



MOST OF the cranes at the ports of Long Beach, above, and Los Angeles are made by a Chinese company and their computerized control systems leave them vulnerable to attack, a U.S. Coast Guard commander said.

## Ports to step up security to deter hacking

Biden order includes \$20 billion to replace Chinese cranes seen as a cyberattack risk.

By Sam Dean

WASHINGTON — President Biden signed an executive order Wednesday that creates new rules to shore up security at American ports — and commits \$20 billion to replace Chinese-made cranes that U.S. officials worry could be vulnerable to hacking and remote control.

The executive order empowers the U.S. Coast Guard to respond to cybersecurity incidents at ports, and lays out a new set of safety regulations that port operators must follow to fend off digital attackers.

“Most critical infrastructure owners and operators have a list of safety regulations they have to comply with,” said Anne Neuberger, deputy national security advisor at the White House. “We want to ensure that there are similar requirements for cyber, when a cyberattack can cause just as much, if not more, damage than a storm or another physical threat.”

Nationwide, about 31 million jobs and \$5.4 trillion in economic activity are linked to trade that passes through ports, all of which could be disrupted by a ransomware or other type of cyberattack, Neuberger said.

The ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach constitute the largest container port facility in the hemisphere, handling 9.9 million and 9.1 million TEUs — twenty-foot equivalent units, the standard volume metric in ocean shipping — respectively, in 2022. The San Pedro complex in Los Angeles handles 29% of all container-based trade in the U.S., and nearly 20% of all U.S. seaport trade.

That volume of cargo is loaded on and off of ships by a forest of roughly 150

[See Ports, A6]

### COLUMN ONE

## The internet said I was dead, but here lies AI

I was the victim of an elaborate hoax that spread fake news about my demise. What it’s like to read your own obituary.

By Deborah Vankin

When I died the other day, no one really noticed. That is, aside from a few alarmed members of my family.

“The event,” as I now call it, unfolded one morning last month as I was racing out the door to a meeting. My phone rang.

“De-De-Debbie, hi,” my dad said, nearly out of breath. “Listen: please *DO NOT BE ALARMED* by what I am about to send you!”

That got my attention. “It’s an” — he paused for dramatic effect — “an obituary.”

“Oh, my God, for who?” I said, putting down my purse.

“You.”

“What?”

“There’s a rumor going around the World Wide Web,” he said, as if it were 1997, “that you died. Your obituary — it’s going viral internationally!”

He’d heard about it from my aunt,

who gets updates from Google whenever my name appears online. I immediately called her.

“I got an alert. It linked to your obit,” she said. Then: “They said some really nice things about you.”

It turns out there were several reports of my death circulating online. And in the words of Mark Twain, they were “greatly exaggerated.”

The lengthy obituaries detailed my career accomplishments and deep ties to family and friends with the uncanny discordance of an AI bot. “Deborah Vankin Obituary, Arts And Culture Writer At Los Angeles Times Sadly Passed Away,” the first headline read. “... Family Mourns The Loss,” read another. “Deborah Vankin, an esteemed journalist whose eloquent storytelling and insightful narratives illuminated the world around us, has passed away.” They cited no cause of death.

The obits, authored by fictional

[See Seam, A9]

## Radioactive waste discarded off L.A. coast, records show

Scientists also find high concentrations of DDT across a wide swath of seafloor.

By Rosanna Xia

For decades, a graveyard of corroding barrels has littered the seafloor just off the coast of Los Angeles. It was out of sight, out of mind — a not-so-secret secret that haunted the marine environment until a team of researchers came across them with an advanced underwater camera.

Speculation abounded as to what these mysterious barrels might contain. Startling amounts of DDT near the barrels pointed to a little-known history of toxic pollution from what was once the largest DDT manufacturer in the nation, but federal regulators recently determined that the manufacturer had not bothered with barrels. (Its acid waste was poured straight into the

ocean instead.)

Now, as part of an unprecedented reckoning with the legacy of ocean dumping in Southern California, scientists have concluded the barrels may actually contain low-level radioactive waste. Records show that from the 1940s through the 1960s, it was not uncommon for local hospitals, labs and other industrial operations to dispose barrels of tritium, carbon-14 and other similar waste at sea.

“This is a classic situation of bad versus worse. It’s bad we have potential low-level radioactive waste just sitting there on the seafloor. It’s worse that we have DDT compounds spread across a wide area of the seafloor at concerning concentrations,” said David Valentine, whose research team at UC Santa Barbara had first discovered the barrels and sparked concerns of what could be inside. “The question we grapple with now is how bad and how much worse.”

This latest revelation [See Dumping, A7]



DAVID VALENTINE ROV JASON

A RESEARCH trip led by UC Santa Barbara came across discarded barrels underwater near Catalina.

## LAUSD candidate apologizes over social media posts

By Howard Blume

Los Angeles school board candidate Kahlid Al-Alim — who is endorsed by the influential teachers union — is under fire for social media activity that has prompted accusations that he agreed with antisemitic content,

glamorized guns and celebrated pornographic images.

A post on X that drew particular criticism was Al-Alim’s praise of an antisemitic publication from the Nation of Islam organization titled: “The Secret Relationship Between Blacks and Jews: How Jews gained control of the Black American economy.” The book accuses Jews of stealing prosperity from Black people — their “40 acres and a mule” — and of “collaborating with and even financing such racial terrorists as the Ku Klux Klan,” according to a blurb about the book on the Nation of Islam online store.

In an October 2022 post, Al-Alim — running for a seat that represents much of south and southwest Los Angeles — said the book should be mandatory reading in L.A. schools: “We not Burning or Banning Our Future! We Not Playing,” he tweeted.

In a statement Tuesday, Al-Alim, 56, appeared to acknowledge all or most of the social media posts and likes, for which he expressed regret. He did not say they were from fake accounts or that his account was hacked.

“I have spent my life fighting against anti-semitism, anti-Arab hate, Islamophobia, and all forms of oppression,” Al-Alim said. “I have spent my life fighting for the equality of all people.

[See LAUSD, A7]



Inside California Politics

### SENATE CANDIDATES SPAR

Top four hopefuls for Sen. Feinstein’s seat face sharp attacks in their final primary debate. Above, they are shown at an earlier event. CALIFORNIA, B1

### First ‘Rust’ trial to start in N.M.

Jury selection begins in the case against armorer as questions remain over source of bullets. CALENDAR, E1

### Trial opens over Henley’s drafts

The criminal case involves handwritten lyrics to the Eagles’ “Hotel California” and other hits. NATION, A4

### Boeing 737 Max exec is ousted

Shake-up targets oversight of quality as firm deals with aftermath of midair blowout. BUSINESS, A8

### Weather

Partly sunny. L.A. Basin: 65/48. B6



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