names on the yard sign were covered in white paint, and a red swastika was painted over them.

Neighbors of the property where the incident occurred told police that the painting was probably done on Monday night or in the early hours of Tuesday.

In the past six months, there have been four reports to the Polk County Sheriff’s Office of campaign signs being damaged. In one instance, a sign was set aflame north of the town of Bondurant. However, none of the previous vandalism incidents involved swastikas or any similar symbols or messages.

Sgt. Ryan Evans, spokesperson for the Polk County Sheriff’s Office, said no suspects have yet been identified.

"That's obviously extreme," Evans said. "It could be construed as a hate crime, which does elevate the severity."

Amid the contentious election coming up on Tuesday between Trump and Biden, reports of vandalized or stolen campaign signs have popped up across the US.

A Florida man is facing charges of grand theft and trespassing after local police stated he stole a bulldozer from a construction site and drove around destroying Biden signs, [reported The Hill](#).

A hay bale display constructed on a Massachusetts farm in support of Biden and Harris was set on fire earlier this month, the outlet added.

Additionally, in Michigan, "a township employee attempting to remove an improperly placed Trump-Pence 2020 sign had his hand sliced open and required 13 stitches because it had been booby-trapped with razor blades," noted The Hill.

The Iowa sign incidents could be a sign of a tense political atmosphere, as polls say the vote there could be very close, according to The Hill. Both presidential candidates have directed attention to the battleground state.

Trump held a rally last week in Des Moines; meanwhile, Biden will be returning to Iowa this week for the first time since becoming the Democratic nominee, noted the outlet.