



# DHS MORNING BRIEFING

Prepared for the Office of Public Affairs (OPA)

U.S. Department of Homeland Security

By TechMIS

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**Editorial Note:** The DHS Daily Briefing is a collection of news articles related to Department's mission. The inclusion of particular stories is not intended to reflect their importance, nor is it intended to endorse the political viewpoints or affiliations included in news coverage.

**TO: Homeland Security Secretary & Staff**

**DATE: Wednesday, April 19, 2023 6:00 AM ET**

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## Top News

### Mayorkas defends border record as GOP legislators threaten impeachment and discuss reports of forced child migrant labor

The [Washington Post](#) [4/18/2023 7:00 PM, Nick Miroff and Maria Sacchetti, 1201K, Negative] reports Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas faced fresh attacks

Tuesday from Republican senators who cited reports of migrant child labor exploitation to renew calls for his impeachment. The DHS secretary has long been a target for Republicans critical of the Biden administration's border and immigration policies, but GOP members appeared to open a new front over recent reports that many underage migrants are working grim jobs at U.S. slaughterhouses, construction sites and auto parts plants. Republican senators angrily denounced Mayorkas in sometimes-personal terms during a committee hearing on the 2024 DHS budget request, pledging to hold a vote of no confidence in his leadership. Republican leaders in the House have also threatened to remove Mayorkas. While such proceedings would require a two-thirds majority in the Democratic-controlled Senate to oust the DHS secretary, they would drive attention to border and immigration issues that tend to favor the GOP. U.S. law requires DHS to turn underage migrants over to the Department of Health and Human Services, which oversees a network of temporary shelters where teens and children remain until the government can identify and screen a family member or another adult eligible to take custody. Many of the minors owe debts to smugglers and need to support family members back home, so they turn to low-wage jobs where they often work illegally. Mayorkas defended his record throughout Tuesday's hearing and said the Biden administration has been working to reduce illegal border crossings by creating more legal channels for migrants to come to the United States while addressing the "root causes" driving people to flee, including poverty, violence and repression. [FOX News](#) [4/18/2023 4:05 PM, Adam Shaw, 8967K, Negative] Video: [HERE](#) reports Sen. Josh Hawley, R-Mo., on Tuesday took aim at Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas over a new report which detailed a surge in migrant child smuggling and exploitation during the Biden administration -- with the Republican lawmaker suggesting that it amounted to an impeachable offense. Hawley, at a Senate Homeland Security hearing, quizzed Mayorkas about a New York Times report showing how the 2021 migration surge resulted in many children being placed in brutal forced labor jobs across the U.S. Hawley tied the increase in child migration across the border to a move by the Biden administration in early 2021 to not apply Title 42 expulsions to unaccompanied children. Mayorkas said there were a number of "false statements" in Hawley's questioning. "One of the significant policy decisions that we have made is to focus our worksite enforcement, investigative efforts, our criminal investigative efforts on unscrupulous employers that exploit individuals because of their vulnerabilities. And that includes underage workers," Mayorkas said. Mayorkas also objected to Hawley's statement that the Trump administration reunited children with their parents -- an apparent reference to the controversy surrounding child separation within the U.S.

Reported similarly:

[\(B\) The 5 O'Clock News](#) [4/18/2023 5:15 PM, Staff]

### **Republicans grill Biden's refugee resettlement chief on migrant child labor; Florida AG calls on Congress to investigate**

[The Hill](#) [4/18/2023 10:37 PM, Christina Van Waasbergen, 1592K, Neutral] reports Republicans grilled the director of the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) at a House oversight hearing Tuesday, accusing the office of failing to vet the adults who take in unaccompanied migrant children. The hearing comes amid reports of children released by ORR ending up in unsafe conditions, including being used for child labor, as the number of unaccompanied children coming across the border has surged in the past couple years. Rep. Glenn Grothman (R-Wisc.) — chair of the House Oversight Subcommittee on National Security, the Border and Foreign Affairs — blamed the problem in part on Human Services Secretary Xavier Becerra, who he said had "pushed to instill a culture at ORR that

prioritizes 'assembly line' speed in releasing unaccompanied alien children to poorly vetted sponsors across the country to the detriment of children's safety." ORR Director Robin Dunn Marcos said her office is obligated to release children to sponsors "without undue delay," and that it has relaxed some of its vetting requirements in order to address a backlog. But she insisted ORR's screening process is thorough, and noted the agency doesn't keep track of children after they are released, and doesn't have the authority to remove children from unsafe situations. "ORR works within the statutes and authority and resources provided," she said. A March report by Florida's statewide grand jury, an arm of the state's Republican attorney general's office, said that ORR wasn't adequately vetting potential sponsors. [FOX News](#) [4/18/2023 8:30 AM, Brandon Gillespie, 8967K, Negative] reports that Republican Florida Attorney General Ashley Moody is calling on Congress to investigate the Biden administration over its alleged poor treatment of unaccompanied migrant children detained in the state after a grand jury accused the Department of Health and Human Services of "Complete abdication of responsibility" for their welfare. "A Florida Grand Jury found shocking and horrific evidence of the Biden administration facilitating human trafficking and child exploitation of unaccompanied minors. It should enrage everyone that any child is being exposed to such danger and terrible conditions," Moody told Fox News Digital in a Monday statement. "I'm calling on Congress to conduct hearings to further the investigation, and uncover the evidence that HHS refused to provide to Florida's Statewide Grand Jury," she added. [FOX News](#) [4/18/2023 10:30 AM, Gabriel Hays, 8967K, Negative] states that the report claimed that even though official complaints and warnings from people working at migrant shelters - as well notices from government staffers and others - made it in front of U.S. Health and Human Services Secretary Xavier Becerra, the department did not respond. When it finally did, it "shifted blame for failing to protect them." The outlet published the story Monday, starting with the perspective of San Antonio migrant shelter worker and immigration lawyer Linda Brandmiller, whose job "Was to help vet sponsors" in the U.S. for many of the thousands of boys who crossed into the U.S. without parents. She alerted her supervisors and HHS to two cases involving men seeking boys to work jobs for them. Brandmiller "immediately contacted supervisors working with the Department of Health and Human Services, the federal agency responsible for these children," addressing them in email, which claimed "This is urgent." Despite her warning, officials never reviewed the case or paused the boys' sponsorship to the man in Florida.

Reported similarly:

[Univision](#) [4/19/2023 12:31 AM, Staff, 598K, Neutral]

### **Mayorkas predicts new illegal immigrant 'surge' next month, coinciding with the end of Title 42**

The [Washington Times](#) [4/18/2023 6:58 AM, Stephen Dinan, 261K, Negative] reports that Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas acknowledged Tuesday that the conditions along the southern border will deteriorate next month when the government's Title 42 pandemic authority to immediately expel illegal border crossers disappears, but told a congressional hearing that his department is working to adapt to the changed conditions. Mr. Mayorkas did not offer specific numbers on border traffic, but a projection last year, ahead of a previous deadline for ending Title 42, said that as many as 18,000 illegal immigrants could cross per day. That would be nearly triple the amount that arrived each day in March. "We do anticipate a surge in the number of encounters," Mr. Mayorkas told the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee. Title 42 is the public health law invoked by the Trump administration at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic -



and retained by the Biden administration - that allows U.S. border agents to deny individuals entrance into the country in order to "prevent [the] spread of communicable disease." He said the department's goal is to shift some of the illegal immigrants to new ways of entering. They would still be illegally present in the U.S., though they would not be sneaking in between the designated ports of entry. Mr. Mayorkas said officials have had a test-run of that policy since early January, when they announced a program to "parole" migrants from Venezuela, Haiti, Cuba and Nicaragua. Illegal crossings from those countries have dropped. "We have indeed seen people avail themselves of the lawful pathway," the secretary said. The [New York Post](#) [4/18/2023 8:01 PM, Victor Nava, 5087K, Neutral] reports that during the hearing, the DHS chief called border security a top priority and insisted his department was working to find solutions to mitigate the expected surge, including with its request for \$4.7 billion in emergency funding designated for a Southwest Border Contingency Fund. The fund, included in President Biden's 2024 budget request, would provide additional resources to DHS in the event increased migration along the Southwest border exceeds the expected number of encounters, Mayorkas said. [NewsNation](#) [4/18/2023 5:21 PM, Katie Smith, 98K, Neutral] reports "The overarching approach of this administration is not only to invest in the countries of origin given the reasons why people flee their homes... What we are doing is building lawful pathways so individuals do not need to place their lives and their safety in the hands of ruthless smugglers..." Mayorkas said. Title 42, the COVID-19-era public health policy that limited asylum entrees into U.S., is set to expire on May 11. The policy allowed law enforcement to turn away migrants at the border as the nation grappled with COVID-19 cases. Meanwhile, the number of people Customs and Border Protection officials encountered entering the U.S. between ports of entry increased 25% from February to March. That figure is down 23% compared to March 2022, marking the lowest seasonal increase in two years. It's typical to see an increase in crossings from February to March as winter weather subsides, CBP said in a news release.

### **US family immigration detention won't restart 'at this time,' official says; DHS is short on detention space**

[Reuters](#) [4/18/2023 5:23 PM, Ted Hesson, 5239K, Neutral] reports the Biden administration is not planning "at this time" to restart family immigration detention, a senior U.S. immigration official said on Tuesday, signaling the contentious practice to more quickly deport families is on hold. Tae Johnson, acting director of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), said officials had discussed jailing families as an option for dealing with increased illegal crossings at the U.S.-Mexico border. ICE would instead use "alternatives to detention" to monitor parents or heads of households, Johnson said. The agency is also weighing a pilot program similar to house arrest, he said, a plan Reuters reported last year. ICE has identified nine detention centers that it could use for faster initial asylum screenings, Johnson said. The [Washington Times](#) [4/18/2023 6:13 PM, Stephen Dinan, 261K, Neutral] reports the Department of Homeland Security is far short on detention space and will have to release illegal immigrants to prepare for a surge of newcomers at the border next month, the country's deportation chief told Congress on Tuesday. Tae Johnson, acting director of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, said he had sought thousands more detention beds in the agency's new budget, but higher-ups in the Biden administration rejected that idea. Now, he'll face the looming border surge with a maximum of 34,000 detention beds. And in reality, he can't even fill all of those because of coronavirus restrictions. The result is that he'll have to release people, Mr. Johnson told the House Appropriations Committee. He said he hopes to speed up deportations to cut into the number of detainees, and will try to limit releases to people with lower-level criminal records. As of last month, ICE was holding more than 28,000 migrants on any given day,

but that dropped to 25,542 as of this week. Mr. Johnson told the House Appropriations Committee in testimony Tuesday that he wants to get that figure down to about 21,000 so they have space for the worst cases among the expected new arrivals. Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas testified Tuesday before the Senate and has a hearing slated before the House on Wednesday. Customs and Border Protection, ICE's sister agency in immigration enforcement, also is slated to appear before the House on Wednesday. Mr. Mayorkas acknowledged Tuesday that the border situation will get worse next month with the end of the Title 42 expulsion power, which allowed some migrants to be turned back. The secretary didn't give estimates for the numbers, but he also didn't counter the suggestion by one senator that as many as 11,000 migrants could enter illegally every day. That would be nearly double the rate right now. Mr. Mayorkas insisted he's trying to find solutions, calling border security a top priority. Mr. Mayorkas said he disagreed with the accusation that Biden policies were responsible for the surge of kids, but said the abuse was "something we do not condone."

### **Officials lay out actions for Mayorkas' impeachment amid Senate grilling**

[FOX News](#) [4/18/2023 11:37 AM, Adam Shaw, Elizabeth Elkind, and Bill Melugin, 8967K, Neutral] reports that Sen. Roger Marshall, R-Kansas, on Tuesday announced that he is introducing a resolution to trigger a vote of no confidence in Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas - just as the DHS chief was facing a grilling from lawmakers at a top committee. "Mr. Secretary, you are derelict in your duties. I would be derelict to not do something about this. And that's why I have a draft resolution here that I intend to introduce in the coming days that would require the Senate to take a vote of no confidence on Secretary Mayorkas," he said as he questioned Mayorkas in a Senate Homeland Security Committee hearing. "I stand at the ready to receive articles of impeachment from the House and conduct an impeachment trial in this body. But in the meantime, I think the Senate must show our colleagues in the House that we've had enough of the failures from the Department of Homeland Security and believe that the secretary is not fit to faithfully carry out the duties of his office," he said. The draft resolution, obtained by Fox News Digital, states that Mayorkas "does not have the confidence of the Senate or of the American people to faithfully carry out the duties of his office." The resolution accuses Mayorkas of having "engaged in a pattern of conduct that is incompatible with his constitutional and statutory duties as Secretary of Homeland Security." Specifically, it says that he has failed to take the necessary actions to achieve operational control of the southern border, something the head of Border Patrol has said the agency does not have. It cites "More than 5,500,000 illegal aliens crossing the United States southern border during Secretary Mayorkas' term in office, including 20 consecutive months with more than 150,000 illegal border crossings and a 180 percent increase in encounters at the southern border compared to the previous administration". The [New York Times](#) [4/18/2023 3:00 PM, Karoun Demirjian] reports the Republican chairman of the House Homeland Security Committee promised donors this month that he would produce an impeachment case against the Biden administration's homeland security chief, Alejandro N. Mayorkas, saying that the secretary's appearance before the panel this week would be the beginning of his demise. Representative Mark E. Green told an enthusiastic crowd in his home state of Tennessee last week that his committee would expose Mr. Mayorkas's "dereliction of duty and his intentional destruction of our country through the open southern border." He said the panel would deliver charges to the House Judiciary Committee, which handles impeachment proceedings, according to an audio recording of a House Freedom Caucus fund-raiser obtained by New York Times. He said he had a "five-phase plan" for doing so and that the Homeland Security Committee would "put together a packet, and we will hand

it to Jim Jordan and let Jim do what Jim does best.” Mr. Green apparently was referring to Representative Jim Jordan, the Ohio Republican who leads the Judiciary panel. His comments made clear that G.O.P. leaders are serious about their threats to impeach Mr. Mayorkas. He said the plan would start with an appearance by the secretary before his committee on Wednesday. During a public session on Capitol Hill on Tuesday before the Homeland Security and Government Affairs Committee, Republicans hammered Mr. Mayorkas both for the border situation and for recent revelations, documented in an investigation by New York Times, that unaccompanied migrant children have been exploited as laborers. Both Senators Ron Johnson of Wisconsin and Josh Hawley of Missouri demanded that the secretary resign. Mr. Mayorkas pushed back, saying his department was not responsible for the child labor crisis. “You are incorrectly attributing it to our policies,” he told Mr. Hawley. He also disputed the idea that he could be held personally responsible for the problems at the border, telling senators: “Our asylum system is broken, our entire immigration system is broken, and in desperate need of reform — and it’s been so for years and years.”

### **House Republicans ready border enforcement push after delays; Introduce plan to revive Trump’s ‘Zero Tolerance’ policy**

The [AP](#) [4/19/2023 12:04 AM, Stephen Groves, 6902K, Negative] reports House Republicans for months have railed against the Biden administration’s handling of the U.S. border with Mexico, holding hearings, visiting border communities and promising to advance legislation to clamp down on illegal immigration and drug trafficking. But so far, they have failed to unify behind a plan, delaying efforts to pass legislation. Now they are hoping to change that. Republicans on Wednesday are jumpstarting work on an immigration and border enforcement package that would remake immigration law to make it more difficult to apply for asylum and easier for the federal government to stop migrants from entering the U.S. Rep. Jim Jordan, the Republican who is chair of the Judiciary Committee drafting the legislation, said he expected Wednesday’s markup of the bill to go “well.” The undertaking comes as Washington is putting renewed focus on border security, and the plight of thousands of migrants who show up seeking entry into the U.S., with a looming May deadline that is expected to end a federal COVID-era asylum policy. The hearing also comes as Republicans, more than 100 days into their new House majority, are under political pressure to deliver on a key campaign promise to secure the border. [Univision Austin](#) [4/18/2023 8:05 AM, Staff, 598K, Negative] reports that severe restrictions on asylum seekers, the mandatory detention of families and unaccompanied minors who cross the border without prior authorization and an increase in penalties for overstaying the visa are some of the tough rules that the Republican Party has included in a protection of immigration law that the judicial committee of the House of Representatives is set to review on Wednesday before scheduling it in plenary session, where they are a majority. The new proposal, introduced by Representative Tom McClintock, calls for a drastic reduction in the number of people entitled to asylum as well as a series of serious and minor crimes that would make it much more difficult for applicants to seek asylum protection, because it broadens 6 to 15 eligibility exceptions. It would also require migrants to apply for asylum at a designated port of entry and impose a \$50 asylum fee for adults. The Trump administration had also tried to impose a payment requirement to claim asylum, but the attempt was stopped in court. Tony Gonzales, who co-chairs the Congressional Hispanic Conference along with Representative Mario Díaz-Balart, has publicly expressed his discrepancies with the project that could become another headache for House Speaker Kevin McCarthy, whose position was possible. thanks to concessions to the radical sector of the party.



### **GOP's Congressional Hispanic Conference warns immigration bill is not 'ready for prime time'**

[Washington Times](#) [4/18/2023 11:39 AM, Haris Alic, 261K, Neutral] reports the Congressional Hispanic Conference issued a warning to House Speaker Kevin McCarthy's hope of quickly passing an immigration and border security bill. Rep. Tony Gonzales of Texas, the Republican group's co-chairman, said the current immigration proposal being considered had a long way to go before earning his support and urged GOP leaders not to push the bill until it could pass and become law. Mr. Gonzales added that the 137-page immigration bill that is scheduled to be considered by the House Judiciary Committee this week was not "ready for prime time." The immigration proposal is a combination of eight other pieces of immigration legislation that have been circulated by various Republican lawmakers. Among other things, it would authorize the Department of Homeland Security to block any foreign national from entering the country if it is "necessary in order to achieve operational control over" the U.S. border. The proposal would allow migrant children to be detained with their parents for the duration of immigration proceedings. The bill also makes it mandatory for U.S. companies to check immigration status before hiring an individual and penalizes them for knowingly employing an illegal alien. The bill proposal revives several Trump-era restrictions on asylum eligibility for migrants traversing the U.S.-Mexico border. It would further block entry to migrants who have traveled through another country in order to reach the U.S. if they did not first seek asylum in the other country. The legislation requires migrants to seek asylum at designated ports of entry, rather than trying to enter the U.S. illegally. It would impose a \$50 asylum fee for adult migrants.

### **Menéndez releases immigration plan reliant on Biden executive action**

[The Hill](#) [4/18/2023 1:53 PM, Rafael bernal, 1592K, Neutral] reports that Sen. Bob Menéndez (D-N.J.) unveiled an immigration plan Tuesday that relies heavily on executive actions to address migration flows in the Western Hemisphere. "For the last year, I have repeatedly expressed concerns over the Biden Administration's decision to implement short-term deterrence policies that fail to address the cycle of irregular migration at our southwest border," Menéndez said in a statement, adding that his proposal "largely includes policies that President Biden can pursue without Congress, until Republicans decide to come to the table and help the administration manage the current challenge." The Senate Foreign Relations Committee chairman is attempting to reset President Biden's approach to the issue of immigration, pivoting to real-world solutions from the political tug-of-war over whether conditions at the border constitute a crisis. "I don't call it a crisis, but it can become one if you understand that there are 20 million people in the Western Hemisphere, in Latin America and Central America who are displaced, who are refugees, who are seeking asylum across the hemisphere," Menéndez told "CNN This Morning." "It doesn't take a rocket scientist to figure out that unless we work with other countries in the hemisphere, they're going to make their march up north." The proposal focuses on four pillars to "effectively manage migration in the Americas": an expansion of legal pathways for immigrants to the United States, an increase in border security resources, expanded aid to countries in the region to amplify their own asylum and refugee programs and increased efforts to combat organized crime and smuggling organizations.

### **Thousands of migrant children missing after illegally entering US: Sen. Marsha Blackburn**

[FOX News](#) [4/18/2023 1:39 PM, Staff, 8967K, Negative] reports that Sen. Marsha Blackburn, R-Tenn., discusses a bipartisan bill to curb human smuggling. [Editorial note: consult video at source link]

### **Judge to decide whether leak suspect should remain jailed**

[AP](#) [4/19/2023 12:02 AM, Alanna Durkin Richer and Eric Tucker, 6902K, Neutral] reports a Massachusetts Air National Guardsman charged with leaking highly classified military documents is due back in court on Wednesday for a hearing to decide whether he should remain behind bars while he awaits trial. Jack Teixeira, 21, was arrested by heavily armed tactical agents at his Massachusetts home last week and charged, under the Espionage Act, with unauthorized retention and transmission of classified national defense information. During his first court appearance in Boston's federal court Friday, a magistrate judge ordered him to remain in custody until Wednesday's detention hearing. Teixeira is accused of sharing highly classified military documents about the Ukraine war and other top national security issues in a chat room on Discord, a social media platform that started as a hangout for gamers. The stunning breach exposing closely held intelligence has sparked international uproar and raised fresh questions about America's ability to safeguard its secrets. Air Force leaders said Tuesday that they were investigating how a lone airman could access and distribute possibly hundreds of highly classified documents. The Air Force has also taken away the intelligence mission from the Air National Guard 102nd Intelligence Wing based in Cape Cod — where Teixeira served — pending further review.

Reported similarly:

[Axios](#) [4/18/2023 6:22 AM, Steph Solis, 1011K, Neutral]

### **Air Force pulls intelligence mission from unit where accused leaker served**

[The Hill](#) [4/18/2023 6:02 PM, Ellen Mitchell, 1592K, Neutral] reports the Air Force has removed the intelligence mission from the unit where a 21-year-old Air National Guardsman had access to potentially hundreds of classified documents leaked over the internet, service officials revealed Tuesday. Air Force Secretary Frank Kendall told senators he has directed the service's inspector general to investigate the Air National Guard 102nd Intelligence Wing in Cape Cod, Mass., the unit where Airman 1st Class Jack Teixeira served, to look at "anything associated with this leak that could have gone wrong." Until then, the 102nd "is not currently performing its assigned intelligence mission. The mission has been temporarily reassigned to other organizations within the Air Force," a service spokesperson confirmed to The Hill. Teixeira was charged on Friday with violating the Espionage Act and another statute that prohibits the unauthorized removal of classified documents in relation to the posting of more than 100 such papers to a group on Discord. Teixeira is set to appear back in court for a Wednesday hearing. On Tuesday, lawmakers on the Senate Appropriations defense subcommittee pressed Air Force leaders as to what happened and why there was such a blind spot within the military.

Reported similarly:

[Reuters](#) [4/18/2023 5:42 PM, Idrees Ali and Phil Stewart, 5239K, Neutral]

[AP](#) [4/18/2023 2:17 PM, Tara Copp, 27K, Neutral]

[CBS News](#) [4/18/2023 2:47 PM, David Martin and Eleanor Watson, 76K, Neutral]

[FOX News](#) [4/18/2023 1:42 PM, Brooke Singman, 8967K, Neutral]

### **[Mexico] Mexico's AMLO Accuses Pentagon of Spying, Dialing Up Tensions With US**

[Bloomberg](#) [4/18/2023 3:49 PM, Leda Alvim and Rafael Gayol, 5543K, Neutral] reports that Mexican President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador ratcheted up the political infighting with the US by saying Tuesday his country has been a target of espionage by the Pentagon. AMLO, as the president is known, said the Mexican government needs to safeguard classified information to protect its "national security and defend its sovereignty," arguing without showing proof the country is subject to spying by units of its northern neighbor including the Drug Enforcement Administration. "We're going to take care of information from the Secretary of the Navy and the Secretary of Defense because we're the object of espionage by the Pentagon," AMLO told reporters during his daily press briefing, adding that several media organization in Mexico are "leaking information provided by the DEA." AMLO's comments come amid growing controversy over the Mexican military's role in domestic security activities, which have greatly expanded with Lopez Obrador's creation of the National Guard. The country's Supreme Court annulled on Tuesday the move that put the National Guard under control of the military, ruling it as unconstitutional, local media reported. On Monday, the Court invalidated military powers to carry out searches and spying in investigations against Mexicans and civil authorities, local media reported. AMLO referred to the ruling during the conference, saying that "no intelligence investigation can be used if there is no court order."

Reported similarly:

[The Hill](#) [4/18/2023 5:57 PM, Julia Shapero, 1592K, Neutral]

### **[Mexico] Drug lord Ovidio Guzman fails in another legal challenge to prevent his extradition to the U.S.**

[Univision](#) [4/19/2023 3:58 AM, Staff, 598K, Negative] reports a Mexican federal court denied an appeal filed by the defense of Ovidio Guzmán López, son of drug trafficker Joaquín 'El Chapo' Guzmán and one of the leaders of the 'Los Chapitos' faction of the Sinaloa Cartel, to stop the extradition process to the United States, where he is wanted for crimes related to drug trafficking. In a unanimous decision, the Fourth Collegiate Criminal Court of the State of Mexico upheld a decision by Judge Abigail Ocampo Álvarez, head of the First District Court for Amparo and Federal Trials, who had denied Guzmán López's provisional suspension. In their decision, announced Thursday afternoon, the judges pointed out that granting the appeal filed by Guzmán López would have implied "paralyzing the extradition proceedings" to the United States, where he is charged with at least five counts, including conspiracy and drug trafficking, in courts in Illinois and New York. The defense, alias 'El Ratón', had previously exercised an appeal of identity, which requires the defense to prove through official documents and DNA tests that the accused person is not the one wanted by the authorities. "I am not the person they think I am," Ovidio Guzman has said in his defense. However, facial recognition technology tools would truncate their strategy, according to experts and jurists quoted in Mexican media. [Editorial note: consult video at source link]

### **[Mexico] Alleged Mara Salvatrucha gang leader arrested in Mexico City**

[AP](#) [4/18/2023 8:00 PM, Staff, 33671K, Negative] reports police and marines in Mexico's capital on Tuesday arrested an alleged senior leader of the Mara Salvatrucha gang who is wanted in the United States for extortion, drug distribution and terrorism-related charges. Mexico City's Secretariat of Citizen Security said Salvadoran José Wilfredo Ayala-Alcántara, alias El Indio de Hollywood, was arrested in the center of the city. Authorities in Mexico said their investigation indicated the 55-year-old was the second in command of the

Mara Salvatrucha, or MS-13. Ayala-Alcántara was located following a citizen complaint of his presence in Mexico. Authorities said Ayala-Alcántara had used a false identity and moved between the state of Hidalgo in central Mexico and the capital. Ayala-Alcántara has an arrest warrant in Houston, Texas, tweeted the head of citizen security agency, Omar García Harfuch, who said the Salvadoran faced murder charges there. Two months ago, the US Attorney's Office for the Eastern District of New York announced charges against 13 alleged MS-13 leaders, accusing them of directing criminal activities, including murder, in the United States, Mexico and El Salvador, among other countries. The FBI detained four alleged gang leaders at Houston's George Bush Intercontinental Airport last February after they were expelled from Mexico. The 13 defendants were identified as members of the gang's command structure, who played important roles in the groups international operations.

Reported similarly:

[Reuters](#) [4/18/2023 5:55 PM, Staff, 33671K, Negative]

**[China] China accused of using American surrogates for citizenship with 'rent-a-womb' process**

[FOX News](#) [4/18/2023 6:25 AM, Staff, 8967K, Positive] reports Independent Women's Forum Visiting Fellow Emma Waters joined 'Fox & Friends First' to discuss how China is posing a national security concern for Americans through reproductive health. [Editorial note: consult video at source link]

## **Immigration and Customs Enforcement**

**ICE asks Congress to authorize virtual arrests as prodigious backlog encumbers agency**

[Washington Times](#) [4/18/2023 10:52 AM, Stephen Dinan, 261K, Neutral] reports U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement said it asked Congress for permission to execute "virtual" arrests of illegal immigrants to try to cut down on its backlog. Acting ICE Director Tae Johnson told lawmakers on Tuesday that his agency is overwhelmed by the amount of work it has, and it needs to figure out ways to make formal arrests of the hundreds of thousands of illegal immigrants who have been caught and released into the country over the last two years. He didn't say what, exactly, the process would look like, though he did mention at one point the possibility of virtual interviews.

**[ME] ACLU Wins Lawsuit to Access ICE Records**

[\(B\) CBS Mornings](#) [4/18/2023 8:56 AM, Staff] reports the American Civil Liberties Union of Maine won a lawsuit against Immigration and Customs Enforcement to access the agency's records. A federal judge ordered ICE to release its records related to detention practices in the state. In 2021, the ACLU sued ICE after they ignored the group's request for records under the Freedom of Information Act.

**[NY] NYC ICE 'mostly booked' for migrants needing court dates — through 2033**

[New York Post](#) [4/18/2023 1:49 PM, Steven Nelson, 5087K, Neutral] reports New York City's worst-in-the-nation federal immigration office wait time continues to grow — with appointments for migrants waiting to get a court date after illegally crossing the southern border now "mostly booked" through March 2033. The latest figure suggests new arrivals

may have to wait a full decade just to get a date to go before a judge — then cool their heels an average of nearly four more years before proceedings are completed. Tae Johnson, acting director of US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), claimed to a congressional panel Tuesday that he was working to tackle the stunning field office backlogs, including by trying to figure out how to use video conferencing to speed up the process. “There is some request to the Hill to give us the authority [where] we can actually serve it virtually and have people agree to accept their documents electronically,” Johnson told the House Appropriations Committee during a hearing focused on budget requests. “That is certainly something that we are continuing to work with the Congress to sort of get the authority for,” he added. “But we are working on the technological piece of it so that we can do these telephonic interviews or virtual interviews and have individuals not have to wait 10 years to have their charging documents issued.” Tae added that ICE also is asking for congressional funding for 45 new agents to process the backlog.

## **Citizenship and Immigration Services**

### **DACA recipients await Biden rule that would grant them access to affordable health care**

[NBC News](#) [4/18/2023 7:00 PM, Nicole Acevedo and Edwin Flores, 3304K, Neutral] reports that, when Paloma Bouhid began working as a concierge at the Walt Disney World Resort in Florida seven years ago, it was the first time she received health care insurance. But the lifeline she found through her job unexpectedly slipped away in 2020, when at 26 she lost her job during a round of mass layoffs. “The first thing I thought of is, ‘Oh my gosh, I don’t have a job’ and then you very quickly realize that also means I’m not insured,” Bouhid, whose family immigrated from Brazil to Tampa in 1999, said. Bouhid is one of the nearly 580,000 young adults without legal status who have been in the U.S. since they were children and are working or studying under the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program, also known as DACA. An overwhelming majority were born in Mexico and other Latin American countries. DACA recipients like Bouhid are barred from accessing federally funded health insurance, but that may change soon: The administration of President Joe Biden is finalizing a proposed rule that would allow them access to it.

### **[Afghanistan] Afghan members of top secret US-trained counter-terrorism force living in limbo**

[FOX News](#) [4/18/2023 4:13 PM, Staff, 8967K, Negative] reports Fox News chief national security correspondent Jennifer Griffin has the latest on the Afghans’ wait for special immigrant visas or asylum on ‘America Reports.’ [Editorial note: consult video at source link]

## **Customs and Border Protection**

### **Immigrant apprehensions at the US southern border increased 25% in March**

[Telemundo](#) [4/18/2023 7:27 AM, Staff, 212K, Negative] reports that Immigration arrests at the southern border of the United States last March increased by 25% compared to the previous month, although the number has been lower compared to last year, according to the Customs and Protection Office. Border Patrol (CBP). Last March, authorities made 162,317 apprehensions on the southwest border, an increase of more than 30,000 apprehensions compared to February 2023 when 130,024 foreigners were apprehended by Border Patrol agents. CBP reported that the increase in apprehensions in March “is typical”



because it represents the end of winter. Acting CBP Commissioner Troy A. Miller noted that the number of 162,317 detainees represents 23% less than the 211,181 migrants detained in March 2022, and a 4% decrease in March 2021 when 169,216 migrants were taken into custody. CBP apprehensions in January and February had dropped after the Joe Biden administration expanded returns of migrants from three countries to Mexico. The Democratic administration is preparing to deal with the end of the controversial Title 42 health rule next month, which is scheduled to end on May 11, when the United States will lift its latest coronavirus-related restrictions. At the beginning of January, the Democratic government decided to expand the rule to allow hot expulsions at the border of people from Nicaragua, Cuba and Haiti. The measure had begun to be applied in October 2022 only to Venezuelan migrants.

Reported similarly:

[Univision Austin](#) [4/18/2023 11:26 AM, Jorge Cancino, 598K, Negative]

[\(B\) Good Day Alabama 8a](#) [4/18/2023 9:09 AM, Staff]

**[MN] U.S. Border Patrol rescues 9 from bog near Warroad**

[Minnesota Public Radio](#) [4/18/2023 7:38 AM, Matt Sepic, 12K, Neutral] reports U.S. Customs and Border Protection said agents rescued a group of people from a flooded bog near the Canadian border near Warroad, Minn. early Tuesday after they had illegally crossed into the United States. In a statement, the agency said a member of the group made an emergency call to the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, which in turn notified American authorities about a group in distress due to exposure to harsh weather conditions. Agents provided first aid and called in medics. Border Patrol agents determined seven of the nine people in the group had entered the U.S. without documentation and will undergo "further processing" after they're medically cleared. The agency did not provide any other details, including their nationalities, ages, or the extent of their injuries.

**[TX] Commercial Operations Resume at Bridge of the Americas**

[\(B\) CBS Mornings](#) [4/18/2023 9:56 AM, Fidel Moreno-Meza] reports the temporary suspension of commercial operations at the Bridge of the Americas has been lifted. The suspension was put in place on Friday after US Customs and Border Protection announced agents were needed to process the influx of migrants surrendering themselves at the border. According Border Patrol, the El Paso sector was encountering nearly 1,500 migrants a day last week.

**[TX] Woman flirts with DPS officer to avoid arrest for human trafficking**

[Univision](#) [4/18/2023 4:22 PM, Staff, 598K, Negative] reports after being pulled over at a traffic stop, a woman tried to cajole a DPS officer to avoid being arrested for the trafficking of two women, in Jim Hogg County. The events occurred on Rural Highway 1017, near the border. The Texas Department of Public Safety reported that the woman was driving a gold-colored Chevrolet Malibu car, where she was transporting two illegal immigrants from El Salvador. The two immigrant women presented two fake driver's licenses to the officer. The driver said she had met the women at a safe house in Mission, Texas. He revealed that the plan was to take them until they passed the Border Patrol checkpoint, located in Falfurrias. The driver, who presented the officer with a card that identified her as a member of the organization La Unión del Pueblo Entero de Texas, was arrested and would be prosecuted for the crime of human trafficking. The two illegal immigrant women were referred to Border Patrol agents.

**[TX] In an educational event, questions answered about SENTRI, agricultural requirements and the CBP One app**

[Telemundo 48 El Paso](#) [4/18/2023 5:14 PM, Staff, Positive] reports the United States Customs and Border Protection will host a public outreach event at the Paso del Norte border crossing on April 19. CBP personnel maintain a display in the pedestrian inspection area to share important information with members of the traveling public. "Our goal is to routinely host events like this in the future. The information we will share is available online, but this event gives those who are more comfortable talking to a person the opportunity to do so." CBP subject matter experts will be available to discuss a variety of topics and answer questions related to SENTRI/DCL enrollment and use, CBP agricultural requirements, how to use the CBP One app, and more.

**[CA] CBP seizes \$21.1 million worth of fentanyl pills concealed within tractor-trailer carrying green beans**

[FOX News](#) [4/19/2023 4:01 AM, Lawrence Richard, 8967K, Neutral] reports officers with the U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) intercepted more than 3.5 million fentanyl pills Monday evening that a driver allegedly attempted to smuggle through the southern border and into California. In a statement released Tuesday, CBP said officers at the Otay Mesa port of entry found 3,520,000 fentanyl pills concealed inside a tractor-trailer that appeared to be transporting a shipment of green beans. The drugs are worth an estimated street value of \$21,120,000, the CBP said. "On Monday, at approximately 7:21 p.m., CBP officers encountered a 48-year-old male driver of a tractor-trailer, with a shipment manifested as green beans. During the initial inspection, a CBP officer referred the driver and cargo load for an intensive agriculture inspection," the statement read. It continued: "A non-intrusive inspection was utilized to conduct a full scan of the tractor-trailer. After examination, irregularities were observed and CBP officers requested a CBP human/narcotic detector dog, who alerted CBP officers to the presence of narcotics."

## **Transportation Security Administration**

**TSA chief sees record number of US airline passengers this summer**

[Miami Herald](#) [4/18/2023 1:25 PM, Alan Levin and Ellen M. Gilmer, Positive] reports that U.S. airline passenger levels this summer are projected to be "comfortably above" pre-pandemic numbers, the head of the Transportation Security Administration said. With disruptions to the air-travel network from COVID-19 fading, the TSA is girding for what would be a record season for air travel, Administrator David Pekoske said in an interview with Bloomberg. "I expect that we're going to see very, very strong demand all the way through the summertime, and that's that's what we're preparing for," Pekoske said. "It'll be a challenge, but we've faced this challenge in prior years and we've been able to be successful at it." Airports in Orlando, Dallas, Houston — and East Coast hubs with a large number of international flights, such as New York's John F. Kennedy International — are expected to be busiest, Pekoske said. High volume during the spring-break period this year is one reason for the projection, he said. The agency is prepared to use more overtime and will move screeners around the country to the busiest airports to keep security lines from becoming too long, he said. Demand for flying rebounded sharply last year, but airlines and the Federal Aviation Administration have at times been unable to keep up with demand with workforces that lagged. TSA has also struggled to hire enough people, but has seen better recruitment results and lower attrition rates so far this year. Pekoske attributed that to pay raises Congress approved last year. The pay boosts kick in in July, but Congress only

provided funding for one quarter. Lawmakers must provide more funding in fiscal 2024 and beyond to maintain the raises and keep the workforce satisfied, he said.

### **TSA Warns of Long Airport Waits if Congress Fails to Boost Pay**

[Bloomberg Government](#) [4/18/2023 9:31 AM, Ellen M. Gilmer, 9K, Neutral] reports that tens of thousands of Transportation Security Administration workers will lose long-awaited pay raises if Congress doesn't agree to extend them - a jolt that would drive away employees and result in longer waits for travelers. Administrator David Pekoske laid out the stakes, saying he's counting on lawmakers to build on funding they provided in the last annual appropriations cycle. "If we then try to pull pay back, you're going to see people leaving the organization quite significantly," he said in an interview with Bloomberg on Monday, adding that reversing pay raises is "Just not done." TSA Administrator David Pekoske speaks outside a congressional hearing in March 2023. The proposal to extend the raises Congress approved last year may face pushback as some Republicans object to the scope of the pay boosts, and others eye broad domestic spending cuts across federal agencies. TSA workers aren't on the standard pay schedule for federal employees and make roughly 30% less than their counterparts in other agencies. Congress last year provided money that covers raises for a quarter of fiscal 2023. TSA has spent the past several weeks notifying workers of the pay raises they can expect in July. The agency is already seeing larger pools of candidates for open jobs and lower rates of attrition since the pay raises were announced, Pekoske said. TSA is now seeking \$1.4 billion to maintain those raises and related spending on employee rights throughout the next fiscal year.

## **Federal Emergency Management Agency**

### **2 major hurricanes predicted in the Atlantic this season**

[Axios](#) [4/18/2023 6:24 AM, Lucille Sherman, Chelsea Brasted, 1011K, Neutral] reports climate researchers predict the Atlantic will churn out 13 named storms during this year's hurricane season, according to a Colorado State University forecast released last week. Six of those storms are predicted to be hurricanes, and two are major hurricanes, Axios' Jay Jordan writes. Researchers called the forecast "slightly below average," which could mean the Atlantic sees one less hurricane this year than it did last. If correct, the forecast would also mean less than the seasonal average number of storms (14), hurricanes (seven) and major hurricanes (three) that formed from 1991 to 2020. CSU's forecast is our first look this year at what may be to come when hurricane season begins June 1. It's one of several professional outlooks published ahead of the season. This could all change, Axios' Chelsea Brasted writes. "Given the conflicting signals between a potentially robust El Niño and an anomalously warm tropical and subtropical Atlantic, the team stresses that there is more uncertainty than normal with this outlook," the CSU report says. The 2022 hurricane season brought 14 named storms to the Atlantic. Hurricane Ian, which left hundreds in North Carolina without power and killed at least four in the state, was among them. This year, CSU researchers predict North Carolina has a 69% chance of being impacted by a named storm, and a 40% chance for hurricane impact.

### **[MS] Insurance losses from Mississippi tornado nearing \$100M**

[AP](#) [4/18/2023 6:09 PM, Michael Goldberg, 2565K, Negative] reports insurance losses from the March tornado that carved a path of destruction through parts of Mississippi are approaching \$100 million, and uninsured losses will likely exceed that number, the state

insurance department announced Tuesday. The damage is particularly severe in the Mississippi Delta, one of the poorest regions in the country. The March 24 tornado lashed the Delta with 200 mph (320 kph) winds, devastating the rural communities of Silver City and Rolling Fork. About 300 homes and businesses in Rolling Fork were destroyed, and 13 people were killed. Large stretches of Amory, a north Mississippi town, were also damaged. Nearly 380,000 cubic yards of debris have been cleared since the storm, according to the Mississippi Emergency Management Agency. Mississippi Insurance Commissioner Mike Chaney says data is still being collected, but the trajectory toward over \$100 million in both insured and uninsured losses underscores the daunting rebuilding process awaiting hard-hit areas. President Joe Biden, who toured Rolling Fork after the tornado, approved a disaster declaration for Mississippi, freeing up federal funds for temporary housing, home repairs and loans to cover uninsured property losses. The state legislature also approved about \$18.5 million for tornado relief in the latest state budget. The Red Cross is helping Mississippi assist 533 citizens with food and lodging in 37 hotels. As of April 17, the U.S. Small Business Administration and FEMA had approved more than \$12 million in aid, according to state officials.

**[FL] Fort Lauderdale counts flooded homes in hopes of FEMA help. So far, nearly 1,000**

[Miami Herald](#) [4/18/2023 6:05 PM, Alex Harris, Neutral] reports the toll of Fort Lauderdale's epic, unprecedented flood is starting to come into focus one week later, largely through a city-run map chronicling each waterlogged home. And there are many. As of Tuesday evening, the city had registered more than 900 flooded buildings within city limits. Most of them saw severe flooding, defined at more than 18 inches. Another 200 saw minor damage, still enough to require ripped-out floors and drywall. And the surveys will take days more. This tally could make a difference in securing aid from the Federal Emergency Management Agency, which Mayor Dean Trantalis said initially wrote off the 1-in-1,000-year deluge as a "non-qualifying event," meaning not serious or expensive enough. That would leave homeowners relying on private insurance companies or federal flood insurance — if they have them. But the city pushed back, and with the help of state emergency managers and U.S. Sen. Rick Scott, managed to convince the agency to visit and review the damage in person. Trantalis said that if the city can prove enough homes saw at least a foot of flooding, FEMA will open the door for government reimbursement and even individual assistance for residents in need. FEMA told the Herald that Florida's Department of Emergency Management also requested FEMA review damage to homes and public buildings to potentially unlock some money, and those inspections begin Wednesday. "These damage assessments are the first step in determining if federal assistance is needed," FEMA said. "At this time, FEMA has not received a major disaster declaration request from the state of Florida for the flooding that occurred in Broward County, Florida."

**[FL] Sanitation problems after flooding in Fort Lauderdale concern authorities**

[Telemundo](#) [4/18/2023 2:04 PM, Arlena Amaro, 22K, Negative] reports the water has receded in the city of Fort Lauderdale but the number of damaged homes is increasing. The streets are littered with damaged furniture and the unsalvageable belongings of dozens of families that have been piled outside homes. The city reports 585 homes with major damage, which means that the owners had 18 feet or more of water inside their homes, and according to an epidemiologist, that accumulated water brings its dangers. "If you have contact (with stagnant water) you can get infections ... if you swallow it you can end up in the hospital," warns Dr. Dadilia Garcés, an epidemiologist. These floods coincide with the

arrival tomorrow of the phenomenon known as the King Tide that occurs when the earth is closer to the sun and the National Meteorological Service forecasts it for Wednesday and Thursday night. Residents of the Edgewood neighborhood near the Fort Lauderdale airport are not the only ones affected; dozens of businesses in the area were also affected after heavy rains a few days ago. [Editorial note: consult video at source link]

#### **[IN] Biden declares parts of Indiana major disaster area after storms**

[Northeast Indiana Public Radio](#) [4/18/2023 5:18 PM, George Hale, Neutral] reports President Joe Biden on Saturday declared a major disaster in parts of Indiana after a deadly storm swept through the state earlier this month. Biden's presidential action orders federal aid to supplement state and local efforts in areas affected by the storms, which killed five people in two counties. Federal funds are available for Allen, Benton, Clinton, Grant, Howard, Johnson, Lake, Monroe, Morgan, Owen, Sullivan, and White counties. The statement said more counties could be designated after assessments are completed. Three people died after a tornado struck Sullivan, Indiana on March 31. At least 200 structures in the county sustained major damage. Two others died in McCormick's Creek State Park, which sustained heavy damage. FEMA's Brian F. Schiller will coordinate federal recovery operations.

#### **[MN] Minnesota braces for flooding on Mississippi, other rivers**

[AP](#) [4/18/2023 4:43 PM, Staff, Neutral] reports the Metropolitan Airports Commission temporarily shut down flight operations for much of Tuesday at the St. Paul Downtown Airport while crews installed flood control barriers to hold back rising water on the Mississippi River. St. Paul, Stillwater and other Minnesota communities have been busy preparing for major flooding on the Mississippi and St. Croix Rivers, which are swollen with water from one of the snowiest winters on record in the region. Temperatures in the 80s last week accelerated the spring melt. The St. Croix, on the Wisconsin border, was expected to reach major flood stage in Stillwater on Wednesday night and crest Friday before beginning a slow retreat. The city's temporarily levee should be high enough, officials said. Gov. Tim Walz on Monday signed a bill to provide \$40 million to replenish a disaster aid fund that the state can tap for responding to expected flooding across the state.

## **Secret Service**

#### **Secret Service Welcomes Veteran Special Agent Ronald Rowe as Deputy Director**

[United States Secret Service](#) [4/18/2023 8:00 AM, Staff, Neutral] reports Ronald L. Rowe Jr. has been named Deputy Director of the U.S. Secret Service (USSS). His tenure will begin in the coming months, marking the latest step in a career with the agency that began in 1999. Rowe replaces outgoing Deputy Director Faron Paramore, who will retire after dedicating more than three decades of service to the agency and its protectees. "Ron and I worked side by side for years. His extensive resume with the agency gives him a breadth of knowledge. I have come to trust and rely upon his decision-making abilities and good counsel," said USSS Director Kimberly Cheatle. "I also wish departing Deputy Director Faron Paramore the best as he moves to the next chapter of his life." Rowe currently serves as the Assistant Director of the Office of Intergovernmental and Legislative Affairs for the USSS. This senior executive position liaises with federal, state and local partners to support the protective and investigative missions of the Secret Service and works with members of Congress to communicate the agency's needs and priorities. Rowe previously worked as



the Chief of Staff for Director James M. Murray and as the Deputy Assistant Director of the Office of Protective Operations, where he and Director Cheatle worked together to oversee all protective operations for the president and vice president. Rowe served as the National Special Security Events (NSSE) Coordinator for a major Secret Service security operation in 2016. In this role, he managed the operations of a combined force of more than 7,000 local, state and federal law-enforcement officers.

**[NY] MCSO: 2 men, teen, arrested for attempting to use credit card skimmer**

[Rochesterfirst.com](#) [4/18/2023 1:51 PM, George Gandy, 30K, Positive, Secondary] reports two men and a teen were arrested for allegedly installing a credit card skimmer onto an ATM. The Monroe County Sheriff's Office said that the three suspects were trying to install the device on an ESL machine on East Henrietta Road. Deputies arrested the suspects upon arrival. Credit card skimmers are illegal card readers that would be put on ATMs or gas pumps to steal someone's credit card information. MCSO identified the three suspects as Radeck Bodan, 31, from the Czech Republic, Danut V. Urseiu, 30, of Romania, and a 17-year-old Romanian citizen. Deputies said Urseiu tried giving them a fake Italian ID. The teenager was released from custody with no charges. The two men face these charges: Urseiu was charged with second-degree criminal possession of a forged instrument, third-degree criminal mischief, fifth-degree conspiracy, and second-degree unlawful possession of a skimmer device. Bohdan is charged with third-degree criminal mischief and fifth-degree conspiracy. Urseiu was arraigned at Henrietta Town Court before he was taken by US Immigration and Customs Enforcement. Bohdan was released on an appearance ticket.

**[DC] Toddler slips past fence and onto White House grounds**

[Washington Post](#) [4/18/2023 3:31 PM, Omari Daniels, 6902K, Positive, Primary] reports a toddler on a visit to D.C. with his parents from Canada managed to slip through the White House fence and briefly enter the grounds Tuesday before he was scooped up by uniformed officers, the Secret Service said. The incident — first reported by the Associated Press, which captured a photograph of the youngster being carried by police — occurred around 11 a.m., according to U.S. Secret Service spokesperson Lt. Paul Mayhair. Officials said that after the child squeezed through the metal fencing on the north side of the White House, officers quickly retrieved him and reunited him with his parents. Mayhair said the incident would not rank among the most significant or unusual things he has seen in his 13-year career with the Secret Service. But the boy appears to be the first person to get past a new, taller fence installed outside the White House in recent years — albeit not by going over it. "The Secret Service Uniformed Division today encountered a curious young visitor along the White House north fence line who briefly entered White House grounds," the Secret Service said in a statement. "The White House security systems instantly triggered Secret Service officers and the toddler and parents were quickly reunited." Anthony Guglielmi, chief of communications for the U.S. Secret Service, said that responding officers took care to not respond too aggressively in a way that could scare the toddler. He said the incident would be one that the toddler's parents would not let them forget. "This might be a story around the Thanksgiving dinner table for sure," Guglielmi said. Asked whether the agency would now babyproof the fence, Mayhair referred the question to the White House.

Reported similarly:

[Politico](#) [4/18/2023 1:04 PM, Matt Berg, 2103K, Neutral, Secondary]

[The Hill](#) [4/18/2023 12:25 PM, Alex Gangitano, 1592K, Neutral]

[AP](#) [4/18/2023 3:41 PM, Staff, Neutral, Secondary]

[CNN](#) [4/18/2023 1:38 PM, Arlette Saenz, 6098K, Neutral, Primary]

[FOX News](#) [4/18/2023 1:22 PM, Julia Musto, 8967K, Neutral, Primary]

[\(B\) News 4 NY at 4](#) [4/18/2023 4:24 PM, David Ushery]

**[WV] Former Franklin pastor charged with sex crimes against children**

[Williamson](#) [4/18/2023 1:34 PM, Matt Masters, 7K, Positive, Secondary] reports a Franklin pastor has been charged with six counts of sexual exploitation of a minor following an April 10 Williamson County Grand Jury indictment. According to court documents, 50-year-old Daryl Hayes was found to have been in possession of six videos “that include a minor engaged in sexual activity” with the associated dates of Oct. 17, Nov. 30, and Dec. 9, 2022. Detectives said that Hayes uploaded the videos online from a church computer where he worked. The identity, ages or number of victims depicted in the videos has not been made public, but the Williamson County Sheriff’s Office said in a news release that “nothing in this investigation led detectives to believe there were any local child victims, or any additional concerns for the public.” While WCSO did not publicly state which church Hayes served as a “lead pastor,” Berry’s Chapel Church of Christ confirmed to The News that Hayes had served with the Franklin church and has since been terminated.

**[NC] Alleged 7-Eleven robber caught on Monday: Stallings PD**

[QC News](#) [4/18/2023 6:56 AM, Matthew Memrick, Positive] reports Stallings Police caught an alleged robbery suspect who stole items from a 7-Eleven on Monday. Authorities say Tyler Holmes fled the scene of a noon robbery on Idlewild Road. Stallings officers worked with Union County Sheriff’s Office, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department, and the United States Secret Service to locate Holmes and make an arrest. Holmes made it less than 10 miles out of town before police had him in custody. Police say Holmes is responsible for three separate robbery incidents with a dangerous weapon in Stallings and a few additional incidents in the Hemby Bridge/Indian Trail area.

**[OH] Counterfeit bills reportedly used in BG stores**

[Sentinel Tribune](#) [4/18/2023 10:30 AM, Staff, 4K, Neutral, Secondary] reports Bowling Green police took three reports of counterfeit bills over the weekend. Police were called Friday at 6:12 p.m. to the 100 block of South Main Street for a theft report. The store employee told police two men and a woman had entered the store and were very loud. The men approached the counter and handed over three crumpled \$20 bills to make their purchase. The employer said he tossed the bills into the register without really looking at them as he was more concerned with hurrying the three people out of the store, according to the Bowling Green Police Division report. After they left, the employer went next door to borrow a counterfeit pen to check the bills and realized the three bills were counterfeit. Camera footage showed a description of the men and that was given to other officers in the area. One patrol officer spoke with individuals in a business in the 100 block of East Wooster Street where one of the men had unsuccessfully attempted to make a purchase with the fake bills, according to the report.

**[LA] LSU Alumna Leslie Pichon: U.S. Secret Service Special Agent In Charge And Louisiana Cyber Champion**

[Louisiana State University](#) [4/18/2023 9:00 AM, Staff, Neutral] reports LSU speech communication alumna Leslie Pichon is one of the nation’s premier cybersecurity leaders. After spending more than 20 years investigating financial fraud and protecting three consecutive American presidents, she is now working to secure Louisiana against cyber

threats as Special Agent in Charge of the New Orleans field office of the United States Secret Service. Pichon works with multiple cybersecurity partners to protect Louisiana: law enforcement, including the Louisiana State Police Cyber Crime Unit; Louisiana National Guard; Louisiana's ESF-17 emergency response function to cyberattacks as coordinated by the Governor's Office—and LSU. "Coming to the New Orleans field office in 2018, I made sure we joined the state's cybersecurity commission, and that opened the door to all of these growing partnerships," Pichon said. "Academia is so important because that's where our next agents will be coming from. And if it's important to pick a school, why not the best school? Now that LSU is an NSA Center of Academic Excellence in Cyber Operations, our partnership can lead to a more permanent collaboration," Pichon said. "That's my end goal. Once a Tiger, always a Tiger."

**[LA] Dine-n-dash with fake money leads to arrest of Tennessee man accused of similar crimes throughout Terrebonne Parish**

[Fox 8 WVUE New Orleans](#) [4/18/2023 3:01 PM, Jesse Brooks, 39K, Positive, Secondary] reports that, after several businesses in Terrebonne Parish reported being targeted by a man using fake cash to make purchases before leaving the scene, a man was arrested in the Houma area, according to Sheriff Tim Soignet. Charles Thomas Parkerson, 61, of Brentwood, Tennessee, was booked for several theft charges following an investigation that was prompted by his alleged attempt to dine-n-dash from a Houma restaurant. Deputies say that on April 12, Parkerson left a restaurant in Houma after using fake money for the cost of food and alcoholic beverages. They also say that the owners made the public aware of the incident through social media, which led other local businesses to claim that they had the same experience with Parkerson in recent months. Detectives say they were able to link evidence from a second location of an alleged crime with the one that occurred at the restaurant. Parkerson was booked for and later released with a \$2,500 cash bond.

**[IN] Indiana Senate approves handgun training fund for teachers**

[AP](#) [4/18/2023 1:33 PM, Arleigh Rodgers, Neutral, Primary] reports Indiana state Senators advanced a bill Tuesday that would make state funding available for teachers seeking firearms training, a move critics have said could increase the number of guns in school to the detriment of students. The 42-8 vote comes after this past weekend's three-day National Rifle Association convention in Indianapolis, which fell on the second anniversary of a mass shooting in the city at a FedEx facility that killed nine people. The House bill first advanced in February, amid teachers' objections that having additional guns in schools would worsen school safety. On Tuesday, two Democrats joined all Republican state Senators in voting for the bill. Supporters have said the 40 hours of optional training would help teachers learn how to defend themselves and students if needed, especially in situations with an active shooter. State law currently allows school districts to permit teachers to be armed, but no training is mandated. The proposed training would be voluntary and paid for by the state. Schools could also apply for such funding in the event of a school shooting "to cover the costs of counseling" for students, teachers and other school employees, the bill states. Bill sponsor Republican Sen. Travis Holdman said before Tuesday's vote that he wished the training was mandatory, "but we can't get that as a General Assembly, because I have tried that for the last number of years."

**[MI] Michigan State selects security firm to review mass shooting**

[AP](#) [4/18/2023 3:14 PM, Staff, Neutral] reports officials at Michigan State University have picked a security firm to review the school's response to a mass shooting earlier this year.

Anthony McRae shot eight students on campus on Feb. 13. Three of the students died. McRae later killed himself off campus as police approached. The university has selected Ohio-based Security Risk Management Consultants to review all aspects of the response, ranging from police action to support offered to students and faculty after the shootings, the Detroit Free Press reported Tuesday. University officials said the firm is expected to develop a series of recommendations that will be made available to the public.

## **Coast Guard**

### **[Mexico] American sailors still missing as Mexico ramps up efforts to unravel mystery**

[FOX News](#) [4/18/2023 11:06 AM, Peter Aitken, 8967K, Neutral] reports that the Mexican navy expanded its search effort for three American sailors who have not been heard from in two weeks. The navy said it is using four patrol boats and a twin-engine prop airplane to search the area but have not reported any signs of the missing trio. Kerry O'Brien, Frank O'Brien and William Gross set sail on their vessel Ocean Bound, last making contact with anyone on April 4 when they were near Mazatlán, Mexico, the Coast Guard said over the weekend. The three Americans were aboard the 44-foot La Fitte sailing-vessel called Ocean Bound, which set off for San Diego but failed to make contact on April 6 when it was supposed to stop in Cabo San Lucas. Ellen Argall, mother of Pennsylvania native Kerry O'Brien, said her daughter has had a love of the water her whole life and told a local CBS News outlet that she is confident her daughter is safe. "I just keep hoping and praying that I'll hear some good news. I want good news, not bad news," she reportedly said, adding that waiting for news was "Pure agony." "I'm trying to hold myself together," Argall added. The operation to locate the trio and their vessel is led by the District 11 Coast Guard, which covers California, Nevada, Utah and Arizona, as well as offshore waters of Mexico and Central America. The Coast Guard said marinas in Baja California have also not reported seeing the vessel. "Search and rescue coordinators have contacted marinas throughout Baja, Mexico, with negative sightings of the vessel," the Coast Guard explained on Saturday.

## **CISA/Cybersecurity**

### **DHS S&T's Kathryn Coulter Mitchell Becomes New Chief of Staff at CISA as Kiersten Todt Returns to Private Sector**

[HS Today](#) [4/18/2023 10:33 AM, Staff, 10K, Positive] reports that the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency announced today that Kiersten Todt will be departing from her role as CISA Chief of Staff to return to the private sector, while continuing to work with Director Easterly and the agency in a senior advisory capacity. Todt will be replaced by Kathryn Coulter Mitchell, currently the Deputy Under Secretary for the Department of Homeland Security Science and Technology Directorate. Kathryn will support the planning, allocation of resources, and implementation of the Agency's Strategic Plan. "I'm really excited to have Kathryn join our team at CISA," said CISA Director Jen Easterly. "She brings the perfect combination of experience and expertise to the job, and I look forward to working with her as CISA grows and matures as an agency." "I'm thrilled to be joining CISA at this critical time for the agency and can't wait to get to work," said Coulter Mitchell. "I thank Director Easterly for the opportunity and look forward to working with the entire team as we lead the national effort to understand, manage, and reduce risk to our cyber and

physical infrastructure.” “I want to thank my dear friend and our fabulous outgoing Chief of Staff, Kiersten Todt,” added Director Easterly. “Kiersten’s contributions to this Administration cannot be overstated - helping to transform CISA into America’s cyber defense agency, while spearheading a number of CISA priorities including collaboration with industry, corporate cyber responsibility, the stand up of our Cybersecurity Advisory Committee, and the co-creation of our People First culture. All of us at CISA are grateful to Kiersten for her tireless work over the past 22 months and look forward to her continued engagement with CISA as we execute our agency’s critical mission.”

### **NSO hacked iPhones without user clicks in 3 new ways, researchers say**

[Washington Post](#) [4/18/2023 2:43 PM, Joseph Menn, 6902K, Neutral] reports that Israeli spyware maker NSO Group deployed at least three new “zero-click” hacks against iPhones last year, finding ways to penetrate some of Apple’s latest software, researchers at Citizen Lab have discovered. The attacks struck phones with iOS 15 and early versions of iOS 16 operating software, Citizen Lab said in a report Tuesday. The lab, based at the University of Toronto, shared its results with Apple, which has now fixed the flaws that NSO had been exploiting. The attacks targeted human rights activists who were investigating the 2015 mass kidnapping of 43 student protesters in Mexico, other suspected military abuses, and the related government response, Citizen Lab said. Mexico has been a major NSO customer. According to Citizen Lab, one of the attacks, in September 2022, coincided with a report by international experts challenging government evidence in the 2015 case and its interference with the investigation. It’s the latest sign of NSO’s ongoing efforts to create spyware that penetrates iPhones without users taking any actions that allow it in. Citizen Lab has detected multiple NSO hacking methods in past years while examining the phones of likely targets, including human rights workers and journalists. While it is unsettling to civil rights groups that NSO was able to come up with multiple new means of attack, it did not surprise them. “It is their core business,” said Bill Marczak, a senior researcher at Citizen Lab. “Despite Apple notifying targets, and the Commerce Department putting NSO on a blacklist, and the Israeli ministry cracking down on export licenses — which are all good steps and raising costs — NSO for the moment is absorbing those costs,” Marczak said. Given the financial and legal fights NSO is involved in, Marczak said it was an open question how long NSO could keep finding or buying new exploits that are effective.

### **Russian-aligned cyber groups are seeking to target Western infrastructure, U.K. says**

[NBC News](#) [4/18/2023 7:02 PM, Dan De Luce, 3304K, Neutral] reports Russian-aligned cyber groups outside Moscow’s formal control represent a growing threat and are looking to target critical infrastructure in the West, according to Britain’s cybersecurity agency. Motivated more by ideology than by money, the groups, which surfaced after Russia invaded Ukraine, pose a potential risk to crucial infrastructure systems in Western countries, especially those that are “poorly protected,” the U.K. National Cyber Security Center, or NCSC, said in an alert issued Wednesday local time. “Although these groups can align to Russia’s perceived interests, they are often not subject to formal state control, and so their actions are less constrained and their targeting broader than traditional cyber crime actors,” the NCSC alert said. “This makes them less predictable.” The groups often focus on denial-of-service attacks, defacing websites and spreading misinformation, according to the alert. But some “have stated a desire to achieve a more disruptive and destructive impact against Western critical national infrastructure, including in the U.K.,” it said. Without outside assistance, it is unlikely that the groups “have the capability to deliberately cause a destructive, rather than disruptive, impact in the short term,” the cybersecurity center said.



But the groups may become more effective over time, and the NCSC recommends that organizations “act now to manage the risk against successful future attacks.”

### **[DC] DC Health Link data breach blamed on human error; 17 House members, 585 aides affected in breach**

[AP](#) [4/18/2023 5:24 PM, Ashraf Khalil, Neutral] reports the recent data breach of personal information for thousands of users of Washington D.C.’s health insurance exchange, including members of Congress, was caused by basic human error, according to a top administrator. The revelation comes from prepared statements submitted in advance of Wednesday’s congressional hearing to investigate the issue. In her statement, Mila Kofman, Executive Director of the District of Columbia Health Benefit Exchange Authority, states that the data breach was first discovered in early March and includes basic personal information — including date of birth, Social Security numbers and contact information — for “56,415 current and past customers including members of Congress, their families, and staff.” Kofman states her office immediately brought in the FBI Cyber Security Task Force and the security flaw was quickly tracked down to a particular computer server that was “misconfigured to allow access to the reports on the server without proper authentication. Based on our investigation to-date, we believe the misconfiguration was not intentional but human mistake.” This security flaw enabled an unidentified hacker to steal two reports that contained the client information — some of which was later offered up for sale in an online forum. The issue first came to public attention when members of the House of Representatives and the Senate were informed that they and their staffers may have been affected. Kofman states that the stolen data “included that of 17 Members of the House and 43 of their dependents, and 585 House staff members and of their 231 dependents.” On Wednesday, the House Oversight Committee’s subcommittee on cybersecurity, information technology, and government innovation will question Kofman and Catherine Szpindor, the chief administrative officer for the House of Representatives in a joint session with the Committee on House Administration’s oversight subcommittee. [Axios](#) [4/18/2023 4:43 PM, Sam Sabin, 1011K, Negative] reports seventeen House members and 585 congressional aides were affected by a data breach at the D.C.’s health insurance marketplace last month, the marketplace’s director will tell Congress on Wednesday. Both Congress and insurance marketplace DC Health Link have been investigating the scope of the recent breach following posts on underground hacker forums selling stolen customer data. Wednesday’s hearing will mark the first time both parties will discuss the findings from their investigations — including how the breach happened and the estimated scope of the incident.

### **[AZ] Hackers Stole School Data. The District Left Teachers in the Dark**

[Bloomberg](#) [4/18/2023 8:22 AM, Jack Gillum, 168K, Neutral] reports that classrooms across Tucson, Arizona, were ravaged by ransomware in January that locked up computer systems and forced teachers to revamp lesson plans. Officials in southern Arizona’s largest school district tried assuring students and staff for weeks that, despite the cyberattack, sensitive data wasn’t stolen. But Bloomberg News found that cybercriminals made off with gigabytes of files, containing tens of thousands of current and former employees’ Social Security numbers and other confidential records. They then uploaded the information in February to the dark web for anyone to access with an easily downloadable browser. The data were still accessible as recently as April 17. Examples of the leaked files include a high schooler’s medical records; another detailed arguments for expelling several students. There are documents showing a confidential settlement agreement with Joann Anderson, a former employee who had previously sued the Tucson Unified School District in federal

court, alleging discrimination. "They told me, 'There was no evidence of a data breach,'" Anderson said of a recent conversation with a school district lawyer, who, she says, told her that nothing was taken. Ransomware can wreak havoc: Financial institutions flagged almost \$1.2 billion in likely ransomware-related payments in 2021 alone, according to the US Treasury Department. Many cases go unreported, so the actual number may be higher.

## **National Security News**

### **US citizens, Russian nationals charged in influence campaign investigation**

[The Hill](#) [4/18/2023 2:24 PM, Jared Gans, 1592K, Neutral] reports a group of four U.S. citizens and three Russian nationals have been charged in connection to an investigation into a foreign influence campaign. The Justice Department (DOJ) said in a release on Tuesday that a federal grand jury issued a superseding indictment against the individuals, alleging they were working on behalf of the Russian government and with the Russian Federal Security Service (FSB), the country's main security and intelligence force, to influence U.S. politics over multiple years. The indictment adds to a case the DOJ has been pursuing against Aleksandr Viktorovich Ionov, the founder and president of a Moscow-based organization called the Anti-Globalization Movement of Russia. He was charged in July with conspiring to have U.S. citizens act as agents on behalf of the Russian government. Officials allege Ionov used his organization to conduct the foreign influence campaign with supervision from FSB officers. The superseding indictment names Aleksey Borisovich Sukhodolov and Yegor Sergeyevich Popov as FSB officers who were responsible for directing the campaign. The release states that the three Russian defendants "recruited, funded and directed" political groups in the United States to act illegally as unregistered agents of Moscow and spread pro-Russian propaganda. The four U.S. citizens who are being indicted are people whom Ionov allegedly recruited to participate. They are Omali Yeshitela, Penny Joanne Hess, Jesse Nevel and Augustus C. Romain Jr. Yeshitela, Hess and Nevel are residents of St. Petersburg, Fla., and St. Louis, while Romain is a resident of St. Petersburg and Atlanta. All seven indicted individuals are being charged with conspiring to have U.S. citizens act as illegal agents of the Russian government and could face up to five years in prison if convicted. Yeshitela, Hess and Nevel are also being charged with acting as agents of Russia without notifying the U.S. government and could face up to 10 years in prison if convicted. A separate criminal complaint charging a Russian national with conspiring with an FSB officer to act as an illegal agent of Moscow has also been unsealed, the release states.

Reported similarly:

[Washington Post](#) [4/18/2023 2:02 PM, Devlin Barrett, 6902K, Negative]

[AP](#) [4/18/2023 3:29 PM, Curt Anderson, Negative]

### **America's Allies Are Not Pleased About the Intel Leaks**

[Bloomberg](#) [4/18/2023 4:18 AM, Staff, 5543K, Neutral] reports the US intelligence community was relieved when a suspect was arrested last week in the leak of highly sensitive classified documents about America's friends and adversaries. But the fallout is far from over. The leaks are a huge embarrassment for the Biden administration, which is moving quickly to reassure the UK, Israel, and other allies. Bloomberg national security correspondent Courtney McBride joins this episode to talk about US efforts to repair the damage and shore up its credibility with leading partners around the world—and what the

government is doing to prevent leaks like this from happening in the future. [Editorial note: consult audio at source link]

### **U.S. Spied on U.N. Secretary-General Guterres, Leaked Documents Show**

[US News & World Report](#) [4/18/2023 1:07 PM, Paul D. Shinkman, 33671K, Neutral] reports that the U.S. spied on U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, listening in on conversations he had with aides and other diplomatic officials about his frustrations toward Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and other contentious issues, according to highly classified leaked documents - the latest in a massive and apparently ongoing national security breach. The Washington Post first reported late Monday on two new documents that appear to confirm the U.S. invasion of Guterres' private communications, piling on to similar revelations last week. The leaked documents appear to contain a series of quotations by Guterres expressing skepticism about traveling to Ukraine to meet with Zelenskyy and "outrage" over being denied permission to visit Ethiopia, two countries that have been ravaged by war. The documents contain observations by his aides as well as apparent analysis from U.S. intelligence officials about the chief diplomat's state of mind about these top-priority issues. The secretary-general now becomes the latest high-profile international official or U.S. ally revealed to be the target of U.S. espionage operations, according to damning information documented in the release of top secret documents in recent weeks through the gaming platform Discord and later disseminated on Twitter and Telegram. Department of Justice Officials last week arrested Jack Teixeira, a member of the Massachusetts Air National Guard who had top-secret security clearance, for allegedly orchestrating the leak. White House and Pentagon officials would not say on Monday whether they believe they had contained the leak, deferring to ongoing investigations by the departments of Justice and Defense.

### **United Nations issues rare rebuke of United States over leaked documents**

[CNN](#) [4/18/2023 3:49 PM, Richard Roth, 225K, Neutral] reports that, weeks after a trove of classified US intelligence documents were posted on social media, the United Nations issued a rare rebuke of the United States after reports that those documents allegedly revealed the US was spying on the Secretary-General and other high ranking UN officials. "The UN has made it clear that such actions are inconsistent with the obligations of the United States of America enumerated in the UN charter and the Convention on the Privileges and Immunities of the United Nations," UN Spokesman Stephane Dujarric read in a statement at his noon briefing Tuesday. The UN also sent a note to the US Mission at the United Nations in New York regarding the leak, according to Dujarric. The stern reaction comes after a BBC report last week on a US intelligence leak which accused Guterres of being too soft on Russia. According to the broadcaster, the documents in the leak also includes detail of a private conversation between Guterres and his deputy Amina Mohammed. "The Secretary-General has been at this job, and in the public eye, for a long time. He's not surprised by the fact that people are spying on him and listening in on his private conversations," Guterres' office said in a statement Thursday.

### **Security researchers start playing spyware whack-a-mole following Biden EO**

[Axios](#) [4/18/2023 12:21 PM, Sam Sabin, 1011K, Neutral] reports that now that the Biden administration has taken a stronger stance against some commercial spyware vendors, the real race begins: detecting and squashing them. The big picture: Spyware vendors are known to operate in the shadows and obfuscate their business structure to confuse potential buyers. Dark market dealings, generic intermediaries and swiftly shifting practices

can make identifying dubious vendors feel like playing whack-a-mole to researchers. The most egregious form of spyware allows a user to target someone else's phone without them knowing, giving unfettered access to phone calls, text messages and real-time location. And many vendors, such as well-known Israeli company NSO Group, in recent years have been spotted selling their tools to both authoritarian and democratic governments that abuse the tech to target dissidents, human rights activists, politicians and journalists. Driving the news: Researchers at the University of Toronto's Citizen Lab uncovered new details last week about how Israeli spyware vendor QuaDream's products were used around the world to target journalists, political opposition figures and an NGO worker. Exposure from the Citizen Lab report was the nail in the coffin for QuaDream, as it was forced to shut down over the weekend following dwindling sales. Between the lines: Experts tell Axios research like Citizen Lab's will play an outsize role in containing the commercial spyware ecosystem as the Biden administration enforces it through a new executive order. The order bans U.S. government use of commercial spyware that either "poses significant counterintelligence or security risks" or has "significant risks of improper use by a foreign government or foreign person." Proving this will require insights into not only which vendors come with those risks, but also which of their subsidiaries.

### **US must stem 'iron river' of guns flowing to Latin America, activists say**

[Reuters](#) [4/18/2023 7:05 AM, Sarah Morland, 5239K, Neutral] reports U.S. guns, many of them exported legally, are flowing into Latin America in an "iron river" ending in the hands of drug cartels and abusive security forces, activists said Monday, calling for greater oversight from U.S. law and federal agencies. More than half of "crime guns" recovered and traced in Central America are sourced from the United States, according to U.S. gun control agency ATF. This level nears 70% for Mexico and is around 80% across the Caribbean. "It's called the iron river and it's flooding countries to the south," Elizabeth Burke of U.S. non-profit Global Action on Gun Violence said at an event organized by the Center for American Progress in Washington. Burke called for rules preventing manufacturers from selling to dealers with lax distribution practices. Manufacturers should also stop selling armor-piercing weapons and guns that can easily be modified to shoot hundreds of bullets at a time, she said. John Lindsay-Poland, an activist from Stop US Arms to Mexico, added that lax license rules and enforcement helped facilitate the cross-border flow of arms - including military-grade weapons desired by cartels. Sixteen U.S. states and a handful of Caribbean governments last month expressed support for Mexico's appeal in a civil lawsuit against U.S. gun manufacturers, which seeks to hold them responsible for facilitating the trafficking of deadly weapons.

### **New report from Senate Republicans doubles down on COVID lab leak theory**

[ABC News](#) [4/18/2023 9:44 AM, Sasha Pezenik, Josh Margolin, Kaitlyn Morris, and Terry Moran, 22K, Negative] reports that a new report from Senate Republicans doubles down on the theory that COVID-19 emerged from an accidental lab leak in Wuhan - and possibly, even more than one leak. While their investigation concedes that "Both hypotheses are plausible," the nearly 300-page document released by the minority on the Senate health subcommittee makes a circumstantial case that the "preponderance of circumstantial evidence" points to "an unintentional research-related incident" - an undetected aerosol leak - likely at the Wuhan Institute of Virology, as the first spark which would ultimately ignite the pandemic. The WIV has long been known for not just its extensive research on bat coronaviruses, but also poor biosafety conditions while dealing with risky contagion samples which need proper containment, investigators wrote. The document says an initial leak may

have occurred "Sometime before September 2019" and began circulating in Wuhan. Once WIV and Chinese government authorities realized what had happened, officials scrambled to quickly and quietly develop a vaccine that could be deployed to contain the outbreak - all before the world could learn the truth, according to the authors. That rush to develop a vaccine may have led to a second accidental lab leak - one which, in turn, would lead to the global pandemic, the investigators believe. No definitive conclusion has yet been reached on the origins of COVID but the intelligence and scientific communities remain split on whether the most likely scenario is a natural spillover or an accidental lab leak.

**[Brazil] Brazil's Lula reaches out to China and Russia, stoking U.S. unease**

[Washington Post](#) [4/19/2023 12:00 AM, Ishaan Tharoor, 6902K, Neutral] reports it may have been a high-water mark in the relationship between the administrations in Washington and Brasília. Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva called on President Biden in the White House in February. The visit came weeks after far-right protesters in the Brazilian capital had stormed the major institutions of the country's federal democracy in an angry challenge to Lula's election as president. Their failed insurrection in some ways mirrored the experience of the United States with the Capitol riot two years prior and loomed over the meetings between the two leaders. A joint statement from Biden and Lula affirmed their pledge "to work together to strengthen democratic institutions" and "continue to reject extremism and violence in politics." On a number of other fronts, including concerns over human rights and climate change, they seemed to be in happy ideological agreement as left-leaning leaders of the Western hemisphere's largest democracies. But the easy optics of the moment belied the deeper differences that lingered and only grew more pronounced in the weeks thereafter. Lula skipped Biden's second Summit for Democracy at the end of last month and did not join Biden's declaration there condemning Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Lula also didn't agree to an earlier request from German Chancellor Olaf Scholz to send munitions to help Kyiv's war effort. Instead, on a major trip to China at the end of last week, Lula called on the United States and the European Union to "stop encouraging war" and "start talking about peace." The tenor of his remarks elicited a biting reaction from the Biden administration.

**[Turkey] Biden administration moves forward with major F-16 equipment deal for Turkey**

[Washington Times](#) [4/18/2023 6:06 AM, Mike Glenn, 261K, Neutral] reports that the Biden administration wants to sell Turkey aviation software upgrades for its current fleet of F-16 fighter aircraft in a deal valued at \$259 million. The White House this week notified Congress of its intent to close the deal. The deal would help bring Turkey's F-16s up to NATO standards and improve its ability to operate alongside allies, according to the Defense Security Cooperation Agency. "The proposed sale will improve Turkey's capability to meet current and future threats and assist in defending its homeland and U.S. personnel there," the DSCA said in a statement. "The proposed sale of this equipment and support will not alter the basic military balance in the region." If the deal goes through, it will be the first major military sale to Turkey that Congress has approved in years. Turkey's request to buy billions of dollars worth of F-16s remains in limbo amid continuing opposition in Congress over a number of Turkish policies, including most recently Ankara's balking at support for Sweden's admittance into NATO. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has accused Sweden of harboring opponents of his regime. Lawmakers in Washington said they would hold up the sale until he changes his position. If approved, the sale will include hardware



and software upgrades and support, equipment, training, spare parts, and technical and logistical support services.

**[Ukraine] Putin rallies his troops with 2nd Ukraine visit in 2 months**

[AP](#) [4/18/2023 9:00 AM, Adam Pemble, 364K, Neutral] reports Russian President Vladimir Putin visited command posts of the Kremlin's forces fighting in Ukraine, officials said Tuesday, as the war approaches its 14th month and Kyiv readies a possible counteroffensive with Western-supplied weapons. A video released by the Kremlin and broadcast by Russian state television showed Putin arriving by helicopter at the command post of Russian forces in southern Ukraine's Kherson province and then flying to the headquarters of the Russian National Guard in Luhansk province, which is in the east. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said the visits took place Monday. The trip, Putin's second in two months to Russian-occupied territory in Ukraine, represented an apparent attempt by the Russian leader to rally his troops and demonstrate his authority. Zelenskyy's visits to areas of his country that have felt the brunt of Russia's full-scale invasion gathered pace last month as he shuttled across the country, often by train. As with Putin, the Ukrainian leader's wartime trips usually aren't publicized until after he's already left an area. [Editorial note: consult video at source link]

Reported similarly:

[Washington Post](#) [4/18/2023 7:20 AM, Mary Ilyushina, 6902K, Neutral]

[CBS News](#) [4/18/2023 7:33 AM, Haley Ott, 76K, Negative]

**[Russia] Russia unveils secretive weapon to target SpaceX's Starlink in Ukraine**

[SFGate](#) [4/18/2023 11:17 AM, Alex Horton, 1201K, Neutral] reports that Russia's quest to sabotage Ukrainian forces' internet access by targeting the Starlink satellite operations that billionaire Elon Musk has provided to Kyiv since the war's earliest days appears to be more advanced than previously known, according to a classified U.S. intelligence report obtained by The Washington Post. Moscow has experimented for months with its Tobol electronic warfare systems in a bid to disrupt Starlink's transmissions in Ukraine, the top-secret assessment, which has not been previously disclosed, contends. The document, among a cache of sensitive materials leaked online through the messaging platform Discord, dates to March and does not indicate whether any of Russia's tests have been successful. The intelligence finding is striking nonetheless as it appears to affirm what observers had only hypothesized previously: that a program ostensibly designed to protect the Kremlin's satellites can be employed instead to attack those used by its adversaries. SpaceX, the firm that owns Starlink, declined to comment. The Pentagon did not address questions about the leaked assessment. "These systems constitute an important layer in Ukraine's communications network," said Maj. Charlie Dietz, a Defense Department spokesperson. The department's focus, he added, "remains on getting the Ukrainians the satellite capabilities they need." Kostiantyn Zhura, a spokesman for the Ukrainian defense ministry, said that officials in Kyiv are aware of Russia's efforts and "taking measures to neutralize them." The Russian Embassy in Washington did not respond to a request for comment.

**[Russia] US reporter Evan Gershkovich denied release in Russia**

[The Hill](#) [4/18/2023 6:21 PM, Brad Dress, 1592K, Negative] reports that, after denying bail, a Moscow judge said Wall Street Journal reporter Evan Gershkovich must remain at the infamous Leftorvo prison until at least May 29. Gershkovich's lawyers had appealed for house arrest or his release on a bail of about \$600,000 as the reporter faces up to 20 years

in prison if convicted at trial. Although his appeal was denied, Gershkovich was in good spirits at Moscow City Court, where he appeared behind a glass cage and smiled at other journalists. The Journal has rejected the charges against Gershkovich and repeatedly called for his release. The newspaper's editor-in-chief Emma Tucker and publisher Almar Latour said they expected the judge to deny the appeal for a pretrial detention but it was "nonetheless disappointing." "Evan is wrongfully detained and the charges of espionage against him are false," they said in a statement. "We demand his immediate release and are doing everything in our power to secure it."

#### **[Sudan] U.S. convoy fired on in Sudan, Blinken says**

[Politico](#) [4/18/2023 7:6 AM, Matt Berg, 2103K, Neutral] reports that a U.S. diplomatic convoy in Sudan was fired on in a "reckless" and "irresponsible" attack amid the African nation's ongoing violence, Secretary of State Antony Blinken said Tuesday. None of the Americans were injured, he told reporters while speaking in Japan, emphasizing that the convoy was fired upon despite bearing diplomatic plates and a U.S. flag. "We have deep concerns, of course, about the overall security environment as it affects civilians, as it affects diplomats, as it affects aid workers," he said. During a call Tuesday morning, Blinken told Gen. Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, who leads Sudan's military, and Gen. Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo, the commander of the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces, that the attack was "totally unacceptable." He also underscored the need for a ceasefire, and, following the call, the RSF issued a temporary ceasefire "to open safe paths for the passage of civilians," the group wrote in a tweet. While the incident is under investigation, initial reports show that the RSF was responsible for the attack, the secretary of state said. When asked whether Americans in Sudan were safe, National Security Council spokesperson John Kirby told reporters Monday that all U.S. government personnel are accounted for and sheltering in place, refusing to provide further details. "We are staying in close touch with them right now, and we expect those communications to continue," Kirby said. "But I don't want to get ahead of where we are." Blinken said he's in contact with Americans on the ground in Sudan, refusing to elaborate other than saying that the U.S. "will continue to take every responsible measure to make sure that our people are safe and secure." [Editorial note: consult video at source link]

#### **[China] Pentagon Cites China's Military Threat as Beijing Spurns Calls to Talk**

[Bloomberg](#) [4/18/2023 6:58 AM, Peter Martin, 5543K, Neutral] reports a senior US defense official will warn lawmakers about the growing risks of Chinese military power, while highlighting China's continued refusal to engage in high-level talks with the Pentagon. China is engaged in a "significant and fast-paced expansion" of its nuclear forces and is embracing "rapid technological change" in areas such as biotechnology, "which could be used for purposes including biological and chemical weapons," Jedidiah Royal, principal deputy assistant secretary of defense for Indo-Pacific Security Affairs, will tell the House Armed Services Committee on Tuesday. Royal also will point to what he calls "risky intercepts" by Chinese aircraft and maritime vessels against US and allied military assets, as well as Beijing's fleet of high-altitude surveillance balloons as evidence of the risks posed by Chinese behavior, according to his prepared testimony. At the same time, Beijing has demonstrated a "concerning lack of interest in the important lines of communication that underpin a stable defense relationship," Royal will testify. Royal cites the refusal of the Chinese defense minister to accept a phone call from Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin after the US shot down the alleged Chinese spy balloon that entered US airspace in February.

**[China] China readies supersonic spy drone unit, leaked document says**

[Washington Post](#) [4/18/2023 7:06 PM, Christian Shepherd, Vic Chiang, Pei-Lin Wu and Ellen Nakashima, 6902K, Neutral] reports the Chinese military could soon deploy a high-altitude spy drone that travels at least three times the speed of sound, according to a leaked U.S. military assessment, a development that would dramatically strengthen China's ability to conduct surveillance operations. A secret document from the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency, which has not previously been reported, shows the Chinese military is making technological advances that could help it target American warships around Taiwan and military bases in the region. The document features satellite imagery dated Aug. 9 that shows two WZ-8 rocket-propelled reconnaissance drones at an air base in eastern China, about 350 miles inland from Shanghai. The drones are a cutting-edge surveillance system that could help China gather real-time mapping data to inform strategy or carry out missile strikes in a future conflict. The assessment says the People's Liberation Army (PLA) had "almost certainly" established its first unmanned aerial vehicle unit at the base, which falls under the Eastern Theater Command, the branch of the Chinese military responsible for enforcing Beijing's sovereignty claims over Taiwan.

**[China] Chinese embassy spox says US trying to 'smear China's image' with latest Justice Department charges**

[FOX News](#) [4/18/2023 9:19 AM, Greg Norman, 8967K, Negative] reports that a spokesperson for the Chinese embassy in the U.S. is arguing that the Justice Department is trying to "smear China's image" after it announced charges yesterday against two New Yorkers who allegedly ran a secret police station in Manhattan's Chinatown neighborhood. The revelations, which the Justice Department is describing as a "Significant national security matter," come as the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Eastern District of New York also accused dozens of Chinese government police officers of belonging to an "Army of Internet trolls" who have threatened and harassed Chinese democracy activists and dissidents worldwide, including in New York City. "By initiating prosecution against Chinese citizens under the pretext of 'transnational repression', the U.S. side is exercising long-arm jurisdiction based on fabricated charges," Liu Pengyu, a spokesperson for the Chinese embassy in the U.S., told Reuters. "This is sheer political manipulation, and the purpose is to smear China's image," he added. The Justice Department said Monday that Chinese Ministry of Public Security officers have been going after pro-democracy dissidents worldwide, including in the U.S. Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Wenbin also claimed Tuesday that no secret police stations are being operated by China in New York City, despite the extensive amount of evidence unearthed by the Justice Department, according to Reuters. He reportedly said during a press briefing that Beijing upholds a policy of non-interference in other countries.

**[China] China reveals new details of Raytheon, Lockheed sanctions**

[AP](#) [4/18/2023 11:01 AM, Huizhong Wu, 22K, Negative] reports that China revealed new details of sanctions it previously announced against two U.S. weapons manufacturers Tuesday, including a ban on Chinese companies doing business with them. China imposed trade and investment sanctions in February on Lockheed Martin and Raytheon Technologies Corp.'s Raytheon Missiles & Defense for supplying weapons to Taiwan, the self-governed island claimed by China. China's Ministry of Commerce said in a statement late Tuesday that the sanctions include a ban on exports and imports by the two companies from and to China "to prevent Chinese products from being used in their military business." It added that Chinese companies should "Strengthen their due diligence and compliance

system construction to verify transaction information" and should not knowingly conduct business with the two companies while importing, exporting or transporting products. It wasn't clear what immediate impact the penalties might have, but the restrictions on imports and exports could hurt the two companies. The United States bars most sales of weapons-related technology to China, but some military contractors also have civilian businesses in aerospace and other markets.

**[China] China has ramped up construction on its new Antarctic station, new report reveals**

[CNN](#) [4/19/2023 1:26 AM, Simone McCarthy and Sophie Jeong, 6098K, Positive] reports China is making "significant progress" building the country's fifth research facility in Antarctica after a several years-long lull in construction, according to a report by the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS). New support facilities and groundwork for a larger structure have appeared at the site following several years of dormancy after construction began in 2018, the Washington-based think tank said in a report released Tuesday. The findings were based on satellite imagery taken in recent months by Maxar. The site – a research station China has hailed as a means to expand its scientific investigation in the Antarctic – could also be used to enhance the country's intelligence collection, according to CSIS. China is far from alone in bolstering its presence and research activities in the frozen continent, where a number of countries including the United States, Britain, and South Korea all operate research stations. But attention has turned to potential dual-use of China's facilities amid increasing power competition with the United States and Western concerns about Beijing's assertive foreign policy and surveillance capabilities. The new station's position, on Inexpressible Island near the Ross Sea, is triangulated with China's other coastal stations on Antarctica to "fill in a major gap in China's coverage" of the continent, and could support intelligence collection given its inclusion of a satellite ground station, according to the CSIS report.

**[Taiwan] Taiwan suspects Chinese ships cut islands' internet cables**

[AP](#) [4/18/2023 7:59 AM, Huizhong Wu and Johnson Lai, 27K, Neutral] reports that in the past month, bed and breakfast owner Chen Yu-lin had to tell his guests he couldn't provide them with the internet. Others living on Matsu, one of Taiwan's outlying islands closer to neighboring China, had to struggle with paying electricity bills, making a doctor's appointment or receiving a package. For connecting to the outside world, Matsu's 14,000 residents rely on two submarine internet cables leading to Taiwan's main island. The National Communications Commission, citing the island's telecom service, blamed two Chinese ships for cutting the cables. It said a Chinese fishing vessel is suspected of severing the first cable some 50 kilometers out at sea. Six days later, on Feb. 8, a Chinese cargo ship cut the second, NCC said. Taiwan's government stopped short of calling it a deliberate act on the part of Beijing, and there was no direct evidence to show the Chinese ships were responsible. Insight by Carahsoft: How can agencies achieve an excellent customer experience with improved cybersecurity? During this exclusive webinar, moderator Jason Miller will discuss the shift to the cloud and identity and access management strategy with agency and industry leaders. The islanders in the meantime were forced to hook up to a limited internet via microwave radio transmission, a more mature technology, as backup.

**[North Korea] Kim says North Korea's 1st spy satellite is ready for launch**

[AP](#) [4/18/2023 9:01 PM, Hyung-Jin Kim and Kim Tong-Hyung, 6902K, Neutral] reports North Korean leader Kim Jong Un said his country has built its first-ever military spy satellite and that he planned to launch it on an undisclosed date, state media reported Wednesday. Previous missile and rocket tests have demonstrated that North Korea can send satellites into space, but many experts question whether it has cameras sophisticated enough to use for spying from a satellite because only low-resolution images were released after past launches. During his visit to the country's aerospace agency Tuesday, Kim said that having an operational military reconnaissance satellite is crucial for North Korea to effectively use its nuclear-capable missiles. Kim cited what he described as serious security threats posed by "the most hostile rhetoric and explicit action" by the United States and South Korea this year, according to the official Korean Central News Agency. He likely hopes to pressure his rivals on issues including joint military drills and international economic sanctions on North Korea. Kim said "the military reconnaissance satellite No. 1" had already been built and ordered officials to speed up preparations for its launch. He said North Korea must launch several satellites to establish an intelligence-gathering capability, KCNA said.

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