

China Is Told  
To Close Down  
Houston Office

U.S. Claims Consulate  
Was Espionage Hub

This article is by Edward Wong, Lara Jakes and Steven Lee Myers.

WASHINGTON — The United States has abruptly ordered China to close its consulate in Houston, accusing diplomats of aiding economic espionage and the attempted theft of scientific research as the Trump administration sharply escalates its moves against China.

China vowed to retaliate, calling the action illegal. Hours after the administration issued its order on Tuesday, consulate employees burned papers in open metal barrels in a courtyard of the Houston building, prompting police officers and firefighters to rush to the area.

The move comes as President Trump’s campaign strategists, anxious about his failures on the pandemic, are pushing a comprehensive anti-China message in an appeal to Mr. Trump’s supporters.

It was unclear what had immediately prompted the crackdown on the consulate, which must close by Friday, although the State Department said China was directing “massive illegal spying and influence operations.”

David R. Stilwell, who oversees policy for East Asia and the Pacific at the State Department, said in an interview that the Houston consulate had a history of engaging in “subversive behavior” and was the epicenter of research theft in the United States. He gave few details to support that assertion, though other American officials released a document with more information on Wednesday night.

He cited one example: He said the consul general, the top Chinese official there, and two other diplomats were recently caught

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Much at Stake  
For Palestinians  
On Police Force

This article is by David M. Halbfinger, Adam Rasgon and Mohamed Najib.

JENIN, West Bank — What wounded Maj. Zahi Jamhour most, he said, wasn’t that the Palestinians he had sworn to protect threw stones at him. It wasn’t even the bullet shot through his leg by an Israeli soldier — a mistake, he was told later — after his Palestinian police squad had risked their lives to rescue a Jew from an attempted lynching.

No, what stings to this day is how the Arab doctors and nurses at an East Jerusalem hospital reacted when he told them how he had been shot.

“They laughed at me,” Major Jamhour, 50, recalled ruefully. “They said, ‘You deserved it.’”

The scorn heaped upon Palestinian Authority security officers for cooperating with Israel, some officers say, was the bitter price of jobs with significant benefits: salaries, pensions and, for some, cars, training abroad and proximity to power.

Neighbors called them collaborators, doing the dirty work for Israel’s occupation. Relatives questioned their self-respect. Israeli counterparts, they said, routinely treated them with highhandedness and disdain.

And yet, in their colorful uniforms, the security forces are a conspicuous embodiment of the incipient state they hoped they were building.

Now that Israel’s threat to annex parts of the West Bank has thrown that national project into

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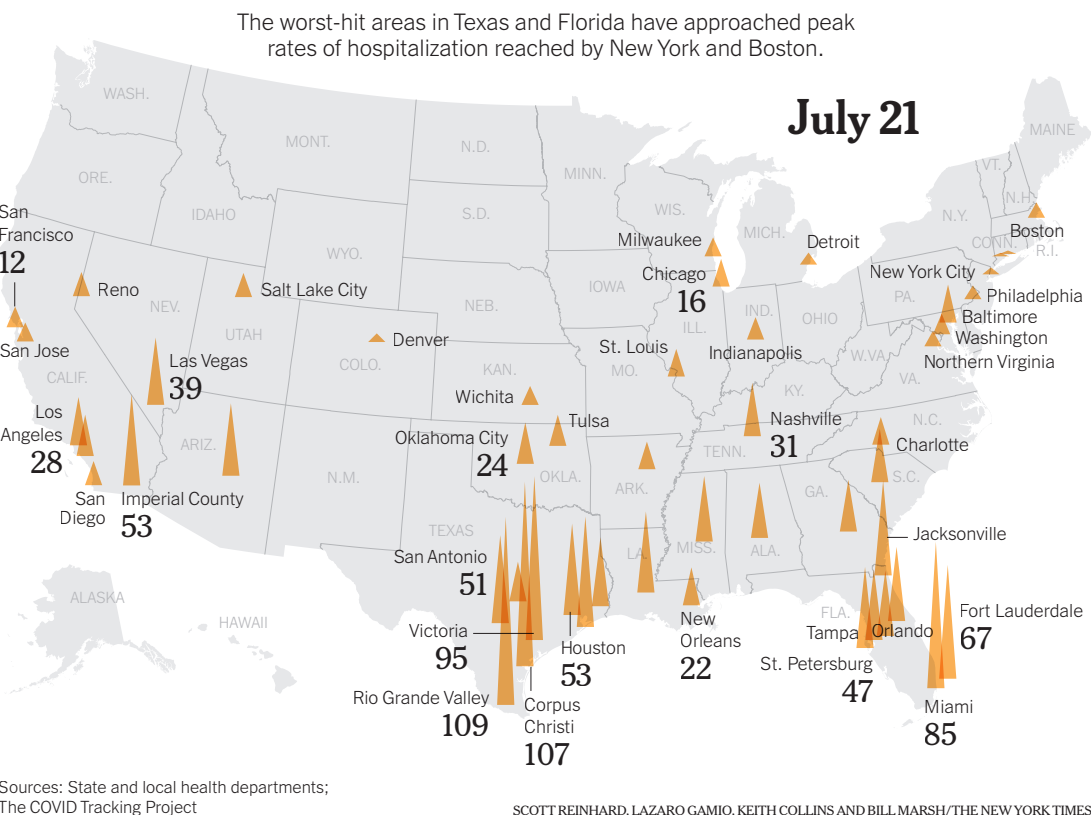
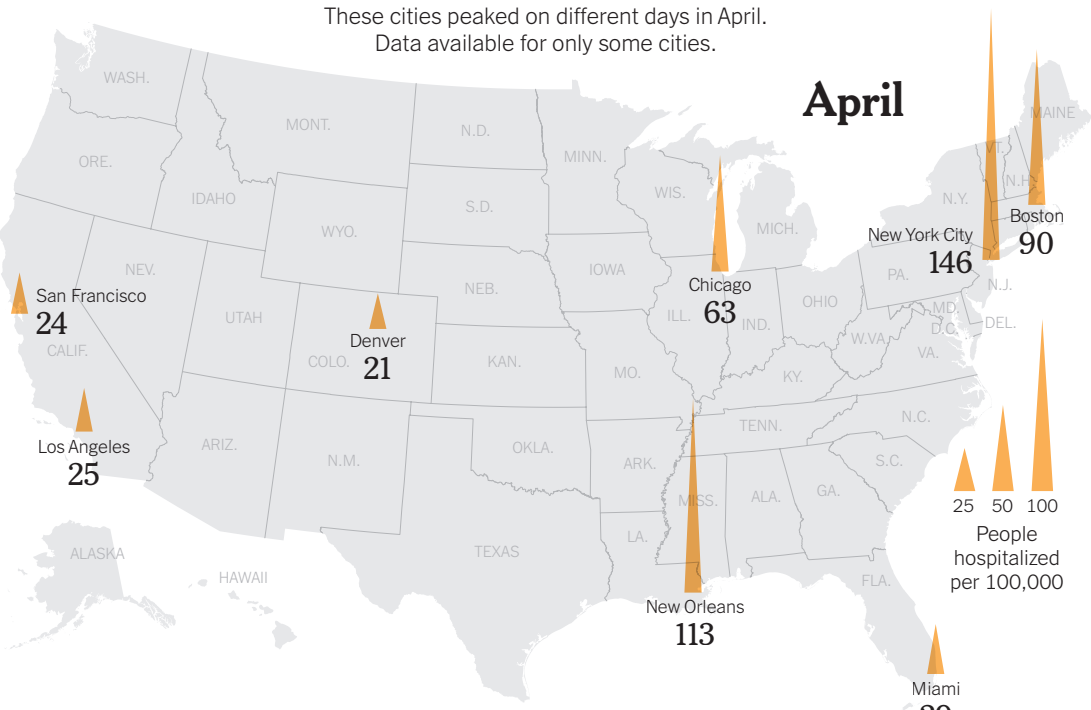
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Virus Hospitalizations Have Returned to April’s Peak

On April 15, nearly 60,000 people were hospitalized with the coronavirus. After a decline, the virus spiked across the South, driving the number of hospital patients back to about 60,000.



Sources: State and local health departments; The COVID Tracking Project. SCOTT REINHARD, LAZARO GAMIO, KEITH COLLINS AND BILL MARSH/THE NEW YORK TIMES

Across the Northeast, a (Masked) Sigh of Relief

By ELLEN BARRY

BOSTON — Last week, as Dr. Emily Wroe left her home in Boston and drove west to see her parents in Idaho, she watched as signs of the pandemic became fewer and farther between.

After she left Ohio, customers at gas stations no longer wore masks. In Nebraska, when she needed a repair to her truck, the mechanic seemed to look at her strangely because she was wearing one. In Montana, there were no masks in sight, and motorcyclists clustered in groups of 20.

The farther she was from the East Coast, the more she found Americans treating the threat of the virus as “faraway, and not important.”

“I wasn’t surprised, but it is striking,” said Dr. Wroe, who spent the spring preparing contact tracers for Massachusetts. “We’re in the middle of a global pandemic, and there are a lot of towns and businesses along the way where nothing has changed.”

Six months since the coronavirus crisis was first detected in the United States, the Northeast stands in sharp contrast with the rest of the nation.

Along the East Coast, from Delaware through Maine, new case reports remain at a low level, a small fraction of their April peak. Six of the country’s 11 states with flat or falling case levels are in that Northeastern corridor.

New York State announced on Wednesday that just over 700 people were hospitalized because of the virus, the fewest since mid-March and a huge drop from a peak of over 18,000 people. Deaths have also slowed significantly, hovering around 20 for the past six days, compared with the nearly 800 fatalities in a single day at its peak.

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**On Their Own in Oregon**  
Protesters in Portland have scrounged for protective gear and operated by consensus. Page A14.

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**The Amazon Critic**  
Tim Bray was a celebrated engineer and vice president at Amazon. Now, he is its highest-profile defector. PAGE B1

**Tesla’s Electric Car Dominance**  
Most traditional carmakers are struggling to produce and market electric vehicles even as Tesla sells hundreds of thousands of its luxury models. PAGE B1

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**Play Ball, and Stay Safe**  
The schedule is short. Stadiums will be empty. But baseball’s biggest task will be keeping the virus at bay. PAGE B9

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**Black Mozart? Say His Name**  
A nickname has diminished the brilliant music and life of Joseph Boulogne, an 18th-century polymath. PAGE C1

**Museum Chief’s Firing at Issue**  
Quebec’s government is reviewing the termination of Nathalie Bondil by the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts. PAGE C1

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Surge Pushes  
U.S. Hospitals  
Close to Brink

Beds Fill Up, Signaling  
Crisis Is Widening

By NICHOLAS BOGEL-BURROUGHS and SARAH MERVOSH

They are hooked up to ventilators, relying on the machines to breathe. They are taking experimental drugs that doctors hope will ease their agony. They are isolated from their families, fighting to recover on their own.

More people are on track to be hospitalized with the coronavirus in the United States than at any other point in the pandemic, a disturbing sign of how the current surge has spread widely and is seriously sickening as many people as ever.

Across the country, 59,628 people were being treated in hospitals on Wednesday, according to the Covid Tracking Project, nearing an earlier peak of 59,940 on April 15, when the center of the outbreak was New York.

The country is averaging more than 66,000 new virus cases per day, more than twice as many as a month ago, and deaths have also started trending upward, with an average of more than 800 daily. But hospitalizations may be the clearest measure of how widely the virus is causing the most serious illnesses, and could offer a glimpse of what is ahead.

“Once you get to the point of being hospitalized or in the I.C.U., some notable portion of those people will die,” said Natalie E. Dean, an infectious-disease expert at the University of Florida. Even when patients walk out of the hospital, “we don’t know what the long-term consequences are,” she said. “Surviving doesn’t mean thriving.”

Not long ago, things seemed to be improving. Fewer than 28,000 patients were hospitalized as of mid-June, when a new surge of cases was appearing throughout the Sun Belt.

The uptick in hospitalized patients around the country reflects a different phase of the pandemic — a widening geographic area, especially across the South, for the most serious illnesses compared with what had been a relatively concentrated crisis in the spring.

Back then, nearly one in five hospitalized patients were in New York, and the city had to set up mobile morgues to keep up with the rising deaths. Now, the situation looks far different, and California, where the virus is surging, has reported more cases than New York. In the past week, both Florida and Texas have added an average of more than 10,000 reported cases each day, with California not far behind.

The spike in hospitalizations for the virus has been driven in part by people younger than 50. That group made up nearly 40 percent

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and White House officials expressed confidence on Wednesday evening that they had reached an agreement in principle on a proposal that would dole out more than \$100 billion to schools, send additional checks directly to Americans and provide \$16 billion for states to conduct testing and contact tracing. But some of the biggest issues, including what to do with enhanced unemployment insurance and Mr. Trump’s payroll tax cut idea, were not finalized.

In a sign of their differences, some Republican senators suggested at one point Wednesday that they might pursue a short-term extension of the enhanced unemployment benefits expiring

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U.S. Places a \$2 Billion Wager  
In the Global Race for a Vaccine

This article is by Noah Weiland, Denise Grady and David E. Sanger.

WASHINGTON — As nations around the world race to lock up coronavirus vaccines even before they are ready, the Trump administration on Wednesday made one of the largest investments yet, announcing a nearly \$2 billion contract with Pfizer and a German biotechnology company for 100 million doses by December.

The contract is part of what the White House calls the Warp Speed project, an effort to drastically shorten the time it would take to manufacture and distribute a working vaccine. So far, the United States has put money into more than a half-dozen efforts, hoping to build manufacturing

ability for an eventual breakthrough.

Europe has a parallel effort underway. Germany recently took a 23 percent stake in a German firm, CureVac, that President Trump once tried to lure to American shores in hopes that its vaccine, if successful, would be distributed in the United States first. A European-led fund-raising effort in May brought \$8 billion in pledges from the world’s governments, philanthropists and leaders for coronavirus vaccine research, even with the United States sitting out the conference.

China has militarized the effort: Researchers associated with the Academy of Military Medical Science

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Still nervous in shared spaces? You can have a manicurist, a dog groomer and even a tattoo artist come to you. PAGE D1

**The Fight for Fertility Equality**  
Activists envision a time when the ability to build a family doesn’t hinge on wealth, sexuality, gender or biology. PAGE D1



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**Late Edition**  
Today, clouds, strong afternoon thunderstorms, humid, high 89. Tonight, showers, thunderstorms, low 74. Tomorrow, thunderstorms, high 87. Weather map, Page A19.

G.O.P. INFIGHTING  
EXPOSES HURDLES  
TO A RESCUE PLAN

\$1 TRILLION IN VIRUS AID

Senators Near a Deal on  
an Opening Offer for  
the Democrats

This article is by Emily Cochrane, Nicholas Fandos and Jim Tankersley.

WASHINGTON — Conservatives are apoplectic about its \$1 trillion cost. Embattled mainstream Republicans are desperate to act quickly and aggressively to show voters they are doing something about the pandemic and resulting recession. And President Trump keeps insisting on proposals, like a costly payroll tax cut, that will do nothing to help tens of millions of jobless Americans and even members of his own party do not support.

The debate over the next round of coronavirus relief has exposed deep divisions among Republicans over spending and policy, leaving the fate of a huge economic rescue package in limbo as the virus surges around the country and posing an election-year dilemma for a party already facing a grim political landscape.

After three marathon days of talks, Senate Republican leaders



ANNA MONEYMAKER FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Steven Mnuchin, the Treasury secretary, on Wednesday.

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