

tradition in the Senate, you shake your hand, that's it."

The Cincinnati Enquirer (7/21, BeMiller, 223K) reports that the President "used Cincinnati as a backdrop to advocate for a bipartisan infrastructure deal, saying there are thousands of bridges in Ohio and Kentucky alone that need repaired. Chief among them: The long-vexed Brent Spence Bridge between Cincinnati and Northern Kentucky." The President said at his town hall, "We gotta fix that damn bridge of yours going into Kentucky."

Senate Republicans Block Vote On Bipartisan Infrastructure Deal. The AP (7/21, Mascaro, Freking) reports while Senate Republicans "rejected an effort Wednesday to begin debate on the big infrastructure deal that a bipartisan group of senators brokered with President Joe Biden." Senate Majority Leader Schumer scheduled Wednesday's procedural vote "to nudge along negotiations that have dragged for weeks," but Republicans "mounted a filibuster, saying the bipartisan group still had a few unresolved issues and needed to review the final details." Politico (7/21, Everett, LeVine, 6.73M) says Republican "centrists say they may be willing to provide the votes as early as Monday, when they think discussions will conclude over a bill expected to provide nearly \$600 billion." Lead Republican negotiator Sen. Rob Portman (R-OH) said, "We're a no today because we're not ready. ... We're saying we do want to take up this bill as soon as we are, and we think that'll be Monday."

The Washington Post (7/21, Kim, Romm, 10.52M) quotes Sen. Mitt Romney (R-UT), a member of the group negotiating the agreement, as saying, "In my view, we'll have the agreement completed over the weekend." Reuters (7/21) reports Romney "said he did not expect to have a full text by Monday." Romney said, "We'll have an agreement and a lot of text, but not all of it. It's going to take quite a while to get the full text. It'll be hundreds of pages."

The New York Times (7/21, Cochrane, 20.6M) says for Republicans, "voting 'no' on Wednesday was a calculated gamble that they would be able to swiftly finish the text and it could be brought up for another vote. Should they complete the deal in the coming days, they would still have to persuade enough of their colleagues to support the measure for it clear the 60-vote filibuster threshold."

Meanwhile, The Hill (7/21, Carney, 5.69M) says Democrats "are feeling fierce pressure to start advancing President Biden's sweeping spending bill, which they are pursuing on two tracks: the bipartisan talks and a separate \$3.5 trillion plan that they will pass along party lines under reconciliation that will allow them to avoid a GOP filibuster on the second piece." Ahead of Wednesday's vote, Schumer "pleaded with Republicans to let them start debate on the bipartisan track, arguing that he and Democrats didn't view it as a hard deadline for the bipartisan talks." Roll Call (7/21, 130K) reports Schumer said in remarks on the Senate floor, "The bipartisan group of senators will have many opportunities to make their agreement the base of the bill, even if they need a few more days to finalize the language. ... My colleagues are well aware that we often agree to move forward with debates on issues before we have final text of the bill in hand."

The Hill (7/21, Bolton, 5.69M) says Schumer "changed his vote to a 'no' to give himself flexibility to bring the motion back up for a vote," and in a separate story The Hill (7/21, Carney, 5.69M) says "senators say they expect" Schumer "to try for a second time to start debate" on the deal if the bipartisan group is able to finalize their agreement. Senate Majority Whip Durbin "indicated that he expects that the second vote would take place next week and that he believes the bipartisan group will be ready to move forward by Monday."

For ABC World News Tonight (7/21, 6:45 p.m. ET, story 6, Muir, 5.93M), Rachel Scott reported, "Republicans say they needed more time to finalize a deal but Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer took a gamble, forcing a vote to jumpstart the process." NBC added, "Schumer's gamble may have paid off. Some Republicans saying they want a deal by the weekend." Nikole Killian, for The CBS Evening News (7/21, 6:37 p.m. ET, story 3, O'Donnell, 3.65M), reported, "Senate Republicans blocked a roughly one trillion dollar package that would road, bridges, and other projects because it is still being negotiated. It is a key part of President Biden's agenda and a small bipartisan group of lawmakers say they are very close to finalizing the details in the coming days."

The Wall Street Journal (7/21, Peterson, Duehren, Subscription Publication, 8.41M) and USA Today (7/21, 12.7M) provide similar coverage as does CNBC (7/21, Breuninger, 7.34M) on its

website.

More broadly, on CNN's Anderson Cooper 360⁸ (7/21, 979K), Abby Phillip said, "So you have both Joe Biden showing up there saying I'm going to fight for liberal priorities, but I'm going to do it in a way where I think I can still reach across the aisle. And he is steadfast in that. It is, you know, very unusual I think balancing act he's trying to do here." Anderson Cooper interjected, "He makes it hard, though, for Republicans to attack him for that very reason. Though he's proposing all these things, he's sort of selling it in a very Joe Biden kind of way."

Democrats Warn Leaders Against Forcing House To Rubber-Stamp Senate Package. The Hill (7/21, Marcos, 5.69M) reports "more than 30 Democrats on the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, including Chairman Peter DeFazio (Ore.), warned party leaders on Wednesday against trying to force House members to rubber-stamp any bipartisan infrastructure package negotiated by the Senate without any changes." In a letter addressed to House Speaker Pelosi and Schumer, the Democrats "called for greater inclusion of policies in a \$760 billion transportation funding bill that the House passed earlier this month and argued the emerging Senate proposal doesn't go far enough." They wrote, "Many of these critical reforms are not included or have not been fully addressed through the Senate bipartisan infrastructure process. We should reject any effort to categorically exclude the thorough, transparent, and transformational process undertaken by the House." The group "called for reconciling any Senate-passed bill with the House infrastructure proposal as part of a formal conference committee, rather than having the House simply clear whatever comes out of the upper chamber."

Former Governors, City Officials Back Infrastructure Deal. Axios (7/21, Allen, 1.26M) reports "a group of key former governors and mayors" on Wednesday "embraced the \$1.2 trillion bipartisan infrastructure deal as long overdue." The group said in a statement, "We know first-hand the overwhelming need for improvement. ... The country and Congress have been debating for years the need to update and invest in vital projects, so we are pleased that both Democratic and Republican Senators have come together to propose the largest long-term infrastructure investment in nearly a century."

Infrastructure Negotiations Give Lobbying Firms A Q2 Revenue Boost. Politico (7/21, Oprysko, 6.73M) reports "nearly every" top lobbying firm in Washington saw its "revenues jump in the second quarter of the year with several reporting record hauls as infrastructure negotiations, the persisting economic fallout from the pandemic, legislation targeting China and antitrust sentiment fueled a flurry of lobbying."

Bai Questions Biden's Two-Track Infrastructure Strategy. Matt Bai writes in the Washington Post (7/21, 10.52M) if Biden's strategy on infrastructure "ends up blocked, it may be, at least in part, because he insisted on conflating two very different things." Biden's initial plan "called for more than \$4 trillion in investment for a wide variety of initiatives that were very loosely related." In the Senate, "Republicans and Democratic moderates would negotiate only on a more limited bill focused on physical infrastructure projects," but "in the House...numerous Democrats made clear they wouldn't support any infrastructure bill that didn't include all the climate and social programs." Biden's "only available solution here was to break his massive program into two measures." But, "instead of just taking credit for a tentative compromise on infrastructure and getting behind a totally separate measure for social spending, he kept insisting that the two things were inextricably linked."

Milley Refuses To Deny Reported Coup Worries.

ABC World News Tonight⁹ (7/21, 6:43 p.m. ET, story 5, Muir, 5.93M) reported Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Mark Milley "[spoke] for the first time after the bombshell reporting that he was concerned at one point about a possible coup attempt by President Trump to stay in power." While General Milley "would not talk specifics, neither did he deny the reports." Milley said, "All of us in uniform, we take an oath, an oath to a document, an oath to the constitution of the United States." He added, "And our oath is to the constitution, not to any individual at all. And the military did not and will not and should not ever get involved in domestic politics. We don't arbitrate elections."

Austin Says Milley Is Apolitical. Politico (7/21, Forgey, 6.73M) reports that on

Wednesday at the Pentagon, Defense Secretary Austin "said he had 'tremendous faith and confidence' in Gen. Mark Milley following reports that the Joint Chiefs chair sought to prevent former President Donald Trump from perpetrating a coup in the aftermath of the 2020 election." Austin is quoted as saying: "I've known the chairman for a long time. We've fought together. We've served a couple of times in the same units. I'm not guessing at his character. He doesn't have a political bone in his body." Politico says "the remarks from the secretary come as Milley has faced heightened criticism from some conservatives for revelations in forthcoming books about the end of Trump's presidency. ... Following the revelations, conservatives including Fox News host Tucker Carlson accused Milley of being overly political and said he should be fired."

CAPITOL VIOLENCE NEWS

Capitol Siege Probe Puts Focus On Ad Hoc Extremist Groups.

CNN (7/21, Polantz, 89.21M) reports, "When officers arrested Robert Morss of Pennsylvania on charges related to the January 6 Capitol riot, they found in his car a notebook with a page titled, 'Step by Step to Create Hometown Militia.' Beneath it Morss allegedly scribbled bullet point reminders, fleshing out the idea of forming a violent cell – 'bring assault rifle' and 'set up your kit' – and notes on 'formation.'" CNN adds, "In the Morss case and others, the Justice Department repeatedly has documented the emergence of what could be called small, right-wing extremist groups. This comes along with rising warnings from US intelligence about violence from right-wing extremists. Since January, prosecutors have alleged that several people who are charged with participating in the insurrection or with planning politically motivated violence also showed interest in organizing others, according to an extensive review of Capitol riot and other Justice Department cases by CNN."

Judge Forces Capitol Siege Defendant To Unlock Laptop Seized By FBI.

CNN (7/21, Rabinowitz, Cohen, 89.21M) reports, "A federal judge forced a US Capitol rioter to unlock his laptop Wednesday after prosecutors argued that it likely contained footage of the January 6 insurrection from his helmet-worn camera." US District Judge Dabney Friedrich "granted the Justice Department's request to place Capitol riot defendant Guy Reffitt in front of his laptop so they could use facial recognition to unlock the device. The maneuver happened after the hearing ended and Reffitt's lawyer confirmed to CNN that the laptop was unlocked. Investigators seized the laptop and other devices earlier this year pursuant to a search warrant." Reffitt "has been in jail since his arrest in January. His case received national attention after his son spoke publicly about how Reffitt had threatened to kill family members if they turned him into the FBI."

Mississippi Man Charged With Attacking Police During Capitol Siege.

The AP (7/21) reports from Jackson, Mississippi, "A Mississippi man has been charged with assaulting an officer and other crimes during the January U.S. Capitol insurrection, federal prosecutors said Wednesday." Michael Leon Brock, 54, of Walls, Mississippi, "used a 4-foot rod to hit and push at least two police officers trying to protect the Capitol about two hours after protestors first broke in the building on Jan. 6, according to a sworn statement from a FBI agent." FBI agents "began investigating Brock after getting an anonymous tip after releasing a picture of the man with the rod taken from police body camera footage, court records said. Brock is at least the third person from Mississippi charged during the Jan. 6 unrest. Two other people face curfew violations."

Judge Says Ex-Army Ranger Used His Training In Capitol Riot.

The Hill (7/21, Schnell, 5.69M) reports, "A federal judge on Tuesday said a former Army Ranger who stormed the Capitol on Jan. 6 used his training or experience to organize the other rioters, which made their actions 'more effective, more forceful and more violent.'" CNN "reported that Robert Morss, an alleged Capitol rioter who is facing nine charges in connection to the attack, was ordered to remain in jail before his trial after a federal judge ruled that he was too dangerous to

be released. The Justice Department released new video of Morss this week, which showed him taking a lead in coordinating the rioters during the attack, according to CNN." Magistrate Judge Michael Harvey "said Morss was 'willing to use his training or experience to organize with the rioters on January 6 ... thereby making their actions more effective, more forceful and more violent,' according to CNN."

Arizona Man Charged In Capitol Siege Probe Is Released.

The Arizona Republic (7/21, Vandell, 1.05M) reports that a Cottonwood, Arizona man "accused of joining the Jan. 6 raid on the U.S. Capitol while dressed as a gladiator – meant to evoke a warrior figure from the Book of Mormon – was ordered to be released from custody on Tuesday after he was arrested last week." The FBI "arrested Nathan Wayne Entrekin on July 15 after he recorded videos inside and outside the U.S. Capitol where he narrated his actions addressed to his mother according to an affidavit an FBI agent filed in federal court. The affidavit claims Entrekin gave an FBI agent access to his phone during an interview in Cottonwood. The videos contradicted Entrekin's initial claims that he entered the U.S. Capitol not knowing he was doing anything wrong and left as soon as he saw damage and looting."

COUNTER-TERRORISM

Ohio "Incel" Charged With Plotting Sorority Mass Shooting.

Reuters (7/21, Hosenball) reports, "A man who identified himself as an 'incel' – involuntary celibate – was arrested on Wednesday and charged with planning a mass shooting of women college students in Ohio and illegal possession of a machine gun, U.S. prosecutors said." Tres Genco, 21, of Hillsboro, Ohio, "planned to shoot women at sororities, the U.S. Department of Justice said, without identifying the university. If convicted he could be imprisoned for life. It was not immediately known who was representing Genco." Reuters adds, "The incel movement with which Genco identified is an online network of men motivated to engage in violence against women who they believe unjustly reject their sexual or romantic advances. An indictment said Genco, who attended U.S. Army basic training for five months at Fort Benning, Georgia, in 2019, posted materials on an incel website between July 2019 and March 2020."

NBC News (7/21, 4.91M) reports, "During an investigation, law enforcement discovered a note indicating that Genco hoped to 'aim big' and attain a kill count of 3,000 victims, officials alleged. Genco also wrote a manifesto, authorities said, in which he said he would 'slaughter' women 'out of hatred, jealousy and revenge.' An examination of Genco's electronics showed that on the day he is accused of having written the manifesto, he also searched online for sororities and a university in Ohio, authorities said. The university was not named."

USA Today (7/21, Knight, 12.7M) reports that Genco "faces hate crime charges after federal prosecutors said he armed himself with a machine gun and planned to kill women in a mass shooting." USA Today reports that the Incel movement "is an online community of predominantly men who harbor anger towards women," U.S. Attorney Vipal Patel stated in a news release. "Incels advocate violence in support of their belief that women unjustly deny them sexual or romantic attention." USA Today adds that while investigating Genco's case, FBI agents discovered writings that suggested he hoped to kill 3,000 people. WKYC-TV Cleveland (7/21, 418K) also reports on Genco's case.

Virginia Man Sentenced For Making Explosive Device.

WJHL-TV Johnson City, TN (7/21, Teague, 158K) reports from Abingdon, Virginia, "A man who showed up at a hospital with severe injuries sustained in an explosion was sentenced to prison Wednesday for making an explosive device." Cole Carini, 24, of Richlands, Virginia, "was sentenced in U.S. District Court to 84 months in federal prison, according to the U.S. attorney's office. Carini pleaded guilty in January to one count of possessing and manufacturing an unregistered explosive device." Prosecutors "say Carini showed up at a Richlands hospital in June 2020 with severe injuries to his hands and fingers and shrapnel wounds to his neck and throat. He

told authorities that he was injured in a lawnmower accident at his home. While searching Carini's home, investigators noticed the lawn was overgrown and found no evidence that suggested that a lawnmower had recently been used. However, they did find evidence of an explosion in Carini's bedroom that was consistent with the injuries he had sustained."

COUNTER-INTELLIGENCE

US Indo-Pacific Command Official Pleads Guilty To Removing Classified Documents.

The Honolulu Star-Advertiser (7/21, 409K) reports, "An executive assistant at U.S. Indo-Pacific Command's Joint Intelligence Operation Center who was temporarily assigned to the U.S. Embassy in Manila pleaded guilty in federal court Tuesday to removing classified national security information and transporting it to an unauthorized location, according to the U.S. Department of Justice." Asia Janay Lavarello, 31, "pleaded guilty before U.S. District Court Chief Judge J. Michael Seabright to one count of knowingly removing classified information concerning U.S. national defense or foreign relations and retaining it at an unauthorized location, according to a news release. 'Government employees are entrusted with a responsibility to ensure classified information is properly handled and secured. Asia Janay Lavarello failed in her duty when she removed classified documents from the U.S. Embassy Manila,' FBI Special Agent in Charge Steven B. Merrill said in a statement."

Tom Barrack Indictment Could Open "Pandora's Box" For Former Trump Officials.

Raw Story (7/21, Reed, 404K) reports Former FBI Deputy Director Andrew McCabe told CNN's Erin Burnett Tuesday Tom Barrack's indictment could pose issues for former Trump officials. McCabe said, "The indictment itself puts the government in a position of enormous leverage over Tom Barrack, and one of the ways he might try to resolve this big problem he's got is to provide information or evidence to the government on any other investigation. That could include the ongoing investigation of the inaugural committee or really anything else. So it really could open up a Pandora's box for other people in the administration."

WPost Analysis: Barrack's Alleged Illegal Lobbying Helped Shape Trump's Policies In Middle East. The Washington Post (7/21, DeYoung, 10.52M) reports, "Writing in *Fortune* magazine two weeks before the 2016 election, Donald Trump's old friend and fundraiser, Thomas J. Barrack, outlined a new U.S. policy for the Middle East. The 'best hope' for America and the Arab world, he said, was U.S. support for the new, 'brilliant young leaders' in places such as the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia." Barrack, "who would soon become head of the president-elect's inaugural committee, was already acting on behalf of one of those leaders, Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Mohamed bin Zayed, the de facto ruler of the United Arab Emirates, according to a federal indictment unsealed against him in California on Tuesday. Charged with failing to register as a foreign agent and lying to the FBI, Barrack allegedly used his close relationship with Trump to push UAE-sought actions on both the campaign and during the first two years of the administration."

CIA Veteran To Lead Havana Syndrome Task Force.

The Wall Street Journal (7/21, Strobel, Subscription Publication, 8.41M) reports CIA Director Burns selected an agency veteran who had participated in the hunt for Osama bin Laden to lead a task force investigating the "Havana Syndrome" afflicting US diplomats and intelligence agents around the globe. The CIA officer is taking over leadership of the task force from Cynthia Rapp, who is retiring from the agency.

Reuters (7/21) reports a CIA official who was "involved in the search for Osama bin Laden has been chosen to head an agency task force investigating cases of an ailment known as 'Havana Syndrome' among US spies and diplomats, a government source said on Wednesday." The Wall Street Journal "said that a panel organized by the National Academy of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine reported last December that some type of 'directed energy' beams were strongly suspected as causing the ailment, which includes dizziness, headaches and nausea." The memo read by Reuters "said intelligence indicated that such a weapon was 'designed to bathe a target's

living quarters in microwaves, causing numerous physical effects, including a damaged nervous system.” The NSA “said in a 2014 memo to one intelligence officer who said he had suffered possible symptoms that an unnamed ‘hostile country’ to which the official traveled” in the late 1990s had a “high powered microwave system weapon that may have the ability to weaken, intimidate or kill an enemy over time and without leaving evidence.” The memo read by Reuters “said intelligence indicated that such a weapon was ‘designed to bathe a target’s living quarters in microwaves, causing numerous physical effects, including a damaged nervous system.’”

NBC News (7/22, Mitchell, 4.91M) reports the task force head, “a 10-year counterterrorism veteran, is still undercover.” The National Security Council is “now coordinating two administration task forces on the syndrome, including the one at the CIA, as the administration says it is committed to an all-out effort to find the cause and protect personnel posted overseas.” The CIA task force “includes intelligence analysts, clandestine officers, clinicians, and specialists from across the agency. A senior official said outside experts are also being brought in for additional technical and medical expertise.”

The Washington Post (7/21, 10.52M) reports Burns “handpicked the officer, who is undercover and a veteran of counterterrorism and counternarcotics operations, these people said, speaking like others on the condition of anonymity to discuss the sensitive assignment.” A CIA spokesperson said Burns is “personally engaged with personnel affected by anomalous health incidents and is highly committed to their care and to determining the cause of these incidents.” While some intelligence officials “believe Russia is responsible, they also think Cuba bears responsibility.” One official “said privately that it defied belief that the Cuban government would be unaware of a Foreign Service using a weapon on American personnel within its own borders.”

NSO Group Spyware Revelations Spur Investigations Into Surveillance Of Politicians, Journalists.

The Guardian (UK) (7/20, Ellis Peterson, 5.53M) reports revelations that “scores of journalists have been spied on by governments using NSO Group spyware have inflamed critics around the world, and hastened calls for investigations into the spying allegations.” The reports have caused political controversies in Mexico and India, and prosecutors in Paris “said on Tuesday that they had opened an investigation into allegations that the Moroccan intelligence services used the Israeli surveillance software Pegasus to spy on several French journalists.” Paris prosecutors “will examine 10 different charges, including whether there was a breach of personal privacy, fraudulent access to personal electronic devices, and criminal association.”

CRIMINAL INVESTIGATIONS

FBI Informants Reportedly Played Key Role In Whitmer Kidnap Plot Investigation.

Insider (7/21, Musumeci, 2.74M) reports, “The conspiracy to kidnap Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer was full with FBI informants, BuzzFeed News reported. At least 12 confidential FBI informants reportedly assisted the investigation into the extremist group. Some of the informants, including an Iraq war veteran, reportedly took leading roles in the scheme.” Insider adds, “The anti-government extremist group accused of conspiring to kidnap Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer had been infiltrated by at least a dozen FBI informants – some of whom took leading roles in the scheme, BuzzFeed News reported.”

The Washington Examiner (7/21, Chakraborty, 888K) reports, “Fourteen members tied to the paramilitary militia group Wolverine Watchmen were arrested in connection to the 2020 scheme to kidnap the Democratic governor after she refused to loosen coronavirus restrictions in the state. The plan was brainstormed at a militant-group training camp in August. Within a few short weeks, the defendants began surveilling Whitmer’s vacation house and ‘drew a map’ that ‘noted approximate distances from the home to police first responders,’ according to an indictment. The group also allegedly planned to attack infrastructure near Whitmer’s house, including blowing up a bridge to slow the response from law enforcement officers.”

Harvey Weinstein Pleads Not Guilty Ahead Of Los Angeles Rape Trial.

Reuters (7/21, Sergeant) reports from Los Angeles that former Hollywood producer Harvey Weinstein "pleaded not guilty on Wednesday to charges of rape and sexual assault involving five women in Los Angeles ahead of a second trial." Weinstein, 69, "arrived at Los Angeles Superior Court for his first appearance there in a wheelchair, wearing a brown jail uniform, after being extradited from New York on Tuesday where he was serving 23 years in prison for rape and other sexual offenses." If convicted, "Weinstein could spend the rest of his life in prison." NBC Nightly News (7/21, 6:45 p.m. EST, story 8, 0:18, Snow, 4.8M) reported that Weinstein pleaded "not guilty to 11 counts of sexual assault against five women."

Court Records Detail FBI Shooting Of Suspect.

Albuquerque (NM) Journal (7/21, Reisen, 188K) reports on the events surrounding the shooting of Marquez Floyd, 31, by FBI agents in Albuquerque last Wednesday. Floyd was allegedly involved in selling guns and drugs and the prostitution business as a member of "Kirk Town Piru" and a leader of "Tha Firm Family Movement." FBI agents found "numerous guns, marijuana and alleged gang notes and documents during searches at Floyd's home and a 'stash house.'" An agent wrote in the affidavit, "As agents approached... Floyd suddenly reached for and obtained a firearm and fired one or more rounds at the agents. The agents returned fire striking Floyd." Investigators found "four bullet fragments and one Winchester 9mm Luger round inside the vehicle. However, there was no gun listed in the items seized from Floyd's SUV."

Navajo Woman Goes Missing, Family Wants Answers.

The Arizona Republic (7/21, Silversmith, 1.05M) reports on Ella Mae Begay's disappearance in Sweetwater, Arizona. Begay, 62, was reported missing on June 15. Her case is one of 61 active missing person cases since the 1970s on the Navajo Nation. When the case was shifted to homicide, the FBI and Navajo Department of Criminal Investigation took over the investigation. FBI Public Affairs Specialist Brooke Brennan said to The Arizona Republic, "The FBI continues to assist the Navajo Police Department and other agencies to find Ella Mae Begay. We encourage anyone who may have information to contact law enforcement."

Mississippi Man Pleads Guilty To Sexual Abuse And Murder Of Child.

The AP (7/19) reports Brett K. Hickman, 27, pled guilty June 13 to second-degree murder and aggravated sexual abuse of a child, and is to be sentenced in November.

FBI, Local Police Searching For Suspect In Louisiana Bank Robbery.

WGNO-TV New Orleans (7/21) reports that the FBI and Jefferson Parish Sheriff's Office "are investigating a bank robbery that happened" at the Capital One Bank in Marrero, Louisiana on Monday. "According to police, on July 19, around 12:32 p.m., the suspect entered the Capital One Bank and presented a demand note to a teller who handed over an undisclosed amount of money to the suspect." WGNO adds, "the suspect is described as a white male in his 30's, approximately 6' tall and weighing 160-170 lbs."

Colorado Man Arrest For Shooting Victim Inside Moving Vehicle.

KCNC-TV Denver (7/21, 91K) reports that in Colorado on Tuesday, the FBI Safe Streets Fugitive Task force and the Westminster SWAT team arrested Isaac James Alvarado on an arrest warrant that was issued after he allegedly shot another man during an argument while they were in a moving vehicle. The driver of the vehicle "told investigators that she was threatened and ordered by the suspect to drive around. They eventually dropped off the shooting victim outside a hospital. The victim is expected to recover from his injuries." KCNC adds that Alvarado now faces charges of "second-degree kidnapping, second-degree assault with a deadly weapon, felony menacing and third-degree assault."

Pharmacist Convicted For Role In Deadly Meningitis Outbreak Re-Sentenced To More

Than 10 Years In Prison.

The AP (7/21) reports US District Judge Richard Stearns lengthened the sentence of former pharmacist Glenn Chin on Wednesday "for his role in a deadly 2012 multistate meningitis outbreak that killed more than 100 people and sickened hundreds of others," after the 1st US Circuit Court of Appeals threw out Chin's previous sentence of eight years and ordered Stearns to reconsider the sentence. Chin is now sentenced to 10.5 years in prison. According to the AP, "Prosecutors had called for a new sentence of more than 17 years for both men, who were convicted of fraud and other crimes stemming from the outbreak caused by mold-tainted steroid injections produced by the compounding pharmacy."

Reuters (7/21, Raymond) also provides coverage.

Ohio Man Sentenced To 20 Years For Child Porn.

WDTN-TV Dayton, OH (7/21, 175K) reports that a federal court in Ohio has sentenced Stephen E. Kirby II to 20 years in prison "for possessing more than 3,400 images and 800 videos depicting child pornography. He was also sentenced to 10 years of supervised release as a sex offender following his time in prison." WDTN explains that "Kirby inadvertently contacted an undercover FBI agent investigating child pornography trafficking in 2019. After pleading guilty in June, he was taken into custody and has remained there since." WHIO-TV Dayton, OH (7/21, 100K) adds that "federal investigators said Kirby was previously convicted on a child pornography possession charge and had started possessing and distributing the images just a month after serving his first sentence for the 2013 crime."

Continuing Coverage: Fugitive In Jaslyn Adams Shooting Death Held Without Bail.

WFLD-TV Chicago (7/21, 280K) reports a state judge has ordered Devontay Anderson "held without bail" in connection with his prosecution for the shooting of 7-year-old Jasyln Adams. WFLD explains that "Anderson – who was taken into custody by FBI agents in Chicago earlier this week – fired at least 28 rounds from the rifle on April 18 when he and two others targeted the girl's 29-year-old father in the 3200 W. Roosevelt Road."

New Mexico Couple Charged With Bank Robbery.

The Carlsbad (NM) Current-Argus (7/21, Smith, 17K) reports that the US Attorney's Office in Albuquerque has charged Roman Andrew Poulsen... "with bank robbery and Lori Crapo... with accessory after the fact." The Current-Argus reports that "both allegedly entered the Washington Federal Bank" in Artesia, New Mexico on July 15 "and handed a teller a note demanding money." The pair were arrested by local police on the same day as the robbery, and their case was passed on to the FBI.

Continuing Coverage: New York Man Faces Charges For Kidnapping Woman With Dementia From LA Hospital.

KCAL-TV Los Angeles (7/21) reports that Johnny Ray Gasca, a resident of Bronx, New York, "appeared in court Tuesday on a federal charge of kidnapping. He did not enter a plea Tuesday and was ordered held without bond." KCAL explains that Gasca is accused of "kidnapping a 68-year-old woman with dementia from the West Los Angeles Veterans Affairs Medical Center." The FBI "tracked the woman's phone" and "Gasca was arrested after agents saw him and the woman exiting the hotel."

Indiana Man Gets 50 Years For Third Child Sex Offense.

WIBC-FM Indianapolis (7/21, Davis, 6K) reports that a federal court has sentenced Brett Alan Walker to 50 years in prison for "sexual exploitation of a minor and distribution of child pornography." WIBC explains that the case against Walker began in 2019 after Google software detected that he had "uploaded sexually explicit images" of a child. WIBC adds, "Walker was previously convicted of child molestation... in 2010, and while on probation for that crime in 2011, he was convicted" of another offense "involving a 14-year-old girl." Walker had been out of prison

for "less than 3 years" before committing the latest offenses. "This lengthy sentence should send a loud and clear message that, while you may think you can hide behind the anonymity of the internet to commit these crimes, we will identify you and bring you to justice," said FBI Indianapolis Special Agent in Charge Paul Keenan."

Former Alaska Principal Gets 15 Years For Enticement Of A Minor.

The Bethel (AK) Delta Discovery (7/21, 14K) reports that a federal court in Alaska sentenced Christopher Allen Carmichael, a former principal for the Lower Kuskokwim School District, "to 15 years in federal prison followed by a lifetime of supervised release for trying to sexually entice a minor." The Delta Discovery explains, "Carmichael became the subject of a federal investigation in November 2019 when the Bethel Police Department contacted the FBI concerning Carmichael's online activities. During the investigation, Carmichael began engaging in graphic sexual communications with an undercover FBI agent posing as a fictional 13-year-old girl." This case "was brought as part of Project Safe Childhood, a nationwide initiative launched in May 2006 by the Department of Justice to combat the growing epidemic of child sexual exploitation and abuse."

Multi-Agency Investigation Nabs Louisiana Man For Child Porn.

The Avoyelles (LA) Journal (7/21) reports that on Tuesday, "a three-month investigation by state, federal and local law enforcement agencies" in Louisiana "led to the arrest of" Robin Kimball for child porn. The Journal explains that Louisiana State Police began investigating Kimball "after receiving a tip from the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children concerning images being shared over the internet. Kimball is a convicted and registered sex offender." The Journal adds that the FBI Safe Streets Task Force and several other agencies assisted in searching Kimball's home where officers "found hundreds of images related to sexual abuse of children." KALB-TV Alexandria, LA (7/21, 21K) also reports on Kimball's arrest.

East Chicago Police Officer Pleads Guilty In Federal Embezzlement Case.

The Times of Northwest Indiana (7/21, 254K) reports that Francisco Aleman, a former officer with the East Chicago Police Department in Indiana, has pleaded guilty to "defrauding fellow officers." The Times explains, "Aleman admitted he stole \$70,151 from the Fraternal Order of Police's Lodge 59 in East Chicago between 2016 and 2019 when he was its treasurer." The case against him began two years ago when "complaints by FOP members about missing money triggered an investigation" by the FBI's Organized Crime and Corruption Unit and state police.

Embezzlement Case At California Dentists Office Tied To Hells Angels Probe.

The San Jose Mercury News (7/21, Gartrell, 432K) reports "a relatively minor federal fraud case came about after federal agents raided a Santa Rosa home as part of their massive probe into the Hells Angels Motorcycle Club that included an alleged murder and two unsolved disappearances, court records recently revealed." The Mercury News explains that "Katrina Maras is charged in federal court with fraudulent use of an unauthorized access device, or in laymen's terms, using the company credit card for a dentist office she worked for on roughly \$12,800 in personal expenses." However, "recently filed court records revealed that a 2017 FBI raid that led to the seizure of evidence in Maras' case wasn't connected to her, but her romantic partner at the time and his alleged ties to the Hells Angels."

Iowa Raid Operation Part Of Investigation That Involves DEA, FBI.

On its website, WHO-TV Des Moines, IA (7/21, Maricle) reports a raid operation that was conducted in Iowa on Wednesday was "part of a large-scale...investigation" that is being conducted by the DEA, the FBI and a number of other law enforcement organizations. The Des Moines (IA) Register (7/21, 469K) also covers Wednesday's operation.

Montana Man Gets 20 Years After Pleading Guilty To Drug And Firearm Charges.

An MTN News article that is posted to the KPAX-TV Missoula, MT (7/21) website says Montana

resident Leon Paul Kavis Jr., who pleaded guilty "to conspiracy to possess with intent to distribute meth and to possession of a firearm in furtherance of a drug trafficking crime," has been "sentenced to 20 years in prison." The sentence was the result of an investigation that was conducted "by the FBI's Montana Regional Violent Crimes Task Force, the Missoula Police Department and the Flathead County Sheriff's Office."

Drugs, Guns Seized During Bust In Michigan.

In online coverage, [WKZO-AM](#) Kalamazoo, MI (7/21, Kriss, 1K) reports, "A large bust by the Southwest Enforcement Team (South Team) and the DEA took place" earlier this week in Sturgis Township, Michigan. Illegal drugs and weapons were seized during the bust. The [WZZM-TV](#) Grand Rapids, MI (7/21, Mack, 232K) website and [MLive \(MI\)](#) (7/21, Weidmayer, 828K) also cover this story.

Two Arrested In Connection With New Jersey Drug Investigation.

The [Cresskill-Closter \(NJ\) Daily Voice](#) (7/21, Levine) reports the DEA participated in a New Jersey drug investigation that led to two arrests. The two arrested individuals, Jason Maxson and Laurie Maxson, allegedly used their New Jersey "home to store and distribute pain medication."

The [Barnegat-Manahawkin \(NJ\) Patch](#) (7/21, 1.44M) and [Jersey Shore Online \(NJ\)](#) (7/21, Vosseller) also cover this story.

Task Force Probe Leads To One Arrest, Illegal Drugs Seizure.

The [Hudson County \(NJ\) Jersey Journal](#) (7/21, Zeitlinger, 1.55M) reports the Hudson County Prosecutor's Office Narcotics Task Force conducted an investigation that led to the seizure of more than two kilograms of illegal drugs. The DEA assisted with the investigation, which also led to New Jersey resident Juan Gomez's arrest.

Drug Sweep In South Carolina Leads To Seven Arrests.

The [Augusta \(GA\) Chronicle](#) (7/21, DeWitt Jr., 167K) reports the DEA was involved with a multi-organization "drug sweep in" Hampton County, South Carolina. Seven people were arrested in connection with the operation.

FINANCIAL CRIME & CORPORATE SCANDALS

Continuing Coverage: As FBI Agent Testifies In Burnette Trial, Juror Is Dismissed For Sleeping.

[WCTV-TV](#) Tallahassee, FL (7/21, 60K) reports that day six "of the JT Burnette corruption trial began with the dismissal of another juror, bringing the number down to 12. She has been sleeping through large portions of the trial. It comes after another juror was dismissed yesterday after being exposed to COVID." WCTV adds that day six included continued testimony from under FBI Agent "Mike Miller" – who is appearing under his alias.

Suspended Georgia Insurance Commissioner Claims Innocence.

[AP](#) (7/21, Amy) reports suspended Georgia insurance commissioner Jim Beck told jurors Wednesday he was being unfairly targeted by federal investigators. Beck was indicted on "charges of wire fraud, mail fraud, money laundering and tax fraud months after he took office in 2019." Beck testified the Georgia Underwriting Association charged customers more to cut the costs the agency paid others to share in its risk, transforming the GUA into a profitable entity. The man behind the computer work needed to perform this was Jerry Jordan, but Beck "admitted he didn't know where Jordan was, didn't know the proper name of Jordan's company, didn't have a written contract with Jordan, didn't have the laptop computer Beck said Jordan provided him, didn't even have a Jordan business card. Beck said he lost track of Jordan after he moved 'out West' to pursue a woman he met online."

Former Illinois School Superintendent Sentenced To 44 Months For Embezzlement.

AP (7/21) reports Daniel Brue, 48, former Illinois school superintendent, was sentenced Tuesday to 33 months in prison and ordered to repay \$343,000 he embezzled from the districts. Brue created a shell company and "fraudulently sent invoices to the districts for work that was never performed. After the schools paid those bills, he deposited the checks into a personal account."

Massachusetts Couple Suing eBay After Harassment And Stalking From Former Executives.

WFXT-TV Boston (7/21) reports a Natick, Massachusetts couple is filing a lawsuit against eBay after cyberstalking from six former eBay executives. FBI investigators announced charges against the former employees June 2020 for cyberstalking, including "sending threatening messages, surveillance of the couple and packages sent to the couple that contained live cockroaches, a funeral wreath and a bloody pig mask." The suit accused eBay of "orchestrating a systematic campaign to emotionally and psychologically torture the Steiners, the two-person team behind EcommerceBytes, a trade publication reporting on eBay. The suit accuses eBay of yielding its enormous power and corporate resources to terrorize and silence journalists."

Pennsylvania Lawmakers Consider Pension Reform.

The Philadelphia Inquirer (7/21, Distefano) reports that with Pennsylvania's Public School Employees' Retirement System "facing an FBI investigation, poor investment results, and an attempted coup by dissident trustees, Pennsylvania legislators are finally showing signs that they're serious about pension reform." The FBI is currently investigating PSERS's Harrisburg land purchases and profit reports.

CYBER DIVISION

Biden To Discuss Cybersecurity Measures With Executives Next Month.

The AP (7/21, Tucker) reports President Biden and his national security advisors intend to meet with private industry representatives on August 25 to discuss strengthening the country's cybersecurity. The AP says the White House is "scrambling to help companies protect against ransomware attacks from Russia-based criminal syndicates and as the administration also confronts an aggressive cybersecurity threat from the Chinese government." According to the AP, a National Security Council spokesperson "disclosed the meeting, but did not identify the business leaders who would be participating."

Bloomberg (7/21, Jacobs, 3.57M) reports that "in a virtual briefing with members of Congress last week, Deputy National Security Adviser Anne Neuberger said that the White House had created a ransomware task force and that the administration's strategy involved efforts to disrupt ransomware operations, confront the use of cryptocurrencies in attacks and work with allies to encourage other nations not to harbor attackers, according to people familiar with the discussion." According to Reuters (7/21), "A pilot program focused on industrial controls launched in April has seen more than 145 of 255 priority electricity entities adopt cybersecurity monitoring technologies, and that number is growing."

UK Man Arrested In Spain For Role In 2020 Twitter Hack.

Reuters (7/21, Lynch) reports, "A 22-year-old British citizen was arrested in Spain on Wednesday in connection with a July 2020 Twitter hack which compromised the accounts of high-profile politicians and celebrities, the U.S. Justice Department said on Wednesday." The department "named the British man as Joseph James O'Connor and said he faced multiple charges. He was also accused in a criminal complaint of computer intrusions related to takeovers of TikTok and Snapchat accounts, including one incident involving sextortion, as well as cyberstalking a 16-year-old juvenile." Reuters adds, "An unnamed second person, identified only as 'Juvenile 1' in the criminal complaint, was also charged in connection with the hack on July 30, 2020, in the Northern District of California for playing a 'central role' in the Twitter attack and used the moniker

Kirk#5270. The teen was later identified as Graham Ivan Clark, 18."

LAW ENFORCEMENT SERVICES

Grassley Seeks Probe Of DOJ Grants System.

Reuters (7/21, Lynch) reports that Sen. Charles Grassley (R-IA) "has demanded an investigation into new Justice Department grant-management software, after Reuters reported that technological glitches in the system have delayed funding programs from police departments to victims' service providers." Grassley, the ranking member of the Senate Judiciary Committee, "in a letter on Wednesday asked Justice Department Inspector General Michael Horowitz to launch a formal probe into the department's roll-out of the new software, known as JustGrants, which manages a \$4.7 billion grant program. In his letter, Grassley cited a variety of reports from Horowitz's office that have documented troubles with JustGrants, including a May 6 alert in which Horowitz said problems with JustGrants had even hampered his own staff's ability to access vital information needed to oversee the grants to root out waste, fraud or abuse."

Congressional Military Justice Overhaul Stalls As Congressional Democrats Split On Scope, Racial Justice Issues.

Politico (7/21, Ferris, Wu, O'Brien, 6.73M) reports that "Democrats are scrambling to find a path forward" for legislation to reform the military justice system, "as lawmakers split over the best way to address serious crimes – primarily sexual assault – within the ranks and tackle racial disparities in military courts." Politico explains that members of the House Armed Services Committee "disagree on a central tenet of the bill – removing commanders' authority to prosecute all serious crimes, beyond just sexual assault. Proponents of that change," including Reps. Anthony Brown (D-MD) and Jackie Speier (D-CA), "say it would be a much-needed reform for U.S. service members of color, who have long faced disproportionate consequences in military courts." However, "the push by Brown and others has led to furious clambering behind the scenes by Pentagon officials, including Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin, who have strongly opposed the change ... In some cases, Austin has privately been phoning Democrats to oppose it."

Senate Passes Bill To Send More Money To Crime Victims' Fund.

Bloomberg (7/21, Avi-Yonah, 3.57M) reports that on Tuesday, the US Senate "unanimously passed a bill...that will send more money to the Crime Victims' Fund, which has seen a 35% drop in its coffers since 2019." Bloomberg explains that the fund "funnels dollars from federal criminal penalties and forfeitures to domestic violence shelters, legal services and charities across the country," but its "balance and appropriation have both significantly dropped in recent years because of lowered rates of prosecution during the pandemic and broader criminal justice reforms."

AP Analysis: Blacks And Latinos Are Losers In The 50-Year-Old "War On Drugs."

The AP (7/21, Morrison) reports, "Fifty years ago this summer, President Richard Nixon declared a war on drugs," yet "today, with the U.S. mired in a deadly opioid epidemic that did not abate during the coronavirus pandemic's worst days...the loser is clear: Black and Latino Americans, their families and their communities." According to the AP, "A key weapon was the imposition of mandatory minimums in prison sentencing," which "led to an increase in the prison industrial complex." The AP adds, "Following the passage of stiffer penalties for crack cocaine and other drugs, the Black incarceration rate in America exploded from about 600 per 100,000 people in 1970 to 1,808 in 2000. In the same timespan, the rate for the Latino population grew from 208 per 100,000 people to 615, while the white incarceration rate grew from 103 per 100,000 people to 242."

States Announce \$26 Billion Settlement To Resolve Opioid Lawsuits.

CBS Evening News (7/21, 6:41 p.m. ET, story 6, O'Donnell, 3.65M) reported that in a

"landmark" deal, "a group of state attorneys general reached a \$26 billion settlement with Johnson & Johnson and three other American companies that distributed opioid painkillers." The Wall Street Journal (7/21, A1, Randazzo, Subscription Publication, 8.41M) continues that a bipartisan group of state attorneys general have revealed a \$26 billion dollar settlement with three drug distributors and a pharmaceutical company to resolve thousands of opioid lawsuits across the country.

Politico (7/21, 6.73M) reports the agreement is the result of a "yearslong effort by state and local governments in the U.S. to force the pharmaceutical industry to help pay to fix a nationwide opioid addiction and overdose crisis." Politico says that "under the deal, Johnson & Johnson would not produce any opioids for at least a decade. And AmerisourceBergen, Cardinal Health and McKesson share prescribing information under a new system intended to stop the avalanches of pills that arrived in some regions about a decade ago."

The Washington Post (7/21, Kornfield, Bernstein, 10.52M) reports that the agreement "with three major drug distributors – McKesson, Cardinal Health and AmerisourceBergen – and pharmaceutical giant Johnson & Johnson," may potentially release "the companies from current and future litigation if a critical mass of communities across the country agree to drop their cases."

The New York Times (7/21, A1, Hoffman, 20.6M) explains "the offer will now go out to every state and municipality in the country for approval." If enough localities formally sign the deal, "billions of dollars from the companies could begin to be released to help communities pay for addiction treatment and prevention services and other steep financial costs of the epidemic." The Times adds that the settlement only binds the four companies, "leaving thousands of other lawsuits against many other pharmaceutical defendants, including manufacturers and drugstore chains, in the mammoth nationwide litigation still unresolved."

Reuters (7/21, Raymond) reports attorneys general from 15 states were involved in brokering the deal, while some others "were cool on the agreement." Connecticut Attorney General William Tong said, "There's not enough money in the world frankly to address the pain and suffering," but he added that the money will "help where help is needed." States have 30 days to examine the agreement and "local governments have up to 120 days to join." North Carolina Attorney General Josh Stein said, "The expectation is north of 40 and well north of 40 will sign on." Louisiana Attorney General Jeff Landry proclaimed "States that don't sign on are being irresponsible... We don't want perfect to be the enemy of the good." In order "To receive the full payout, the agreement needs support from at least 48 states, 98% of litigating local governments and 97% of the jurisdictions that have yet to sue."

The AP (7/21, Finley, Mulvihill) reports the distribution companies said in a statement: "While the companies strongly dispute the allegations made in these lawsuits, they believe the proposed settlement agreement and settlement process it establishes ... are important steps toward achieving broad resolution of governmental opioid claims and delivering meaningful relief to communities across the United States."

Record Numbers Of Children Suffer Overdoses From Consuming Edible Marijuana Gummies, Sweets.

The CBS Evening News^x (7/21, 6:41 p.m. ET, story 7, O'Donnell, 3.65M) reported that "gummies and other sweets containing" marijuana "are sending kids to emergency rooms in record numbers." CBS continued, "The number of children 12 and under who have ingested THC edibles at home jumped from 132 in 2016 to almost 2500 last year. Those requiring medical care jumped astronomically too." CBS said the surge comes as "more states around the country legalizing marijuana and as these edibles become more common in households with kids."

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

ONDCP Official Says More Reform Progress Needed Before Full Dues Paid To WADA.

The AP (7/22, Pells) reports an ONDCP official said the US government would like to see more reform progress before all owed dues are paid to the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA). During a Wednesday hearing, the ONDCP's Richard Baum said, "There have been some good conversations

in WADA about reform, but we still believe that in order to be comfortable with making the full payment, we'd like to see additional steps forward."

Reuters (7/21) does not mention the ONDCP in its coverage of Wednesday's hearing, which included testimony given by Jim Walden, an attorney who represents Russian doping whistleblower Grigory Rodchenkov. Speaking about the Rodchenkov Anti-Doping Act (RADA), Walden "said Congress could super-size RADA's impact if it uses its oversight authority to ensure the FBI and Justice Department have a complete plan and allocate sufficient resources to bring cases."

OTHER FBI NEWS

AG Garland Issues New Directive Limiting Contacts With The Executive Branch.

USA Today (7/21, Johnson, 12.7M) reports Attorney General Merrick Garland "issued a long-anticipated directive restricting Justice Department contact with the White House as a firewall against potential political interference" on Wednesday. The directive "marks a sharp pivot from the Trump era when the former president casually broke with institutional norms, repeatedly calling on the department to launch investigations of his political rivals, including President Joe Biden, Hillary Clinton and former FBI Director James Comey." Garland wrote, "Trust must be earned every day, and we can do so only through our adherence to the long-standing departmental norms of independence from inappropriate influences, the principled exercise of discretion and the treatment of like cases alike." He also "referred to necessary 'safeguards' that have regulated communications between Justice and the White House as 'designed to protect our criminal and civil law enforcement decisions, and our legal judgments from partisan or other inappropriate influences, whether real or perceived, direct or indirect.'"

The Wall Street Journal (7/21, Viswanatha, Subscription Publication, 8.41M) explains the guidelines underscore Garland's interest in shielding DOJ from the sort of problematic political influence that some believe occurred during the Trump Administration.

Reuters (7/21, Wolfe, Lynch) reports that Garland "said in a statement that the new policies further 'longstanding Departmental norms of independence from inappropriate influences' and 'the principled exercise of discretion.'" Reuters adds, "The new rules, which follow criticism of Justice Department actions under Republican former President Donald Trump, generally prohibit prosecutors from discussing pending or contemplated law enforcement investigations with White House officials, although there are exceptions for matters of national security, according to a memo released by the Justice Department."

WPost: Garland's New Rules Strike Proper Balance Between Rule Of Law, Free Press.

The Washington Post (7/21, 10.52M) editorializes that it "isn't easy for prosecutors to balance their need to pursue legitimate investigations, without which rule of law cannot survive, against journalists' need to develop sources and report news, without which a society cannot be free." The Post continues, Attorney General Merrick Garland "has formulated new rules that get the balance right." The Post explains that Garland's new policy "forbids prosecutors from going after reporters engaged in 'newsgathering activities'" – meaning the Department cannot use subpoenas "to try to determine journalists' sources, even if the case involves disclosure of classified information." But the policy also makes clear there are "no special restrictions on investigations of reporters under suspicion of unrelated crimes." The Post says, the Administration "should be credited for its prompt and well-considered response," but "because future administrations could rewrite" the new rules, lawmakers should take steps to "enshrine them into law."

FBI Agent In Whitmer Kidnap Plot Probe Allegedly Assaulted Wife After Swinger's Party.

The Detroit News (7/21, Brand-Williams, 1.16M) reports, "An FBI agent at the center of the investigation into the plot to kidnap and kill Gov. Gretchen Whitmer is accused of smashing his wife's head against a nightstand and choking her after a dispute stemming from their attendance

at a swingers' party, according to court records." According to the News, "Special Agent Richard Trask, 39, of Kalamazoo, was charged Monday with assault with intent to do great bodily harm, less than murder following the alleged incident Sunday. An affidavit filed by the Kalamazoo County Sheriff's Office in Kalamazoo County District Court said Trask's wife had bloody lacerations to the right side of her head and 'blood all over chest, clothing arms and hand,' as well as 'severe' bruising to her neck and throat."

The AP (7/21) reports from Kalamazoo, Michigan, "She ended the attack Sunday by grabbing Trask's groin, investigators said. Trask is charged with assault with intent to do great bodily harm less than murder. The FBI has declined to comment about his job status since Monday when he appeared in court and was released on bond."

MLive (MI) (7/21, Weidmayer, 828K) reports, "Blood was actively running down the side Trask's wife's head when police arrived at their home on North 10th Street in Oshtemo Township on July 18, the affidavit said." Trask "joined the FBI in 2011 as a special agent, according to his LinkedIn page. He is the lead agent in the case against the people accused of plotting to kidnap Gov. Gretchen Whitmer." Also reporting are the New York Post (7/21, Lungariello, 7.45M), WWJ-TV Detroit (7/21), and the Washington Examiner (7/21, Dima, 888K).

OTHER WASHINGTON NEWS

At Town Hall, Biden Says Pandemic Is Impacting The Unvaccinated.

CNN (7/21, Vazquez, Liptak, 89.21M) reports that the President "began the town hall event at Mount St. Joseph University by telling moderator Don Lemon that the current pandemic is one of the unvaccinated." The President said, "It's real simple. We have a pandemic for those who haven't gotten a vaccination. It's that basic," adding, "If you are vaccinated, you're not going to be hospitalized, you're not going to be in an ICU unit, and you're not going to die. So it's giantly important that we all act like Americans care about our fellow Americans."

The AP (7/21, Jaffe, Madhani) reports, President Biden "expressed pointed frustration" over "the slowing COVID-19 vaccination rate in the U.S. and pleaded that it's 'gigantically important' for Americans to step up and get inoculated against the virus as it surges once again." Biden said, "We have a pandemic for those who haven't gotten the vaccination — it's that basic, that simple." Reuters (7/21, Shalal) reports that the President added, "Ten thousand people have recently died. Nine thousand nine hundred and fifty of them, thereabouts, are people who hadn't been vaccinated." The President's message on vaccinations led both of the wire services' coverage of the town hall.

Following the town hall, on CNN's Anderson Cooper 360 (7/21, 886K), Dr. Leana Wen said, "I was actually disappointed by President Biden's...answers tonight because I actually thought he was answering questions as if it were a month ago. He's not really meeting the realities of what's happening on the ground. ... He was talking about how if you get the vaccine you're well-protected from having severe disease. That's true. But we actually don't know how well you're protected from mild illness, and whether with the delta variant if you're vaccinated could you still be contagious to other people?" However, David Axelrod said Biden's job "was to go in there and try and calm the country down a little and say there's an answer, the answer is to get vaccinated."

US COVID Cases Tripled Over Past Two Weeks. The AP (7/21, Hollingsworth, Salter) reports that, according to the latest John Hopkins University COVID data, new cases "tripled in the U.S. over two weeks amid an onslaught of vaccine misinformation that is straining hospitals, exhausting doctors and pushing clergy into the fray." The seven-day rolling average for new cases "rose...to more than 37,000 on Tuesday, up from less than 13,700 on July 6." The massive increase comes as federal vaccination efforts continue to stagnate with only an estimated 56.2 percent of Americans partially vaccinated. The CBS Evening News (7/21, 6:32 p.m. ET, story 1, 3.65M) reported that the CDC "is predicting that the rate of COVID deaths in the US will rise well into August" because nearly one-third of US counties "are experiencing a rapid spread of the virus." NBC Nightly News (7/21, 6:31 p.m. EST, lead story, 3:00, Snow, 4.8M) reported that the US now "sees a thousand new COVID infections every hour."

Doctors Warn Of Growing Number Of Young COVID Patients. NBC Nightly News (7/21, 6:34 p.m. EST, story 2, 1:49, Snow, 4.8M) reported that US hospitals are "seeing disturbing and eerily familiar scenes as they see an influx of COVID patients, most of them unvaccinated, most of them young." The segment focuses on the growing surge in South Carolina, where hospitalizations "have increased by 103% in less than a month."

ABC World News Tonight (7/21, 6:32 p.m. ET, story 1, Muir, 5.93M) reported that 23,000 new pediatric cases were "reported just in the past week," and it "[is] twice as many as we were seeing just a couple of weeks ago at the end of June." The growing infection rate among minors comes as the American Academy of Pediatrics is now "recommending masks for all children and adults in school even those who are vaccinated to protect everyone."

Meanwhile, CNN (7/21, Cole, 89.21M) reports that the President, at the CNN town hall on Wednesday night, said that children under the age of 12 could be eligible for the vaccine "soon." He predicted "that the government could green light the rollout for young Americans in the next few months."

White House, Biden Administration Officials Mulling Whether To Expand Mask Guidance. The Washington Post (7/21, A1, Linskey, Diamond, Pager, Sun, 10.52M) reports, "Top White House aides and Biden administration officials are debating whether they should urge vaccinated Americans to wear masks in more settings as the delta variant causes spikes in coronavirus infections across the country, according to six people familiar with the discussions." These debates "are in a preliminary phase and their result could be as simple as new messaging from top White House officials." However, "some of the talks include officials at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention who are separately examining whether to update their masking guidance, according to a Biden administration aide and a federal health official."

Analysis: White House Not Keeping Biden's Pledge To Be Transparent About COVID-19. CNN (7/21, Cillizza, 89.21M) reports that this week, Axios broke a story about "a White House aide [who] had tested positive for Covid-19 despite having been fully vaccinated against the virus." The article adds, "The White House had said nothing about it. Not a word – until after, of course, the news had been reported." This is problematic, given that "candidate Joe Biden bashed President Donald Trump on transparency during the 2020 campaign." Biden vowed "to be far BETTER than Trump on issues of transparency. And that matters when we are talking about people who work in and around the White House."

Biden Engaged In Battle Over COVID-19 Misinformation After Failing To Heed Calls For A Dedicated Czar Or Task Force.

Politico (7/21, Levine, 6.73M) reports President Biden failed to "heed pleas from activists and congressional Democrats last year that he put a dedicated czar or task force in charge of countering falsehoods about Covid vaccines – despite warnings that conspiracy theories about public health were creating 'tragic consequences.'" And now, the battle over "vaccination misinformation has become central to his administration's struggles to inoculate the vast majority of Americans, as vaccination rates plateau, the highly contagious Delta variant spreads and the specter of new lockdowns or mask mandates threatens the nation's return to normal life."

Henry Olsen writes in the Washington Post (7/21, 10.52M) that President Biden "is venturing into troubling territory as he attempts to push Facebook to censor anti-vaccination speech." While he "may be on the moral high ground on the facts of the issue," by "pursuing this strategy, he is posing a threat to the principles of the First Amendment." Biden "is correct that people who believe the falsehoods are harming themselves, perhaps even leading to their deaths. He's free to promote the opposite viewpoint far and wide, combating false speech with more speech. What he's not permitted to do is try to shut speech down." Olsen argues Biden "should immediately reverse course on his efforts to coerce Facebook to restrict speech. All Americans should take note if he doesn't."

Anti-Vaccine Groups Using Subterfuge To Counter Facebook Censorship. NBC Nightly News (7/21, 6:49 p.m. EST, story 9, 2:01, Snow, 4.8M) reported that anti-vaccine groups "are trying to stop Facebook from removing their posts by using code words and fake profile names related to dance." While Facebook "says it's working hard to fight misinformation,

removing 18 million COVID-19 falsehoods so far, this new tactic could make that tougher."

US Announces Extended Travel Restrictions For Mexico, Canada.

Reuters (7/21) reports that the Biden Administration "extended the closure of land borders with Canada and Mexico to non-essential travel such as tourism through Aug. 21 even as officials debate whether to require visitors to have received a COVID-19 vaccine." The latest extension, announced by DHS, "came after Canada announced on Monday it will start allowing in fully vaccinated U.S. visitors on Aug. 9 for non-essential travel after the COVID-19 pandemic forced a 16-month ban that many businesses have called crippling." The New York Times (7/21, Slotnik, Isai, Abi-Habib, 20.6M) reports White House press secretary Jen Psaki "told reporters on board Air Force One on Wednesday afternoon that 'we rely on the guidance of our health and medical experts, not the actions of other countries' to determine border security policy."

The Washington Post (7/21, 10.52M) reports Northern Border Caucus co-chair Rep. Brian Higgins (D-NY) "said he was 'infuriated' by the administration's decision, which he described as 'illogical given the success of vaccines and counterproductive.'" Politico (7/21, Blatchford, 6.73M) reports Higgins added, "It is time for the United States to align its border policy with the science, with the facts and with the data. Action is long overdue. Open the U.S. border to our Canadian neighbors."

Zients Reportedly Behind Continued Travel Restrictions. Politico (7/17, Kumar, Meyer, 6.73M) reports that the Biden Administration "is resisting lifting U.S. travel bans on a broad swath of foreign countries, despite a rising chorus of voices both inside and outside the Administration questioning whether they are still necessary in the fight against Covid-19." Critics "point to Jeff Zients, the coordinator of the White House's coronavirus pandemic response, as the main obstacle standing in the way of easing the longstanding restrictions, according to five people familiar with the matter."

CDC Investigating Role Of Unvaccinated Staff In Nursing Home Deaths.

The AP (7/21, Dearen, Alonso-Zaldivar) reports that the CDC is investigating nursing home deaths in Grand Junction, Colorado, and the investigation "raises concerns among public health doctors that successes in protecting vulnerable elders with vaccines could be in peril as the more aggressive delta variant spreads across the country." While fully vaccination rates among nursing home workers is near the national average at 59 percent, they lag behind the full vaccination rates for seniors, who have reached 80 percent. The agency "has not released the findings of its investigation publicly, but said it plans to publish the results in an upcoming Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report."

Senator Warren Called On The Biden Administration To Clarify "Contradictory Guidance" Regarding PPP Loans.

Politico (7/21, Sheehey, 6.73M) reports Sen. Elizabeth Warren (D-MA) "is pressing the Biden Administration to explain the extent to which accountants and lawyers who helped businesses receive aid under the Paycheck Protection Program may have been shortchanged for their services." She wrote a letter to the SBA on June 14, and she "raised concerns about 'contradictory guidance' from the agency that may have prevented businesses from receiving fees for helping employers file applications with banks for forgivable loans under the nearly \$1 trillion rescue program."

Treasury Department Reports Vast Majority Of Rent Assistance Appropriations Remains Unspent. Politico (7/21, O'Donnell, 6.73M) reports that, according to the Treasury Department, state and local officials "disbursed \$1.5 billion in federal rental assistance in June...bringing the total rental aid distributed over the first six months of the year to a little over \$3 billion — about 6.5 percent of the total aid Congress has allocated." The aid bottleneck "has become an urgent issue, with just 10 days left before expiration of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's nationwide moratorium on eviction for nonpayment of rent."

AAP Mask Recommendation Fueling New Debates In Arizona School Districts.

ABC World News Tonight® (7/21, 6:37 p.m. ET, story 2, Muir, 5.93M) reported that the American Academy of Pediatrics' decision to recommend masks for the upcoming school year has initiated a new series of debates in Arizona, where its school districts "opened their doors with no mask regulations in place leaving that decision up to parents." The decision comes as Arizona is "seeing a rise in daily infections," and new cases "have increased nearly 75 percent in the last week" in Maricopa County alone.

President Touts Infrastructure, Tours Union Training Center In Ohio Swing.

The New York Times (7/21, Tankersley, 20.6M) reports that President Biden flew to Cincinnati on Wednesday "to promote his economic agenda and participate in a town hall aired on CNN, even as a bipartisan infrastructure agreement he brokered failed its first formal test in the Senate." The President "toured a union training center, the I.B.E.W./N.E.C.A. Electrical Training Center."

As Biden toured the union training center WLWT-TV Cincinnati (7/21, 27K) reported, "It is sort of a Joe Biden-type of setting: labor leaders, workforce training." This "labor setting sort of this fits like a political glove with his Build Back America agenda. President Biden seeing job training up close at this IBEW electrical training center, where solar panels are made. ... It's a place that falls into his definition of infrastructure." Biden: "There is a reason why unions are the best. You're the best trained people in whatever field you are in. Nobody is as good. I really do mean it. You guys built the middle class. It's the reason there is one."

In its preview of the President's trip to Ohio, the Los Angeles Times (7/21, Hupka, 3.37M) reports that Biden's trip "comes at pivotal moment for Biden. His bipartisan infrastructure deal with a group of Republican senators has been bogged down in Congress as lawmakers haggle over the details of legislation to build and repair roads, bridges and water systems, expand broadband access and more, and how to pay for it all. His progress in the fight against the pandemic is threatened by the more contagious coronavirus variant."

Amid Controversy, No Clarity From Mount St. Joseph On Who Approved President's Appearance. The Cincinnati Enquirer (7/21, Wartman, 223K) reports that "no one seems to want the credit at Mount St. Joseph University for approving President Joe Biden's CNN Town Hall Wednesday night. Outrage spread quickly among anti-abortion groups and Catholics when news spread Monday and Tuesday that the Catholic university in Cincinnati's suburban Delhi Township would host Biden's nationally televised event." The Enquirer adds that "all a spokesperson for Mount St. Joseph would say is 'university leadership' approved the town hall. Those in university leadership contacted by The Enquirer didn't respond."

As part of its coverage, the Cincinnati Enquirer (7/21, DeLetter, 223K) reports on a lighter note that "hometown favorite Graeter's Ice Cream has seen its fair share of politicians and celebrities stop through its doors for a scoop while visiting Cincinnati. But during his visit Wednesday to the Queen City, President Joe Biden hasn't been one of them."

Biden Taps Friends, Fundraisers For Ambassadorships To Canada, Austria And Slovenia.

Reuters (7/21, Hunnicutt) reports that on Wednesday, President Biden "selected friends and campaign donors for a set of ambassador slots, including nominating a Comcast Corp adviser as the top U.S. diplomat in Canada." The President "picked David Cohen, a senior adviser to Comcast chief executive Brian Roberts and a key lobbyist for the media giant, to represent the United States in Ottawa." Biden also selected Victoria Kennedy, "a longtime friend, gun control activist and the widow of late Senator Ted Kennedy of Massachusetts, for the top U.S. ambassadorial post in Austria." Finally, the President "chose Jamie Harpootlian, the wife of another major campaign contributor and supporter, as his ambassador to Slovenia."

Politico (7/21, Gardner, Blatchford, 6.73M) reports that Cohen, if confirmed, "would take over the job in Ottawa at a time of stronger ties between the White House and Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's office," following "four tumultuous years in the relationship under the Trump administration." The piece adds that Cohen will face a number of challenges on trade and economic matters.

Looking at the selections, the Washington Post (7/21, Pager, 10.52M) reports Biden "has continued the tradition of rewarding longtime friends and donors with foreign postings, even as the

White House has vowed to nominate a more diverse group of people and have a higher percentage of career Foreign Service officers serve as ambassadors than in previous administrations."

Republicans Demand Spending Cuts To Offset Debt Ceiling Hike.

The Washington Post (7/21, Romm, Min Kim, DeBonis, 10.52M) reports Senate Republicans "threatened" Wednesday "to vote against an increase to the debt ceiling unless Congress first agrees to new spending cuts or other measures, raising the potential for a major political showdown that could carry vast implications for both the global economy as well as President Biden's agenda." The "Republican threats arrived only 10 days before a current agreement that suspends the debt ceiling is set to expire."

The Hill (7/21, Jagoda, 5.69M) reports the CBO forecasted Wednesday "that the Treasury Department would most likely run out of cash in October or November absent congressional action on the debt limit." Roll Call (7/21, Lerman, 130K) says "the CBO also cautioned that the Treasury could run out of cash either earlier or later than it projects, depending on the timing and size of revenue collection and spending in the coming months."

Reuters (7/21) says "failure to work out differences over whether government spending cuts should accompany an increase in the statutory debt limit, currently set at \$28.5 trillion, could lead to a federal government shutdown...or even a debt default." The White House called on Congress "to resolve partisan differences." White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki told reporters, "We expect Congress to act in a timely manner to raise or suspend the debt ceiling as they did three times on a broad bipartisan basis during the last administration."

Politico (7/21, Emma, Scholtes, 6.73M) reports if Congress doesn't address the debt limit, "Democrats say the fallout will be [Senate Minority Leader] McConnell's fault." Politico says "top Democrats" accused McConnell "of plotting to hold the economy hostage after McConnell said he doesn't expect any Republican senators to vote to prevent the U.S. government from defaulting on its loans in the coming weeks."

President: Long-Term Inflation Not Likely To "Get Out Of Hand."

At his CNN town hall on Wednesday night, the AP (7/21, Jaffe, Madhani) reports, Biden was asked about inflation. He "acknowledged 'there will be near-term inflation' as the economy rebounds from the pandemic but said it was 'highly unlikely long-term inflation will get out of hand.'" Similarly, in its coverage of the town hall, Reuters (7/21, Shalal) reports that Biden added, "The vast majority of the experts, including Wall Street, are suggesting that it's highly unlikely that it's going to be long-term inflation that's going to get out of hand."

CNN (7/21, Liptak, 89.21M) reports in its takeaways from the event that the President "delivered somewhat unwelcome economic news in two separate answers. He acknowledged current price increases were real when questioned about an overheating economy. And he frankly told a restaurant chain owner that he'll continue to struggle hiring workers for the foreseeable future -- and suggested the restaurant owner raise wages." It "was some tough economic love."

Stock Selloff Indicates Investors More Concerned About Slow Growth Than Inflation. The Wall Street Journal (7/21, Goldfarb, Subscription Publication, 8.41M) reports the stock selloff Monday is an indication of growing investor concern that slow growth, rather than inflation, poses the greatest risks to markets right now. Many investors believe inflation will continue to be high then decline on its own or prompt the Fed to increase rates.

Air Force, Navy Leaders Defend Plans To Retire Nearly \$3B Worth Of Planes, Ships.

Roll Call (7/21, Clevenger, 130K) reports Air Force and Navy leaders told the Senate Appropriations Defense Subcommittee on Wednesday that "retiring almost \$3 billion worth of planes and ships is driven by both the need to invest in future capabilities and to get rid of equipment well past its service life." The Air Force "is seeking to divest \$1.37 billion worth of equipment in fiscal 2022," while the Navy "wants to retire \$1.26 billion in assets." Roll Call says lawmakers "are leery of being caught unprepared if a sudden conflict emerges in order to finance the needs of a potential future one. Additionally, members of Congress tend to favor existing

programs that produce reliable, good-paying jobs in their states and districts, even if the Pentagon says it no longer needs the end product."

Analysts Believe Delta Variant Will Not Hurt Economic Recovery.

The Wall Street Journal (7/21, Morath, Omeokwe, Subscription Publication, 8.41M) reports analysts do not anticipate that the Delta variant of COVID will hurt the economic recovery. The Journal says analysts expect the current expansion to continue into the second half of this year.

FTC Moves To Make It Easier To Repair Smartphones, Other Devices.

The Wall Street Journal (7/21, Tracy, Subscription Publication, 8.41M) reports the FTC is seeking to give consumers more power to repair devices such as smartphones and appliances. The commission on Wednesday voted unanimously to increase targeting of manufacturers if it is determined repair restrictions are illegal.

At Town Hall, Biden Says Dreamers Should Be Able To Stay In US.

Among its takeaways from the President's town hall on Wednesday, USA Today (7/21, Morin, 12.7M) reports that Biden "offered his support to Dreamers...moments after telling new migrants to not come to the United States." Biden said of "Dreamers," "They come here with really no choice, and they're here and they're good, good people. They should be able to stay in the United States of America."

Harris To Meet With Dreamers In Wake Of Court Ruling Against DACA. Univision Noticias (7/21) reports Vice President Harris "will meet this Thursday with 11 members of organizations and DACA recipients to assess the impact of a Texas judge's decision, which on Friday suspended the issuance of new permits for the Deferred Action Program for Arrivals in the Childhood (DACA)." The meeting "is expected to take place at 11:45 am in the ceremonial office of the Vice President. DACA beneficiaries will attend, those seeking to join Deferred Action and representatives of the movement." A spokesman said the Vice President is going to "exalt the urgent need for Congress to pass a path to citizenship."

Politico (7/21, Rodríguez, 6.73M) quotes a "senior White House official" as saying, "The president and her are fighting for them. That's the topline message. ... But they, above all, need Congress to create a pathway to citizenship and that has to happen as soon as possible, which is why they've called for this to happen through reconciliation or other means."

Secretary Vilsack Defends Immigrant Farmworker Programs In Senate Hearing.

Roll Call (7/21, Monyak, 130K) reports Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack "batted back attacks from Republicans on the Biden Administration's border policies while discussing migrant farmworker programs at a Wednesday hearing, where Sen. Ted Cruz called Vilsack's view on immigration 'fertilizer.'" The Senate Judiciary Committee hearing focused on "creating an earned pathway to citizenship for migrant farmworkers," but Republican members "said they would not support such legislation without first ramping up border security." Vilsack "defended the immigration portions of the proposed legislation, known as the Farm Workforce Modernization Act, pushing back against claims that a process allowing farmworkers to apply for U.S. citizenship after paying a \$1,000 penalty fee is 'amnesty.'"

President Opposes Doing Away With Filibuster In Its Entirety.

The Washington Post (7/21, 10.52M) reports that during his town hall on Wednesday, President Biden "said he supports bringing back the 'talking filibuster' but remains opposed to doing away with the Senate rule entirely, warning that doing so would 'throw the entire Congress into chaos.'" Biden said, "I've been saying for a long, long time, the abuse of the filibuster is pretty overwhelming," adding, "I would go back to that, where you have to maintain the floor. You have to stand there and talk and hold the floor."

The New York Times (7/21, Karni, 20.6M) says that the President "defended the filibuster," Biden "rejected the idea that overturning or changing the filibuster was the only way he would pass

his agenda through a divided Congress." He said, "I'm trying to bring the country together. And I don't want the debate to only be about whether or not we have a filibuster, or exception to the filibuster, or going back to the way the filibuster had to be used before."

CNN (7/21, Liptak, 89.21M) reports at the top of its takeaways from the event that while the President was "confronted with open skepticism by some of his questioners, particularly on the matter of voting rights," he "plodded ahead, elevating his belief in bipartisanship as nothing less than a quest to prove Democracy can work."

On CNN's Anderson Cooper 360 (7/21, 979K), Van Jones said that "three challenges I think Joe Biden has and Democrats have, inflation, crime and COVID. Those are the three big threats. ... On inflation I thought he gave a good answer. I hope it's temporary. But on the crime question he went into the gun control argument, which nobody believes he's going to get anything done about. And on the COVID question I think he's strong. But for me there's pain and panic at the base of this party over voting, and I don't think [Biden] had great answers."

Over 30 Former Senate Chiefs Of Staff Call For Changes To Filibuster Rules. The New York Times (7/21, Hulse, 20.6M) reports that "more than 30 former chiefs of staff to Democratic senators have written an open letter calling for 'repeal or reform'" of the Senate filibuster which "they say no longer serves its original purpose." While the "31 signers of the letter, who worked for more than 25 current and former Democratic lawmakers, conceded that they and their former bosses had embraced the filibuster in the past," they "argued that the maneuver is now being abused as a blunt-force instrument to stall most legislation." The Times quotes Eric Mogilnicki, a chief of staff to former Senators Edward M. Kennedy and Paul Kirk of Massachusetts, as saying, "Many of us stood shoulder to shoulder with our former bosses when they filibustered legislation, and it was a valuable tool." ... "But it shouldn't be that overwhelming the filibuster is the only way to pass legislation."

President Decries Conspiracy Theories: "This Is Not Who We Are."

CNN (7/21, LeBlanc, 89.21M) reports that President Biden, speaking at the town hall in Ohio on Wednesday night, "raised the alarm about conspiracy theories flourishing in the US and dividing the nation, warning that 'the rest of the world's wondering about us.'" Biden "said the US has 'got to get beyond this' moment after referencing the QAnon conspiracy theory and the role of misinformation in sowing division and unfounded fears over the Covid-19 vaccine." The President said, "This is not who we are."

Scientists Warn Countries Must Learn From German Flooding To Prepare For Climate Change Events.

The Wall Street Journal (7/21, Pancevski, Subscription Publication, 8.41M) reports that climate scientists are calling on the international community to recognize the risks associated with climate changed-linked extreme weather events after unpredicted flooding killed 170 in Germany last week. However, scientists also "say it can be hard to identify the cause of specific extreme events," and the article adds that zero studies have found a link between climate change and extreme weather patterns.

NBC Nightly News (7/21, 6:37 p.m. EST, story 4, 2:51, Snow, 4.8M) reported NASA Jet Propulsion Laboratory Climate Scientist Kerry Cawse-Nicholson said of extreme climate events, "The long-term impacts of climate change are largely unknown. And so, we do expect increased heat and increased incidents of fire, but what's important is to monitor these changes so we can be prepared for future impacts." Yet, scientists "say greenhouse gases must be reduced as a start to the solution."

Wildfire Smoke Impacting Weather In The US. The New York Times (7/21, Popovich, Katz, 20.6M) reports that Canadian and Western US wildfire smoke "stretched across North America this week, covering skies in a thick haze, tinting the sun a malevolent red and triggering health alerts from Toronto to Philadelphia." The smoke has degraded the EPA's air quality index in the Midwest and the East Coast, where numbers were "hovering around 130 to 160 in New York City, a range where members of sensitive groups and the general public may experience adverse health effects."

California Pacific Gas And Electric Announces Plan To Bury 10K Miles Of Power Lines. CBS Evening News (7/21, 6:37 p.m. ET, story 4, O'Donnell, 3.65M) reported that California's Pacific Gas and Electric "pledged to bury 10,000 miles of its power lines after its equipment possibly touched off the Dixie Fire." The plan "is being described as the largest infrastructure project in California history."

Analysis: Climate Change Is Playing A "Prominent Role" In Extreme Weather Events. The New York Times (7/21, 20.6M) examines the recent array of extreme weather events both in the United States and across the world, and the article says that climate change "has played a prominent role in many of the extreme weather conditions this summer." The article reviews extreme weather phenomena, which have killed hundreds so far this year.

White House Outlines Environmental Justice Implementation Plans.

Axios (7/21, Geman, 1.26M) reports that the White House is "laying out initial steps to implement its pledge to ensure at least 40% of the benefits from federal clean energy and climate investments flow to disadvantaged communities." Axios says that on Tuesday, officials "released 'interim guidance' for federal agencies about steps they should take to define the effort and meet that benchmark. It also names 21 existing federal programs that will pilot the implementation of the effort. They address flood mitigation, weatherization, drinking water infrastructure, diesel emissions reduction and more."

House Approves Bill To Set Deadline For EPA Limits On "Forever Chemicals."

The Los Angeles Times (7/21, Wire, 3.37M) reports that on Wednesday, "the House...approved a bill setting deadlines for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to implement drinking water regulations for so-called forever chemicals." Similar legislation had previously passed the House in 2020, but "stalled in the Senate." The Times explains that the bill "orders the EPA to designate" certain perfluoroalkyl and polyfluoroalkyl substances, commonly called PFAS, "as hazardous air and water pollutants, and set drinking water regulations for their use within two years of the bill becoming law." The Times continues, PFAS "are widely used, man-made compounds that are found in manufacturing and consumer products like Scotchguard, flame-resistant materials, nonstick cooking surfaces and firefighting foam used on military bases since the 1940s." While the chemicals "have been found in water wells throughout California and thousands of water sources across the country," the EPA "has only established a non-enforceable health advisory level on the compounds in drinking water."

Federal Judge Blocks Arkansas Ban On Nearly All Abortions.

The New York Times (7/21, Cramer, 20.6M) reports US District Judge Kristine Baker on Tuesday "temporarily blocked Arkansas from enforcing a strict new law that would ban nearly all abortions, a decision that comes as many states with Republican-controlled legislatures are trying to force the issue before a newly reshaped Supreme Court." The Washington Post (7/21, Pietsch, 10.52M) says Baker, "responding to the challenge brought by advocates of abortion rights, wrote that bans on abortions before a fetus is considered viable are 'categorically unconstitutional.'"

Judge Temporarily Blocks Arkansas Ban On Treatments For Transgender Youth.

The New York Times (7/21, Lukpat, Paz, 20.6M) reports US District Judge James Moody on Wednesday "temporarily blocked Arkansas's ban on gender-confirming treatments for transgender youths as a lawsuit over the first-in-the-nation state law advances." Moody's decision "came in response to a legal challenge by the American Civil Liberties Union, which sought a preliminary injunction blocking the law enacted by Republican state legislators in April." The law banning "sex reassignment surgery and gender-confirming treatments, like hormone treatment and puberty-blocking medication, was set to take effect on July 28." Reuters (7/21) reports Arkansas Attorney General Leslie Rutledge "said she would appeal the decision to a higher court."

Pennsylvania Decertifies County's Voting System After Audit Pushed By Pro-Trump Senators.

The Washington Post (7/21, 10.52M) reports Pennsylvania's Acting Secretary of State Veronica W. Degraffenreid "has decertified a county's voting system for future elections after it was subjected to a review by a private company in an effort promoted by a group of state senators supporting former president Donald Trump's baseless claims of widespread fraud in the 2020 election." Degraffenreid "said in a statement Wednesday that Wake TSI's examination of the Fulton County ballots earlier this year violated the state's election code." According to the statement, Fulton County officials allowed Wake TSI "to access certain key components of its certified system, including the county's election database, results files, and Windows systems logs. The county officials also allowed the company to use a system imaging tool to take complete hard drive images of these computers and other digital equipment." The statement called Wake TSI "a company with no knowledge or expertise in election technology."

9/11 Museum Struggling Amid Pandemic.

NBC Nightly News (7/21, 6:51 p.m. EST, story 10, 1:45, Snow, 4.8M) reported, "In less than two months, the country will pause on the 20th anniversary of 9/11," but the "9/11 Memorial and Museum is struggling to continue its mission." Alice Greenwald, head of the National September 11 Memorial and Museum, said that with the pandemic, "our business model collapsed overnight." NBC (Ellis) added, "The head of the 9/11 Memorial and Museum said its revenue comes mostly from ticket sales, which plummeted nearly \$45 million last year. Despite federal PPE and increased efforts, there were cutbacks in staff, programs and visiting hours."

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

WHO Director-General Warns New Global COVID Wave Is Approaching.

Axios (7/21, Gonzalez, 1.26M) reports WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus has "warned that the world is in the early stages of another wave of coronavirus infections and deaths." He made the comments in an IOC meeting, where he said that the global pandemic response "has led to a 'two-track pandemic – the haves are opening up, while the have-nots are locking down." He said, "The pandemic will end when the world chooses to end it. It's in our hands ... We have all the tools we need: we can prevent this disease, we can test for it, and we can treat it." CNBC (7/21, Choudhury, 7.34M) reports Tedros added, "This is not just a moral outrage, it's also epidemiologically and economically self-defeating."

UK Testing Limits Of COVID Mandate Relaxation Efforts. The Wall Street Journal (7/21, A1, Douglas, Subscription Publication, 8.41M) reports that the UK, which lifted nearly all of its COVID restrictions on Monday, is increasingly under observation by other advanced economies as to whether well-vaccinated countries "can enjoy something approaching pre-pandemic life in the face of fast transmitting versions of the virus." The decision comes as the UK is facing a new COVID surge, reporting an estimated 50,000 new cases per day.

Public Health Officials Warn Against Loosening COVID Mandates. The New York Times (7/21, A1, Wee, 20.6M) reports that public health experts "warn that it may be too soon to design exit strategies for the pandemic" as a growing pool of international officials "are encouraging people to return to their daily rhythms and transition to a new normal." While political officials are increasingly urging, "We have to learn to live with the virus," the emergence of new variants "means that even wealthy nations with abundant vaccines, including the United States, remain vulnerable." The Times focuses on Singapore, which "announced plans to gradually ease restrictions and chart a path to the other side of the pandemic." Yet, Delta's rapid spread has challenged this approach, and the country has "announced a tightening of measures, including banning all dine-in service."

USAID Reportedly Struggling To Pay For US Vaccine Export Program.

Politico (7/21, Banco, 6.73M) reports that while the Biden Administration "announced last month that the United States would become an 'arsenal of vaccines' – sending hundreds of millions of doses abroad to help save the world from Covid-19," USAID "is scrambling to figure out how to

pay for them" because of ongoing bureaucratic challenges that leave it over \$1 billion short. The agency is now "considering whether to ask lawmakers for the full \$1.5 billion in supplemental funding," The incident "points to a growing sense of frustration at the agency at a time when the Biden Administration has begun positioning the U.S. as a leader in the global pandemic response."

Pan American Health Organization Warns Latin American Unvaccinated Population Is Fueling New Wave.

Reuters (7/21) reports that the Pan American Health Organization "warned that countries with low inoculation rates are seeing increases in COVID-19 and repeated a call for vaccine donations." PAHO Director Carissa Etienne said, "We face a pandemic of the unvaccinated, and the only way to stop it is to expand vaccination." She added, "Vaccines are critical, even if no vaccine is 100% effective." The warning comes as only 15 percent of Latin Americans and Caribbean residents "have been fully vaccinated."

US Olympic Team Reports Additional COVID Infection.

ABC World News Tonight^s (7/21, 6:39 p.m. ET, story 3, Muir, 5.93M) reported that a second US Olympic athlete has been confirmed to have COVID, and it comes as "nearly 80 people inside the Olympic bubble [are] testing positive." USA Volleyball is "stating that 'in alignment with local rules and protocols, the athlete has been transferred to a hotel.'" The CBS Evening News^s (7/21, 6:39 p.m. ET, story 5, O'Donnell, 3.65M) reported Taylor Crabb "reportedly tested positive after landing in Tokyo, bringing to five the total number of Americans knocked out of the Olympics by the virus."

NBC Nightly News^s (7/21, 6:43 p.m. EST, story 7, 2:02, Snow, 4.8M) provided additional coverage.

Dubai's Ruler Reportedly Used NSO's Pegasus To Thwart Princess's Bid For Freedom.

The Washington Post (7/21, 10.52M) reports, as part of its "Pegasus Investigation," that in 2018, Princess Latifa bint Mohammed al-Maktoum, "the 32-year-old daughter of Dubai's fearsome ruler," attempted to flee and apply for political asylum in the US, "but there was one threat she hadn't planned for: The spyware tool Pegasus, which her father's government was known to have used to secretly hack and track people's phones. Leaked data shows that...eight days into her escape, operatives had entered the numbers of her closest friends and allies into a system that had also been used for selecting Pegasus surveillance targets." According to the Post, "Their numbers appear on a list that includes phones targeted for surveillance with Pegasus, the hacking tool from the Israeli spyware giant NSO Group, amid the sprint to track her down."

Meanwhile, in another piece, the Washington Post (7/21, Dwoskin, Rubin, 10.52M) reports that NSP group co-found Shalev Hulio defended his firm in the wake of the allegations reported by the Post and other outlets. Hulio told them, "There is one thing I want to say: We built this company to save life. Period." He added, "I think there is not enough education about what a national security or intelligence organization needs to do every day in order to give, you know, basic security to their citizens. And all we hear is this campaign that we are violating human rights, and it's very upsetting. Because I know how much life has been saved globally because of our technology. But I cannot talk about it."

Reuters: Israel Sets Up Team Looking Into NSO Group. Reuters (7/21, Williams) reports that Israel "has set up a senior inter-ministerial team to look into growing allegations" that spyware sold by NSO Group "has been abused on a global scale, an Israeli source said on Wednesday, while adding that an export review was unlikely." The team "is headed by Israel's National Security Council, which answers to Prime Minister Naftali Bennett and has broader areas of expertise than the Defence Ministry, which oversees exports of NSO Group's Pegasus software, the source said."

New York City Announces Additional Signatories For Sustainable Development Goals Campaign.

Reuters (7/21) reports that New York City's International Affairs Commissioner Penny Abeywardena announced new progress for its campaign to increase adoption of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals. Abeywardena said, "It's been this interesting wave over this last year of the way that we're able to support and provide information and guidance and policy suggestions." 332 local governments, which represent countries across the world, "have backed a New York City-led campaign to address global goals tackling poverty, inequality, injustice and climate change and pledged to report their progress to the United Nations."

State Department: US Exploring Sanctions Against Cuba Over Protest Crackdown.

Reuters (7/21) reports that the Administration is "exploring sanctions on Cuban government officials following Havana's crackdown on protesters in the island nation, the U.S. State Department said on Wednesday." State Department spokesperson Ned Price told reporters, "The Treasury Department's Office of Foreign Assets Control is exploring designating Cuban officials responsible for violence, repression, human rights violations against those peaceful protesters."

Levy: Mayorkas Should Welcome Cuban Refugees. Republican National Committee member Leora Levy argues in the Wall Street Journal (7/21, Levy, Subscription Publication, 8.41M) that DHS Secretary Mayorkas, a childhood friend, should do better to support the Cuban people, who have been "risking their lives by fighting to liberate themselves from the communist Castro regime," and she defends her criticism by basing it in her personal connections to the Mayorkas family. She calls on President Biden and Secretary Mayorkas retract their earlier messages, which told Cubans to abandon any plans to flee to the US, and to replace them with messages "express[ing] unwavering support for the Cuban people."

Haitian Political Crisis Ensnarers Washington Lobbyists.

The New York Times (7/21, A1, Vogel, Kitroeff, 20.6M) reports that the "struggle for power in Haiti after the assassination of the country's president has spilled onto K Street, where rival Haitian politicians, business leaders and interest groups are turning to lobbyists to wage an expensive and escalating proxy battle for influence with the United States." The Times says, "Documents, interviews and communications among Haitian politicians and officials show a scramble across a wide spectrum of Haitian interests to hire lobbyists and consultants in Washington and use those already on their payrolls in the hopes of winning American backing in a period of leadership turmoil in Haiti." The Times explains these lobbyists, who come from firms such as Mercury Public Affairs – "which was paid at least \$285,000 in the second half of last year by the Haitian government" – are working with "allied politicians to position successors in the wake of the assassination." In addition to Mercury, "Haiti's government is paying a total of \$67,000 a month to three other lobbyists or their firms, some of which have retained additional lobbyists under subcontracts."

Op-Ed: Public Should Remain Cognizant Of Troubling History Between US, Haiti. In an op-ed for the New York Times (7/21, Gordon-Reed, 20.6M), Annette Gordon-Reed, a professor of law and of history at Harvard, writes that when "assassins killed President Jovenel Moise of Haiti on July 7, pushing the country to the brink of chaos, it may have struck many Americans as the latest in a string of political upheavals and destabilizing disasters in an unfortunate country with which the United States should have little to do. But the revelation that two of the suspects were American citizens was a reminder of the complicated history of our relations with Haiti – a needlessly tragic history, driven by self-interest and the politics of racism." Gordon-Reed says, "As the United States now offers to help Haiti restore political order, it should be kept squarely in mind that Haiti is more than just a troubled neighbor. It is a nation whose revolutionary fight for freedom helped make the United States the country that it is today."

Sherman: US, Japan And SKorea Are United On Taiwanese Sovereignty, NKorean Threat.

Bloomberg (7/21, Reynolds, 3.57M) reports that on Wednesday in Tokyo, Deputy Secretary of State Wendy Sherman "discussed preserving peace in the Taiwan Strait with her Japanese and South Korean counterparts, prompting China to accuse Tokyo and Washington of forging confrontational blocs." Chinese Foreign Ministry Spokesman Zhao Lijian said, "Whether it is issues

related to Hong Kong, Taiwan, or Xinjiang, these are all China's internal affairs and brook no foreign interference. The U.S. and Japan have been adhering to a Cold War mentality, deliberately foster confrontation by creating blocs, and trying to create anti-China encirclement."

Reuters (7/21, Park) reports that also while in Tokyo, Sherman said the "close coordination" between the US, Japan and South Korea "sends a very critical message to North Korea in that we are together and shoulder-to-shoulder in our approach to this policy." Likewise, Japan's vice foreign minister, Takeo Mori, "said the trilateral cooperation with the United States was crucial for the denuclearisation of North Korea. 'North Korea's next move is unpredictable,' Mori said."

Axios (7/21, Basu, 1.26M) reports that the State Department announced on Wednesday that Sherman "will visit Tianjin, China, on July 25-26 to meet with Chinese government officials, including State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi." According to Axios, Sherman "will become the highest-ranking Biden administration official to visit China, just days after the U.S. and its allies accused Chinese state-sponsored actors of carrying out massive cyberattacks all over the world." The AP (7/21) reports that "senior U.S. officials would not confirm suggestions that the Chinese had initially offered only lower-level officials for Sherman to meet. But they said the Biden administration would not have agreed to the visit unless they were assured Sherman would be able to see top-ranking officials in person." Bloomberg (7/21, 3.57M) and CNBC (7/21, Macias, 7.34M) have more on Sherman's travels in Asia.

Boot: US Needs To Do More To Deter Chinese Action Against Taiwan. Max Boot writes in the Washington Post (7/21, 10.52M) that China "has the actual, no-kidding capacity to blockade Taiwan." This "would be a nightmare scenario not only for Taipei but also for Washington." The 1979 Taiwan Relations Act "doesn't pledge the United States to defend Taiwan. Would the United States be willing to risk war with another nuclear-armed superpower?" Boot argues, "if we want to avert that dire contingency, we need to work harder to deter China." The US "needs to remove the ambiguity about whether it would come to Taiwan's defense. ... President Biden should declare that, though we will not support a Taiwanese declaration of independence from China, we will defend the island if it is attacked." In addition, we "need to build up a more credible deterrent. ... We won't be able to effectively deter a Chinese lunge at Taiwan until we do more to transform our military."

Kerry Pressures China On Climate, But Won't Commit To Tax On Polluter Nations.

CNBC (7/21, Frangoul, 7.34M) reports that in a speech Tuesday in London, US Climate Envoy John Kerry "sought to emphasize the magnitude of the challenge facing the planet." According to CNBC, Kerry "issued a stark warning on climate change, saying the suffering brought about by" the COVID pandemic "would be 'magnified many times over in a world that does not grapple with, and ultimately halt, the climate crisis.'" He also "called on China to do more." Kerry is quoted as saying, "As a large country, an economic leader and now the largest driver of climate change, China absolutely can help lead the world to success by peaking and starting to reduce emissions early during this critical decade of 2020 to 2030.' ... 'The truth is there's no alternative, because without sufficient reduction by China, together with the rest of us, the goal of 1.5 degrees is essentially impossible.'"

Bloomberg (7/21, Dlouhy, Lacqua, Follain, 3.57M) adds that during in interview in Rome on Wednesday, "U.S. envoy John Kerry said" the Biden Administration "hasn't decided whether to impose a tariff on carbon-intensive imports from China and other countries as a way to fight climate change...even as he urged Beijing to slash greenhouse gas emissions and shut down coal plants." The Administration "is evaluating a potential carbon border adjustment amid concerns it could inflame already fraught trade tensions, Kerry said."

Flooding In China Leaves Dozens Dead, Displaces Over One Million.

ABC World News Tonight^{*} (7/21, 6:49 p.m. ET, story 8, Muir, 5.93M) reported flooding in China has forced "more than a million people...from their homes" and left "at least 25" dead. NBC Nightly News^{*} (7/21, 6:40 p.m. EST, story 5, 1:18, Snow, 4.8M) said, "Dozens are dead in China...after unprecedented flooding brought on by torrential rain, some losing their lives in subways as they filled with water." NBC continued that as "nearly a year's worth of rain fell in

three days," China's army is scrambling "to shore up dams, now at risk of bursting."

The AP (7/21) continues that on Tuesday night, "China's military...blasted a dam to release floodwaters threatening" the residents of Henan – one of the country's most heavily populated provinces. The "dam operation was carried out...in the city of Luoyang, just as severe flooding overwhelmed" the city of Zhengzhou, Henan's provincial capital, "trapping residents in the subway system and stranding them at schools, apartments and offices."

Administration Announced Nord Stream 2 Deal To Bipartisan Criticism.

The AP (7/21) reports that the US and German have "reached a deal" that will allow the completion of the "controversial" Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline "without the imposition of further U.S. sanctions, a senior U.S. official said Wednesday." The project "has posed a major foreign policy dilemma for the Biden administration. U.S. officials from both parties have long feared that it would give Russia too much power over European gas supplies," but the pipeline "is almost completed and the U.S. has been determined to rebuild ties with Germany that were damaged during the Trump administration."

Reuters (7/21, Shalal, Lewis) reports that the pact "aims to mitigate what critics see as the strategic dangers of the \$11 billion pipeline, now 98% complete, being built under the Baltic Sea to carry gas from Russia's Arctic region to Germany." The deal "aims to impose costs on Russia to prevent it from using the pipeline to harm Ukraine or other countries in the region." Sen. Ted Cruz (R-TX), a vocal opponent of the pipeline, said that the agreement would be "a generational geopolitical win for Putin and a catastrophe for the United States and our allies."

The Washington Post (7/21, 10.52M) says that the deal is "ending a heated dispute between the two allies that overlapped three successive U.S. administrations." In exchange for not blocking the pipeline, Germany "will invest in Ukraine's green technology infrastructure and Berlin and Washington will work together on other initiatives to mitigate Russia's energy dominance in Europe." The move, however, "drew immediate criticism from Russia hawks in Congress who hoped" the US could find a way to block the progress.

The New York Times (7/21, Jakes, Erlanger, 20.6M) says the Administration's move "was effectively an acknowledgment that the pipeline project was too far advanced to stop, and that relations with Germany, a crucial ally, were too important to jeopardize over the dispute." However, "it infuriated Republicans and Democrats in Congress who have demanded the use of economic penalties to halt the pipelines, and on Wednesday accused the administration of being soft on Russia."

In a piece featuring much criticism of the deal, Politico (7/21, Desiderio, Ward, 6.73M) reports that the President is "facing bipartisan backlash" to the agreement. Sen. Tim Kaine (D-VA), for example, said, "I'm not happy about it. I'm not happy about it in terms of the Russia politics, and I'm not happy about it in terms of climate change." Sen. Jeanne Shaheen (D-NH), who co-authored the sanctions regime, "said she was 'skeptical that [the agreement] will be sufficient when the key player at the table — Russia — refuses to play by the rules.'" Similarly, the Wall Street Journal (7/21, Subscription Publication, 8.41M) reports the deal drew concern from lawmakers on both sides of the aisle.

In an editorial entitled, "Tough Biden Talk, Little Action," the Wall Street Journal (7/21, Subscription Publication, 8.41M) says that the decision to allow the pipeline and the lack of sanctions following the accusations of cyber-malfeasance against China earlier this week suggest that the Administration is willing to talk tough, but follow up with diplomacy that actually has minimal impact.

Zelensky Coming To White House On August 30. Meanwhile, Politico (7/21, Forgey, 6.73M) reports that Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky "will meet" with President Biden on August 30 "in Washington, D.C., the White House announced on Wednesday."

UK Demands Renegotiation Of Brexit Deal's Critical Northern Ireland Clauses.

The Wall Street Journal (7/21, Norman, Subscription Publication, 8.41M) reports that UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson is seeking to renegotiate parts of the Brexit deal that relate to Northern Ireland. The Journal explains Johnson's government believes the Brexit agreement is interfering in

trade between Northern Ireland and the rest of the United Kingdom.

Germany Announces \$470M In Flood Aid.

The Washington Post (7/21, 10.52M) reports that the German government "approved \$470 million in immediate aid for flood victims on Wednesday as it assessed the mammoth task of rebuilding infrastructure torn apart by floodwaters last week." German Finance Minister Olaf Scholz said, "If it becomes the case that more is needed, then we will make more funds available." Germany has yet to finalize the total damage cost, but the Ministry of Transport and Digital Infrastructure said that rail infrastructure will need \$1.6 billion to repair alone.

McFaul: US Will Not Succeed In Disrupting Sino-Russian Relationship.

In his column for the Washington Post (7/21, 10.52M), Michael McFaul writes that while President Biden is right to make competition with China "his top foreign policy priority," the Administration should be wary of attempting to repeat the successful Cold War strategy of "prying Russia from China." McFaul continues, "The current Sino-Russian partnership is worrying, and the impulse to view all other foreign policy issues through the U.S.-China bilateral lens is tempting. But this particular Cold War play won't work today." McFaul argues that among the strategy's many problems, "closer relations with a Russian autocrat to help contain a Chinese autocrat will undermine Biden's aspiration to unite the free world, about which he has spoken so passionately in the last six months." McFaul concludes, "Someday, the United States should seek deeper partnership with Russia in containing and competing with China. But that policy should be initiated with a democratic Russia, not an autocratic Putin."

Milley: Despite "Strategic Momentum," Taliban Takeover Of Afghanistan Is Still "Not A Foregone Conclusion."

Politico (7/21, Seligman, 6.73M) reports that at the Pentagon on Wednesday, Gen. Mark Milley, chair of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, "expressed confidence in the Afghan security forces' ability to fend off a takeover by the Taliban, despite significant gains by the group across the country and reports that Kabul could fall in a matter of months." Politico quotes Milley as saying, "I don't think the end game is yet written. ... A negative outcome, a Taliban automatic takeover, is not a foregone conclusion."

At the same time however, the New York Times (7/21, Schmitt, 20.6M) reports that Milley "offered a glum assessment...of the security situation in Afghanistan, saying the Taliban had seized 'strategic momentum' over Afghan military forces who were falling back to prioritize the protection of important cities, including Kabul." According to the Times, Milley's "comments...echoed mounting reports from the ground in Afghanistan. But his sober, almost clinical, account of recent Taliban gains hammered home the point." Milley said, "There clearly is a narrative out there that the Taliban are winning." The Hill (7/21, Kheel, 5.69M) adds that the general's "comments come as the U.S. military is about 95 percent done with its withdrawal from Afghanistan after nearly 20 years of war. President Biden has set an Aug. 31 deadline for the United States to be fully out."

As US Grapples With Evacuation Of Afghan Translators, House Considers Bill To Expand Visas. Roll Call (7/21, Simon, 130K) reports that the House is set to consider "a bill to authorize an additional 8,000 special immigrant visas for Afghan interpreters, contractors and other vulnerable allies." The legislation "would open up the extra slots in a visa program designed to provide a safe haven for Afghan allies at risk of persecution or death if they remain in Afghanistan as the U.S. military completes its withdrawal from the country." Roll Call says that "around 20,000 Afghans and their families are in line for the program, which has a total of 26,500 authorized slots."

The New York Times (7/21, Steinhauer, 20.6M) adds that, meanwhile, on Wednesday, "State Department officials said" that "an additional 4,000 Afghans who worked with American forces, many of them interpreters, had been approved to relocate to the United States with their families in light of the withdrawal of U.S. troops." However, the officials "added that evacuations were only taking place out of Kabul, the capitol, and any eligible Afghans in remote areas were on their own in figuring out how to make the difficult, and likely dangerous, journey if they wanted to take

advantage of the offer."

Death Toll From South African Riots Rises To 276.

Reuters (7/21) reports that the death toll from this month's riots in South Africa "has risen to 276, and police are investigating 168 cases for murder, a cabinet minister said on Wednesday." Khumbudzo Ntshavheni, acting minister in the presidency, "told a news conference there were now 234 deaths linked to the unrest in KwaZulu-Natal and 42 in Gauteng."

Woodsome: Administration Not Clear On Plans To Bring Home Americans Held By Iran.

Kate Woodsome writes in the Washington Post (7/21, 10.52M) that Americans Emad Shargi, Morad Tahbaz and Siamak and Baquer Namazi "are being held in Iran as bargaining chips in broader talks with Washington about national security." Biden Administration officials say "they are committed to bringing the four Americans home, whether nuclear talks succeed or not. The how and when remain elusive." Woodsome says the Administration "has showed immense care but little clarity. ... This concern is a balm but not an antidote." Babak Namazi said, "Families in my situation do not find long-term or even short-term comfort in empathy. ... It's action that's been lacking for the past six years."

THE BIG PICTURE

Headlines From Today's Front Pages.

Wall Street Journal:

States Announce \$26 Billion Settlement to Resolve Opioid Lawsuits
PG&E, In Reversal, to Bury Power Lines in Fire-Prone Areas
Opening Its Economy As Delta Variant Surges, The U.K. Becomes A Covid-19 Test Case
Fed Chief Powell Enjoys Support For Reappointment, But He's Not A Lock
Missing From The Tokyo Olympics Torch Relay — The Running Part
JPMorgan Awards Jamie Dimon Surprise Retention Bonus

New York Times:

Drug Distributors And J.&J. Reach \$26 Billion Deal To End Opioids Lawsuits
How Nations Are Learning To 'Let It Go' And Live With Covid
U.S. Life Expectancy Plunged In 2020, Especially For Black And Hispanic Americans
The 1964 Games Proclaimed A New Japan. There's Less To Cheer This Time.
'Please Save Us!' Grim Scenes In China As Flood Inundates A Subway
Battle For Power In Haiti Extends To Lobbying In Washington

Washington Post:

In Dubai, A Princess Plots A Futile Race To Escape
China Reacts To Deadly Flood
Variant Triggers New Talk Of Masks
Isolation, Inequity Make Heat Waves More Deadly
Bipartisan Inquiry Into Jan. 6 Crumbles

Financial Times:

EU Rejects British Plan To Rip Up Brexit Deal
Novartis Aims To Beat Rivals To Novel \$10bn Cancer Treatment Market
China Flooding Kills A Dozen People In Industrial Centre Zhengzhou

Story Lineup From Last Night's Network News:

ABC: US COVID; US COVID Vaccines For Children; Tokyo Olympics-COVID; January 6 Capitol Investigation; Gen. Milley Comments; Biden Infrastructure Bill; China Flooding.

CBS: US COVID; January 6 Capitol Investigation; Biden Infrastructure Bill; US Wildfires; Tokyo Olympics-COVID; Opioid Epidemic Settlement; Spike In Children Eating Marijuana Gummies.
NBC: US COVID; US COVID Vaccines; US Wildfires; China Flooding; January 6 Capitol Investigation; Tokyo Olympics-COVID; Harvey Weinstein Extradited; COVID Misinformation; 9/11 Memorial; NBA Championship

Network TV At A Glance:

COVID Update – 10 minutes, 10 seconds
US Wildfires – 6 minutes, 50 seconds
January 6 Capitol Investigation – 5 minutes, 55 seconds
Tokyo Olympics-COVID – 5 minutes, 20 seconds
US Vaccines – 3 minutes, 40 seconds
China Flooding – 1 minutes, 50 seconds

WASHINGTON'S SCHEDULE

Today's Events In Washington.

White House:

President Biden — receives the President's Daily Brief in the Oval Office, receives a briefing from members of the White House COVID-19 Response Team on the COVID-19 pandemic and the vaccination program in the Oval Office, delivers remarks and sign H.R. 1652, the VOCA Fix to Sustain the Crime Victims Fund Act of 2021, into law in the East Room, meet with union and business leaders to discuss the strong support and urgent need for the Bipartisan Infrastructure Framework, which will create a generation of good-paying union jobs and economic growth.

Vice President Harris — receive the President's Daily Brief in the Oval Office, meet with DACA recipients, Dreamers without DACA, and immigrant rights leaders, join the President as he delivers remarks and signs H.R.1652, the VOCA Fix to Sustain the Crime Victims Fund Act of 2021, into law, meet with union and business leaders to discuss the strong support and urgent need for the Bipartisan Infrastructure Framework.

US Senate:

- Senate Judiciary Committee Executive Business Meeting – Executive Business Meeting, with agenda including 'S. 1425, Stop STALLING Act', 'S. 1428, Preserve Access to Affordable Generics and Biosimilars Act', 'S. 1388, Prescription Pricing for the People Act of 2021', 'S. 1435, Affordable Prescriptions for Patients Act of 2021', and the nominations of Gustavo Gelpi to be U.S. Circuit Judge for the First Circuit, Angel Kelley to be U.S. District Judge for the District of Massachusetts, Christine O'Hearn to be U.S. District Judge for the District of New Jersey, Helaine Ann Greenfeld to be Assistant Attorney General for the Office of Legislative Affairs, and Christopher Schroeder to be Assistant Attorney General for the Office of Legal Counsel

Location: Rm 216, Hart Senate Office Building, Washington, DC; 9:00 AM

- Senate Natural Resources Committee Business Meeting – Business Meeting to consider the nominations of Robert Anderson to be Department of the Interior Solicitor; Shalanda Baker to be Department of Energy Office of Minority Economic Impact Director; Samuel Walsh to be Department of Energy General Counsel; Andrew Light to be Assistant Secretary of Energy for International Affairs; and Tracy Stone-Manning to be Bureau of Land Management Director

Location: Rm 366, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Washington, DC; 9:30 AM

- Senate Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs subcommittee hearing on addressing future pandemic risk – Securities, Insurance and Investment Subcommittee hybrid hearing on 'Examining Frameworks to Address Future Pandemic Risk', with testimony from Chubb Chairman and CEO Evan Greenberg; and University of South Carolina Risk and Uncertainty Management Center Director Dr Robert Hartwig IHOP franchisee Adenah Bayoh; American Property Casualty Insurance Association Senior Vice President Robert Gordon; Marsh United States & Canada Division President Martin South; and Arnold & Porter's L. Charles Landgraf (on