

10/16/21 Saturday

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New Satellite Images Reportedly Show That Trump's Scotland Golf Course Wrecked a Sand Dune System
By- Evan Craighead

In December 2020, Scotland's nature agency announced that the coastal sand dunes at then-US President Donald Trump's Aberdeenshire golf resort had lost their status as a protected environmental site. The agency claimed the dunes were a "high quality example" of a geological system in Scotland, but no longer merited the governmental safeguard.

New satellite images show that a collection of ecologically sensitive dunes at the former US president's 'Trump International Golf Links, Scotland' have been partially destroyed, according to a new report from Business Insider.

Satellite images captured by Maxar Technologies in March 2010 and April 2021 closely detail the Menie Estate strip of the Foveran Links, where Trump's golf course is located. The resort opened in 2012.

Trump purchased the strip of coastal land in 2006, promising that the site would contain "the world's greatest golf course."

The real estate tycoon also reassured environmentalists in November 2008 that he would "stabilize the dunes" and protect them from further destruction.

"They will be there for ever," Trump said, [as reported by The Scotsman](#). "This will be environmentally better after [the resort] is built than it is before."

John Swinney, Scotland's finance secretary at the time, declared that Trump's golf course would have "a significant economic and social benefit" for Scotland.

[Fast-forward to 2019 as NatureScot](#), Scotland's nature agency, said that although Foveran Links were "a very high-quality example of a sand dune system," they had also suffered damage to one-third of its special habitats in recent years.

The damage prompted officials to reconsider designating the Foveran Links a site of special scientific interest (SSSI).

"The denotification of SSSIs is unusual, however in this case we have found there is no longer a reason to protect the dunes at Menie as they do not include enough of the special, natural features for which they were designated," said Sally Thomas, the agency's director of people and nature.

Bob Ward, policy and communications director at the Grantham Research Institute on Climate Change and the Environment, explained to the Insider that sand dunes are dynamic and stabilization attempts by the resort had "killed it as a natural environment."

"So they've essentially planted vegetation on top of them and put physical constraints on them so the dunes can't move and it's not a dynamic system anymore," Ward explained.

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Venezuelan Government to Suspend Negotiations With Opposition Over Extradition of Alex Saab to US

By - Evan Craighead

Earlier on Saturday, Alex Saab, a Colombian-born Venezuelan national with business ties to a Venezuelan food distribution and subsidies program, was placed on a US Department of Justice-chartered flight to the US, where he faces money laundering charges. Saab had remained in Cape Verde for some sixteen months after he was detained by authorities. National Assembly President Jorge Rodriguez announced on Saturday that Venezuela would be suspending this weekend's upcoming negotiations with the opposition after the same-day extradition of Saab, a 49-year-old envoy of Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro. Rodriguez, who heads the Venezuelan government's negotiating team, said that officials would not be attending the talks that had been scheduled to begin on Sunday, according to Reuters. The National Assembly president emphasized that the breakdown in negotiations comes as a protest against "brutal aggression" aimed at Saab.

[Flight Aware data showed](#) that an aircraft owned by the US Department of Justice took off from Cape Verde on Saturday at around 4:53 p.m., local time. As of this article's publication, the flight has not landed.

The Venezuelan government stated in a Saturday memo that the extradition of Saab "also attempts to derail the development of the negotiations" between the Venezuelan government and the opposition in Mexico City, Mexico.

Maduro's government has described the extradition as a "kidnapping" and has vowed to take further action.

In June 2020, Saab's flight from Venezuela to Iran was refueling when [he was arrested](#) in Cape Verde on charges of spearheading a money laundering scheme in Venezuela.

The charges, filed in a Florida court, claim that Saab consistently identified as an operator who assisted in securing trade deals for Maduro.

The US claims that the envoy violated US sanctions against Venezuela and profited from overvalued contracts associated with his food distribution and subsidies program, dubbed 'Local Committees for Supply and Production' (Spanish acronym CLAP).

CLAP has assisted with feeding more than six million Venezuelan families (or over 60% of the country's population), according to government officials.

Lawyers for Saab have characterized the US charges as "politically motivated," adding that Saab, at the time of his June 2020 arrest, was en route to negotiate the shipment of fuel and other humanitarian supplies to Venezuela.

Additionally, [the Venezuelan government has maintained](#) that those involved in the arrest of Saab are in violation of international law and norms.

"In violation of all norms and procedures, Mr. Saab was detained in an irregular manner by Interpol authorities in Cape Verde on June 12, despite the fact that at the time there was no active Red Notice in the system of that international police coordination body," Maduro's

government said in a June 2020 memo. "After his arbitrary detention, on June 13, Interpol issue[d] an extemporary capture order to justify the detention, without taking into consideration the diplomatic immunity granted by international law to an agent of a Sovereign State." Nevertheless, it was confirmed that the extradition of Saab could proceed after Cape Verde's constitutional court [rejected a previous court ruling](#) which claimed that Saab's detention was illegal because the Interpol red notice for his detention was issued a day after his arrest.

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Biden Says It Is Harder Than Ever to be a Cop in America
By - Evan Craighead

The 40th annual 'National Peace Officers' Memorial Service at the US Capitol building honored law enforcement officers who lost their lives in 2019 and 2020. US President Joe Biden and the first lady, Dr. Jill Biden, were among the attendees at the Saturday event in Washington, DC. US President Joe Biden on Saturday proclaimed that law enforcement officials in the US are faced with a number of modern-day expectations that have made their line of work more difficult than it has ever been.

"We expect everything of you, and it's beyond the capacity of anyone to meet the total expectations. Being a cop today is one hell of a lot harder than it's ever been," the US president said to members of law enforcement and other attendees of the 40th Annual National Peace Officers Memorial Service.

Biden emphasized that to account for high expectations, cops in the US must be properly equipped with "resources", such as community policing.

The US president also highlighted that investment into community-based programs should be viewed as assisting law enforcement.

"To support our law enforcement officers requires that we invest in systems that provide adequate health care, counseling, drug prevention, housing, education and other social services in the community, so there is not the discord," he said, noting that 2020 was the deadliest year for law enforcement.

Biden's Saturday remarks come alongside the publication of data showing that at least 476 officers have died from COVID-19 since the beginning of the pandemic. Per the [Officer Down Memorial Page](#), the number of COVID-19-related deaths, dwarfs the 97 gunfire deaths logged for the same period.

Additionally, police forces across the country appear to be struggling to get officers vaccinated. In Chicago, rank-in-file police officers in the city were given until midnight on Thursday to disclose their vaccine status or be placed on unpaid leave. Some officers, including Chicago Police Union President John Catanzara, have complained that the move is an overreach by the city.

Catanzara argued that "Chicago will have a police force at 50% or less" if the city's vaccination order is followed by officers. A judge has since [slapped the police union president](#) with a

restraining order that barred him from making similar statements. It will take days for the results to come back.

Speaking in front of the US Capitol building on Saturday, Biden recounted how US Capitol Police and other authorities responded to the January 6 storming of the government building. The US president referred to the incident as an "unconstitutional and fundamentally un-American attack on our nation's values and our votes."

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Pablo Escobar's 'Cocaine Hippos' Breeding Out of Control
By - Adriana Montes

The Colombian government has begun sterilising dozens of hippos once owned by late drug lord Pablo Escobar, amid environmental concerns as an invasive species.

The so-called "cocaine hippos" introduced by Escobar to his private zoo, have grown from a herd of 35 in 2012 to 80 this year, and were thought to be the largest outside Africa.

Out of the 80 hippos, 24 have [reportedly](#) already been treated with a chemical that makes them infertile.

The overly-fertile descendants could potentially take over the country's marshlands and pose a threat to Colombia's natural wildlife since their urine and faeces are toxic, [according](#) to scientists.

Pablo Escobar, the kingpin of the world's largest cocaine empire in the 1980s, collected a range of illegally imported animals at his estate in Colombia, which included hippos, kangaroos, giraffes, elephants, and other exotic creatures.

In 1993, after Escobar's reign came to an end when he was shot dead by authorities, one male and three female hippos escaped from his 7,000-acre jungle hacienda between Medellin and Bogota.

"It was logistically difficult to move them around, so the authorities just left them there, probably thinking the animals would die", Colombian biologist Nataly Castelblanco [reportedly](#) told the BBC earlier this year.

Since then, the hippo population has grown and taken over the countryside.

Scientists warn that their numbers could soon be impossible to control and their environmental impact will be irreversible.

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Texas Senate Passes Athlete Bill Targeting Transgender Youth
By - Adriana Montes

The Texas Senate passed a bill Friday that requires students to compete on school sports teams that correspond with their birth gender and not the gender they identify with.

After more than 10 hours of debate, [House Bill 25](#) which passed the Texas House of Representatives by a vote of 76-54 Thursday, now heads to the Texas Senate, where it is expected to pass.

Introduced by Texas Representative Valoree Swanson (R-District 150), the bill restricts how transgender students participate in school sports. Texas public schools male born athletes will only be allowed to play on boy's sports teams, whereas female born athletes will only be allowed to play on girl's teams unless an all-girls team at the school doesn't exist.

Transgender male athletes will be allowed to play on male teams only if there are no other options available for the sport.

A modified birth certificate will be accepted if it had been changed "to correct a clerical error," the bill states.

Swanson, the bill's author, said Thursday that the bill was about fairness.

"The bill I'm bringing before you today protects girls' safety and their right to equal access to athletic opportunities," Swanson [reportedly](#) said on the House floor. "This is a right guaranteed to our girls under Title IX."

"Biological males, in addition to having much higher testosterone levels, have many other physiological advantages that girls just cannot overcome," she added.

Democrats didn't hold back and attacked the House Bill 25 as a dangerous foray into discrimination towards already vulnerable transgender youth.

Texas Representative Mary Edna González (D-District 75), chair of the Texas House LGBTQ Caucus, [reportedly](#) called the bill unnecessary and compared the bill to a 2017 legislation that prohibited transgender Texans from using public bathrooms that matches their gender identity.

"To the community, this is bathroom bill 3.0; a bill that was not needed then, and a bill that is not needed now," she said.

Texas Representative Ann Johnson (D-District 134) [reportedly](#) said that the proposed law will discriminate and exclude transgender kids.

"The goal is to bully and harass trans children," she said. "When I was growing up, I was a lesbian, and I never told anybody because it wasn't okay."

Human Rights Campaign Texas State Director Rebecca Marques [reportedly](#) criticized the bill after the Texas House passed it, saying, "Texas legislators seem to take pride in passing discriminatory bills without any concern for the impact on Texans and the state's growing negative national reputation."

The Texas ACLU also shared its input on the bill through Twitter:

Conservatives on the other hand say the law, which applies to public school teams through high school, is protecting fair competition.

"We need a statewide level playing field," bill sponsor Representative Valoree Swanson said during the debate.

Mary Elizabeth Castle, Senior Policy Advisor for Texas Values sided spoke at a press briefing Thursday and released the following [statement](#):

"We are excited that the Texas House stood up for Texas girls by passing H.B. 25, the Save Women's Sports Bill. We now urge the Senate to pass it quickly and for this bill to be signed into law to protect girls' Title IX rights to play on a level playing field in sports."

Republican-led Texas election House bill 25 is headed to Governor Greg Abbott's desk to be signed into law.

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Robert Durst on Ventilator Battling COVID-19, Amid Life Sentence, Lawyer Says
By - Adriana Montes

Durst, 78, was sentenced to life in prison without parole Thursday for the 2000 murder of his friend, Susan Berman, in a slaying possibly tied to his missing wife. The millionaire and former real estate heir was in "very bad condition" during the sentencing hearing, according to his lead defense attorney, Dick DeGuerin.

Robert A. Durst has been placed on a ventilator after contracting COVID-19 — days after being sentenced to life in prison for murder, his lawyer said Saturday.

"All we know he's tested positive for Covid-19, he's in hospital and on a ventilator," DeGuerin reportedly told NBC News on a phone call.

"He looked awful Thursday, worst I've ever seen him. He was having difficulty breathing, he was having difficulty speaking."

Durst's attorney said he believes Durst has been vaccinated against COVID-19, but could not provide details on whether he had received any booster shot against the virus.

Durst was admitted Friday evening to a USC Medical Center in Los Angeles according to the [Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department inmate locator](#).

Westchester County prosecutors are expected to select a grand jury within weeks to examine evidence on the case against Durst in his first wife's disappearance.

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Vienna Flaunts its 'Explicit' Artworks on OnlyFans Amid Censorship on Nudes
By - Adriana Montes

The Austrian Capital's tourist board rails against censorship of art and turns to using the adults-only online platform OnlyFans to fully showcase the most 'explicit' works of art. Centuries back, the Vienna Secession movement paved the way for a new freedom of art — promoting modern art at every level of society by presenting exhibitions free from the strict guidelines of Vienna's annual salon.

To honor the movement and protest against platforms' ongoing censorship of its art museum and galleries, Vienna's tourism board has [reportedly](#) found a new site for artistic expression free from censorship — the adults-only platform OnlyFans — a social network that permits depictions of nudity.

"Vienna and its art institutions are among the casualties of this new wave of prudishness," and stated that's why they decided to put "the capital's world-famous 'explicit' artworks on OnlyFans," said the tourism board.

"The battle against censorship still rages on: with the rise of social media, bans like these are back in headlines once again. Major social media channels like Instagram and Facebook have nudity and 'lewd' content firmly in their sights."

The ancient art is being presented from four of Vienna's most revered museums, including the Albertina Museum and the Leopold Museum, who have recently faced issues when posting their artwork to social accounts.

Tik Tok [reportedly](#) suspended and later blocked Albertina Museum's account in July, for displaying works of art by Japanese artist and photographer Nobuyoshi Araki that displayed a partially-obscured breast.

Vienna's tourist board gave praise to the uncensored nature of OnlyFans and said that the platform "shook up social media by giving creators a platform where they could freely share nude and pornographic content with subscribers."

As a perk, people who subscribe to the account on OnlyFans will receive a free Vienna city card or a free ticket to any of the featured museums where "uncensored works of art in question can be seen in the flesh."

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China Tested New Space Capability With Hypersonic Missile in August - Report
By - Adriana Montes

According to a report, China has tested a nuclear-capable hypersonic glide missile that travels into space and circles the globe in an orbital-like fashion before speeding through the atmosphere toward its target.

The test, which was confirmed by five officials, proves China has advanced space capability that "caught the US government by surprise," the Financial Times [reported](#).

Defense Department spokesman John Kirby insisted that he would not comment on the specifics of the report but [added](#):

"We have made clear our concerns about the military capabilities China continues to pursue, capabilities that only increase tensions in the region and beyond,"

"That is one reason why we hold China as our number one pacing challenge."

The trial flight is said to have taken place around August, with the boost-glide vehicle being lifted into space by a Long March 2C rocket.

The tested hypersonic glide vehicle reportedly missed its target by two-dozen miles, but nonetheless demonstrates China's "astounding progress" on hypersonic weapons — the same ones that Russia, the US and China have all been working on.

Russia tested one such missile in July, while the US plans to dress all of the Navy's destroyers with them.

Hypersonic missiles, like traditional ballistic missiles which can deliver nuclear weapons, are known to travel five times faster than the speed of sound.

Unlike ballistic missiles that fly high into space in an arc to reach their target, hypersonic missiles fly on a lower flight path in the atmosphere, to potentially reach a target more quickly. Crucially, a hypersonic missile is hard to stop, since they fly and maneuver to avoid detection and swerve defensive countermeasures.

Last month, US Air Force Secretary Frank Kendall [reportedly](#) warned that China could be heading for a first-strike nuclear capability — including the potential for “global strikes... from space” — urging the US to accelerate its own weapons development to keep peace with Beijing. “If they continue down the path that they seem to be on—to substantially increase their ICBM force—they will have a de facto first-strike capability,” Kendall told reporters at the Air Force Association’s annual conference outside Washington, D.C.

Kendall further suggested that China was developing something akin to the “Fractional Orbital Bombardment System” that the USSR deployed for part of the Cold War.

“If you use that kind of an approach, you don’t have to use a traditional ICBM trajectory. It’s a way to avoid defenses and missile warning systems,” said Kendall

In his second major speech, Kendall deliberately called out various Chinese weapons developments as reason for concern.

“You’re gonna get tired of hearing me talk about China and the pacing threat that we face,” he [reportedly](#) said at a press conference a few hours after his speech.

Chinese Minister Counselor and Spokesperson Liu Pengyu [reportedly](#) said the country’s military policy was “defensive in nature.”

“We don’t have a global strategy and plans of military operations like the US does,” Liu said.

“And we are not at all interested in having an arms race with other countries.”

While countries like the US have developed systems designed to defend against cruise and ballistic missiles,

there is concern about a gap in the military’s ability to track and defeat low-flying hypersonic weapons.

China has been aggressively investing in new defense and other technologies to defend against the US, according to a recent [report](#) by the US Congressional Research Service.

The reported test comes as US-China tensions have intensified and Beijing has stepped up military activity near Taiwan.