

# EPOCH INSIGHT

## The Border Rush

*By Brad Jones  
& John Fredricks*



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# A Closer Look at the 'Yuma Gap'

**AFTER MORE THAN TWO YEARS OF** President Joe Biden's border policies, we take a look at a hot spot for illegal crossings, where construction on the Trump border wall was suddenly halted and an endless stream of people is pouring through.

As with the whole southern border, the Mexican cartels control the flow of people through the border wall gap in Yuma, Arizona.

Epoch Times reporters Brad Jones and John Fredricks spent several days on the border to investigate how people from countries around the world, including Ghana, Senegal, Turkey, Pakistan, Uzbekistan, and Georgia, cross the border illegally.

After paying the cartels thousands of dollars and crossing the Rio Grande, the border-crossers wait on the U.S. side until they are loaded into unmarked white buses by Border Patrol.

During fiscal year 2020, Border Patrol agents apprehended 8,804 illegal immigrants in the Yuma sector. During fiscal 2022, that number jumped to 310,094 apprehensions.

Rafael Rivera, president of the Yuma branch of the National Border Patrol Council union, said: "We're not securing the border. We just became clerks. We're either asylum officers or immigration processors. That's all we do."

Rivera said the Border Patrol in Yuma is so overwhelmed and understaffed, it can't even keep track of illegal entries.

Read this week's cover story about one small area along the United States' 1,950-mile border with Mexico.



**ON THE COVER**

A closer look at the southern border in Yuma, Ariz., after the end of Trump-era restrictions on illegal immigration.

JOHN FREDRICKS/THE EPOCH TIMES



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## EPOCH INSIGHT

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STEPHEN MATUREN/GETTY IMAGES

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# SPOTLIGHT

## Honoring the Heroes

**U.S. SAILORS AND MARINES STAND ON** the flight deck of the USS Bataan, a Wasp-class amphibious assault ship, as it passes the Statue of Liberty during Fleet Week in New York Harbor on May 24. The 35th annual Fleet Week, honoring those who have served in the U.S. Navy, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard, runs from May 24 to May 30.

PHOTO BY ANGELA WEISS/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES



# The Week



**A man sits alone on a bench** overlooking part of the Manhattan skyline during the pandemic, in Brooklyn, N.Y., on April 21, 2020.

PHOTO BY ANGELA WEISS/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

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### Life Skills

A boot camp teaches self-sufficiency skills that more Americans are showing interest in. **44**

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The United States is facing a shortage of life-saving drugs that’s causing concern among experts. **60**

INSIDE

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“The Durham report ... shows the FBI became a political weapon.”

Sen. Lindsey Graham (R-S.C.)



86%

The vast majority of Americans, 86 percent, maintain a belief in a higher power, according a NORC survey.

“We are fighting to preserve an American Dream that increasingly is out of reach.”



Rep. Chip Roy (R-Texas), on Republicans' debt ceiling demands

88%

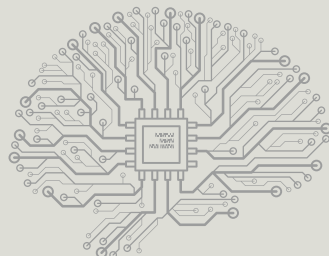
The Black Lives Matter Global Network Foundation raised just \$9.3 million in the fiscal year that ended in June 2022, down 88 percent from the \$80 million or so the group raised in 2020.

2,000 CHILDREN

The Illinois attorney general's office has found that nearly 2,000 children have been sexually abused by Catholic clergy in the state.

10 YEARS

The makers of ChatGPT have warned that artificial intelligence could “exceed expert skill level” across most domains within the next 10 years.



35%—The percentage of U.S. adults reporting that they are worse off financially rose to 35 percent in 2022, the highest since the Fed started tracking the data in 2014.

THIS PAGE FROM TOP: KEVIN DIETSCH/GETTY IMAGES; DREW ANGERER/GETTY IMAGES; SHUTTERSTOCK; RIGHT PAGE: CLOKWISE FROM TOP: ALISON JOYCE/GETTY IMAGES; GIUSEPPE CAOCACE/AP VIA GETTY IMAGES; LOGAN MOOK; BUNTING/GETTY IMAGES

**MUSIC**

**Queen of Rock ‘n’ Roll Tina Turner Dies at 83**

TINA TURNER, the singer who left a hard-scrabble farming community in Tennessee to become one of the top recording artists of all time, has died at the age of 83.

She died peacefully after a long illness at her home in Küsnacht near Zurich, her representative said.

Turner began her career in the 1950s, during the early years of rock ‘n’ roll, and evolved into an MTV phenomenon.

Sometimes nicknamed the “Queen of Rock ‘n’ Roll,” Turner won six of her eight Grammy Awards in the 1980s.

Rolling Stone magazine placed Turner at No. 63 on its list of the top 100 artists of all time.



Tina Turner poses during fashion week in Milan, in this file photo.

**POLICY**

**House Votes Against EPA Truck Emissions Rule**

THE HOUSE HAS APPROVED a resolution to overturn a Biden administration rule on heavy-duty vehicles’ tailpipe emissions, the latest knock against the president’s environmental agenda in a closely divided Congress.

The legislation would roll back a rule submitted by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for trucks in December 2022. If President Joe Biden vetoes it, backers would need two-thirds majorities in both chambers to overcome his opposition.

The rule “sets stronger emissions standards to further reduce air pollution, including pollutants that create ozone and particulate matter, from heavy-duty vehicles and engines starting in model year 2027,” according to the EPA.

Heavy-duty vehicles are those with a gross vehicle weight rating above 8,500 pounds.



U.S. Sen. Tim Scott (R-S.C.) announces his run for the 2024 Republican presidential nomination at a campaign event in North Charleston, S.C., on May 22.

**ELECTION**

**Tim Scott Formally Announces 2024 Presidential Bid**

SEN. TIM SCOTT (R-S.C.) formally announced his bid for president during an event in North Charleston, South Carolina.

In his speech, Scott, 57, drew heavily from his life story of rising from extreme poverty to become the Republican Party’s only black U.S. senator.

“Joe Biden and the Democrats are attacking every rung of the ladder that helped me climb,” he said. “And that’s why I’m running for president of the United States.”

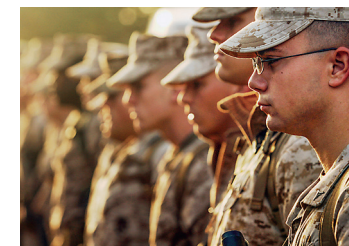
**HEALTH**

**Parkinson’s Risk 70 Percent Higher for Camp Lejeune Marines: Study**

U.S. MARINE VETERANS who served at Camp Lejeune face an elevated risk of Parkinson’s disease, potentially affecting millions of individuals, a study shows.

A large-scale study published in JAMA Neurology involving nearly 350,000 Camp Lejeune veterans found that the risk of Parkinson’s disease was 70 percent higher among Marines stationed at the North Carolina base between 1975 and 1985 than those stationed at Camp Pendleton in California.

The researchers attribute the heightened risk to exposure to trichloroethylene, which was present in the water that the troops used for drinking and bathing and in food preparation at the camp.



Marines prepare to be deployed at Camp Lejeune, N.C., in this file photo.



U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken (L), Papua New Guinea's Defense Minister Win Bakri Daki (R), and Papua New Guinea's Prime Minister James Marape in Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea, on May 22.

**US-PACIFIC ISLANDS**

## US Secures Defense Pact With Papua New Guinea

**THE UNITED STATES** and Papua New Guinea (PNG) have signed a defense cooperation agreement to solidify their bilateral ties as part of U.S. efforts to push back against China's influence in the Pacific region.

Secretary of State Antony Blinken met with PNG Prime Minister James Marape in Port Moresby on behalf of President Joe Biden, whose planned trip was canceled to focus on debt limit talks in Washington.

The defense pact would enable the United States to support PNG in building up its defense capacity, tackling illegal fishing, and providing disaster relief, Blinken said.

**US-CHINA**

## CCP Presents 'Grave Threat' to the US Homeland: DHS

**THE CHINESE COMMUNIST PARTY** (CCP) presents a unique threat to the American homeland and is actively working to undermine U.S. security and damage U.S. economic standing, according to a senior Homeland Security official.

The CCP, which rules China as a single-party state, seeks to leverage the whole of the Chinese nation against the United States, said Iranga Kahangama, assistant secretary of the Department of Homeland Security for cyber, infrastructure, risk, and resilience.

"Beijing presents an especially grave threat to the homeland," he said during a hearing of the House Homeland Security Subcommittee on Counterterrorism, Law Enforcement, and Intelligence.



A session of the National People's Congress at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing on March 11, 2018.

**VACCINE**

## Messenger RNA COVID-19 Vaccines Linked to Increased Risk of Vaginal Bleeding: Study

**WOMEN** vaccinated with the Pfizer or Moderna COVID-19 vaccines are at higher risk of vaginal bleeding, according to a study.

One or more doses of the messenger RNA shots in women aged 12 to 74 increased the risk of bleeding, Swedish researchers reported in the study, which was published by the British Medical Journal.

Adjustments to the data resulted in removing some of the heightened risks, but even after adjustments, younger women still were more likely to experience bleeding after the first and third doses and older women were more likely to suffer from the issue after the first, second, and third doses.

**AUSTRALIA**

## Australia Has 41,000 Modern Slaves: Report

**AUSTRALIA** currently has about 41,000 modern slaves, which is twice the figure recorded five years ago, a human rights report estimates.

Walk Free, an international human rights group based in Perth, has released its 2023 Global Slavery Index, raising the alarm about the state of modern slavery worldwide.

Modern slavery refers to situations in which individuals are subject to exploitation and can't refuse or escape because of threats, coercion, violence, deception, and other abuses. It includes forced labor, forced marriage, debt bond, sexual exploitation, human trafficking, exploitation of children, and other actions.

According to the report, 50 million people around the world lived in modern slavery on any given day in 2021, an increase of 10 million from the previous report.



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Final War" is a film that is so relevant to current events and so important that we're offering it to EVERYONE for free. It will answer your questions about the pandemic, the impending invasion of Taiwan, and how the CCP works to keep the United States occupied with at least four global adversaries.

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# The Week in Photos

**(Right)** A voter carrying his dog, casts his ballot in Greece's general elections at a polling station in Athens on May 21.



**(Above)** An athlete competes in the biking segment of the IRONMAN 70.3 Morro Bay in Morro Bay, Calif., on May 20.



**(Above)** A man rides two bulls during the Karapan Sapi, a traditional bull racing event, in Probolinggo, Indonesia, on May 21.



**(Left)** Guests in baroque-style costumes gather in the Hall of Mirrors during the Fêtes Galantes, a fancy dress evening, at the Chateau de Versailles in France on May 22.



**(Left)** Romanian Air Force F-16 fighter jets participate in NATO's Baltic Air Policing Mission near Siauliai, Lithuania, on May 23.

**(Left)** Smoke and ash shoot into the air from the Popocatepetl volcano in Amecameca, Mexico, on May 23.

EXCLUSIVE

# 'BETRAYED' BY THE SERVICE

By J.M. Phelps

*A former Marine  
artilleryman says he  
was unjustly treated  
by the branch after  
suffering injuries  
during the 2017  
campaign to defeat  
ISIS in Syria*



*"I felt betrayed, knowing I gave everything, but the Marine Corps took a different approach," says veteran Javier E. Ortiz.*

PHOTO BY JOHN MOORE/GETTY IMAGES



**J**AVIER E. ORTIZ WANTED NOTHING MORE than to become a Marine. And after a humble beginning, he quickly devoted himself to the Corps. In return, he says, he was stripped of his dignity and left to fight an uphill battle alone.

Ortiz was born in the Dominican Republic on Dec. 22, 1994. He was a boy when his father left the family to build another. In search of the American dream, Ortiz moved with his mother and older brother to New York in November 2003. A month later, they moved to New Jersey, and Ortiz entered the American school system. His mother's cash stockpile slowly deteriorated as she cared for Ortiz, his older brother, and other family members in the home.

Taking the opportunity to live closer to his grandparents, Ortiz moved with his mother and brother to Kissimmee, Florida, in 2005. As his mother continued to struggle financially, he eventually was adopted in 2007 by an aunt and uncle, who began to provide the stable environment he longed for.

Distancing himself from the family's rocky start in America, Ortiz began to cultivate the idea of serving in the U.S. Marine Corps as one of "the few, the proud." "I decided to do everything I had to do to be able to join the Marines," he told *The Epoch Times*.

With frequent visits to the local recruiting station between 2012 and 2015, Ortiz grew increasingly motivated to join the Corps. In 2014, he gained naturalization for work, which allowed him to apply for a Social Security card. And in 2015, he was able to do what he had always wanted to do: join the Marine Corps.

Ortiz traveled to Parris Island, South Carolina, for

boot camp during the fall-to-winter cycle of 2015. "The first night I arrived, there was a meteor shower, a complete affirmation I was doing the right thing," he said. The 13 long weeks of training were "good," he said. "I adapted well, due to my long-awaited goal of protecting my new homeland."

### Deployment

Not only did Ortiz earn the Marine Corps' Eagle, Globe, and Anchor, he became a U.S. citizen shortly after completing boot camp. And with that, he was ready to support and defend the Constitution of the United States, even to the point of death. In 2016, Ortiz was attached to the headquarters element of the 1st Battalion, 11th Marine Regiment, 1st Marine Division in Camp Pendleton, California.

"I was in headquarters for only a couple of months before 1st Battalion, 11th Marines [1/11] Alpha Battery was rumored for deployment to Syria," he said. "I was eager to perform, and I was eager to deploy."

A fellow service member was recovering from a personnel incident and another was attending to an ill family member, opening the door for Ortiz as the next in line to join a combat element he had long desired to be part of.

"Alpha Battery's reputation was that they were extremely accurate [and] the tip of the spear," he said. "And within a couple days, I was in formation with Alpha Battery, ready to take that deployment."

His performance and willingness to deploy on short notice also led to a meritorious promotion from the rank of private first class to lance corporal in October 2016.

### Enter Alpha Battery

Ortiz found himself aboard an amphibious assault ship—the USS Makin Island—in October 2016. The 1/11 Alpha Battery was deployed and served as the artillery unit for the 11th Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU).

For the remainder of the year, Ortiz was on the ship "on the other side of the world," he recounted. At the end of 2016, he said, there were finally talks about artillery batteries being dispatched into Syria as the ISIS terrorist group continued to gain large swaths of territory in Iraq and Syria.

Aboard the USS Makin Island in December 2016, Sgt. Maj. Ronald Green told those on the ship, "We are here to impose our will onto our enemies—to change their minds or their zip code!" Ortiz recalled.

***"Even though we knew something was wrong, each of us continued to give all for the Marines. We had trained hard to be there, and nobody wanted to leave."***

**Javier E. Ortiz**, veteran



U.S. Marine Corps recruits climb ropes during an obstacle course on Marine Corps Recruit Depot, Parris Island, S.C., May 20, 2017.

Prior to Ortiz's deployment, Special Operations troops had already been in the country since early 2016, training and advising local forces in the fight against ISIS in northern and eastern Syria.

In March 2017, *The Washington Post* reported that an undisclosed number of Marines assigned to the 11th MEU had secretly entered Syria to "fire artillery in the fight for Raqqa," the self-identified capital city for ISIS. Ortiz was among that group—and the deployment was said to have marked "a new escalation in the U.S. war in Syria" against hardened terrorists.

It was the first time American forces, other than Special Operations, had entered the Middle Eastern country; and by May, then-Defense Secretary James Mattis would be calling U.S. involvement an "annihilation campaign."

Ortiz and Alpha Battery began conducting training exercises in Kuwait in early 2017. Prior to being trans-

ported to the deadly fight ongoing in Syria, MEU Cmdr. Col. Clay C. Tipton told the battery that "not all of us will make it back," Ortiz recalled.

"At that point, it clicked, and I began to understand the sacrifices we were all about to make," Ortiz said. Shortly after, he and his fellow artillerymen were flown into Syria on a Boeing C-17 Globemaster, a massive military transport aircraft.

The 1/11 Alpha Battery was tasked by the 11th MEU to provide direct and indirect fire in support of the mission to defeat ISIS, dubbed Operation Inherent Resolve, in February 2017. "We were some of the first Marines in Syria, literally the first artillery battery with a mission task," Ortiz said. "I was part of a series of artillery batteries, being the initiating force to overtake Raqqa."

"I was the ammo driver for Gun 4, responsible for chucking rounds, ramming rounds, and providing powders [into an M777 howitzer]." And the first time ♦



Sgt. Javier E. Ortiz in 2019. Ortiz's health issues, which he believes were directly related to the injurious effects of blasts, were not addressed by the Marine Corps.

FROM: COURTESY OF ORTIZ; U.S. MARINE CORPS PHOTO BY LANDE CPL COLBY COOPER/RELEASED

he pulled the lanyard, he had confirmed kills. To this day, he still has the primer from that round he fired.

Ortiz recalled at least three different occasions when he also was threatened by incoming fire from high-explosive rounds. “But we were obliterating ISIS,” he said. And after about two weeks, Alpha Battery pushed beyond the perimeter of a secure base of operations. His unit was required to sign the equivalent of a nondisclosure agreement while outside the wire, stating they would not discuss anything—about their mission in Syria or otherwise—on social media and other channels. This was, and remains, unprecedented, according to service members who spoke to *The Epoch Times*.

### Unsafe Exposure

Marine Corps officials were once “tight-lipped” about the 11th MEU’s contributions to the campaign in Syria in 2017. Many of its missions were not discussed publicly. But reports quickly surfaced about powerful 155-millimeter shells from M777 howitzers beginning to rain down on Raqqa. One of the secretive details of the onslaught—the number of artillery rounds fired in Syria—was disclosed a year later.

According to Army Sgt. Maj. John Wayne Troxel, the artillery battalion “fired more rounds in five months in Raqqa, Syria, than any other Marine artillery battalion, or any Marine or Army battalion, since the Vietnam War.” During a Marine Corps Times roundtable discussion in 2018, the former senior enlisted adviser to the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff said that 35,000 artillery rounds were used to kill ISIS terrorists “by the dozens.”

For comparison, 60,000 rounds were fired by the Marines and the Army during the First Gulf War. And during the initial invasion of the Iraq War, more than 34,000 artillery shells were fired.

In the time period Ortiz was confirmed to be there, MEU spokesman Maj. Craig Thomas was quoted by USNI News as saying, “The task force executed over 400 fire missions and fired more than 4,500 rounds from M777 howitzers to support our coalition partners fighting to isolate and then liberate [Raqqa] from ISIS.”

Between March and May 2017, Ortiz participated in the Battle of Raqqa. At one point, a howitzer was fired every hour for 47 consecutive days, Ortiz said. During that time, there was also a 14-hour fire mission where all four of the 1/11 Alpha Battery’s howitzers were active.

“We were shooting a lot,” he said.

The numbers appear to have exceeded what is safe for service members to be exposed to.

Gun 4—the specific howitzer Ortiz was assigned to—was the first to fire over 1,000 rounds within the first few weeks of landing in Syria. During one particular mission, his gun ran out of ammunition and had to be resupplied from Kuwait.

Considered some of the most destructive and powerful artillery rounds in the Marine Corps arsenal, Ortiz said, Gun 4 averaged “25 rounds per day with 12 to 17 of these rounds being charge 5 [the maximum level].”



*U.S. Marines with the 11th Marine Expeditionary Unit fire their M777 howitzer during a fire mission in Syria on March 24, 2017.*

Subject matter experts at the U.S. Army Field Artillery School said that “at maximum charge, when all prescribed personal protective equipment [PPE] is used, 12 rounds in 24 hours” is a safe number of rounds for human exposure, according to the public affairs office at Fort Sill, where all field artillerymen of the Marine Corps are trained.

### Reported and Ignored

After the initial, unprecedented bombardment of Raqqa, soldiers from the 2nd Battalion, 10th Marine

Division Fox Battery replaced 1/11 Alpha in May 2017.

On Oct. 20, Raqqa was publicly declared liberated.

The damage was done—not only to the terrorist stronghold and its inhabitants, but also to artillerymen like Ortiz and his fellow Marines.

“A few of us were not feeling well, and we brought it up as we noticed,” Ortiz said. “But at the end of the day, none of us wanted to stop, nor could we stop during an active battle; we just wanted to let the officers know we shouldn’t be shooting that much.”

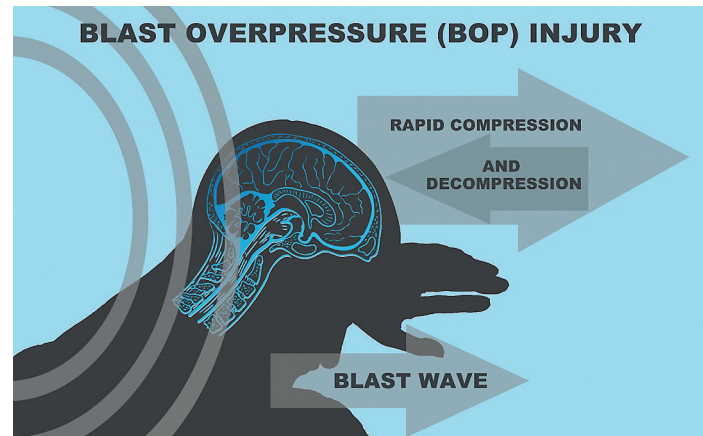
“The order to go above standard operating procedure was above everybody’s pay grade on the ground there,” he continued, adding that “we couldn’t afford to lose anybody, so we just continued to exhaust all our ammo until things went back to normal.”

Early on, Ortiz said he experienced nothing more than a daily headache as a result of the constant firing. Three weeks later, however, abdominal pains began to emerge. Ortiz reported all of these symptoms. Some of the other soldiers were experiencing the same. Four of the eight artillerymen assigned to his howitzer experienced symptoms, he said.

“All that exposure to the blasts messed up our stomachs. Our hands were swelling, and nosebleeds were happening,” he said, adding that as a result, he and others were lining up for doses of ibuprofen to combat the growing number of symptoms. None, however, were evaluated to find the root cause.

“Even though we knew something was wrong, each of us continued to give all for the Marines. We had ♣

U.S. MARINE CORPS PHOTO BY LANCE CPL. ZACHERY LANNING/RELEASED



*“The rapid compression and decompression, ricochet and rebound, of air emboli [gas bubbles] from the effect of a blast wave cause damage to the body,” says Dr. Robert Beckman.*

**“The longer each exposure, and with multiple exposures, the more damage occurs in our veterans’ bodies and brains.”**

*Dr. Mary Lee Esty, researcher*

trained hard to be there, and nobody wanted to leave.” On May 16, 2017, the 1/11 Alpha Battery’s deployment came to an end. “When we left, some of us were not well mentally or physically,” Ortiz said. The cause of the psychological and physical issues was unknown, but he began to associate them with the number of rounds he and others had fired.

**Invisible Long-Term Consequences**

According to protocol, the symptoms experienced by these artillerymen should have been addressed by the Marine Corps.

The U.S. Marine Corps Traumatic Brain Injury Program states that traumatic brain injuries (TBIs) “can have a significant operational readiness impact as well as potential long-term health consequences.”

But when asked, Ortiz said the Marine Corps had not followed through with its own protocol. He became confident that the headaches, which were not random, were directly related to the injurious effects of blast overpressure. This, along with other problems, like abdominal pains, nosebleeds, and swelling, were not addressed by the Corps.

In an unclassified report released by the Marine Corps in 2019, a blast overpressure (BOP) injury is defined as an “injury caused by the effect of the blast wave on a body.” Gas-filled organs such as the middle ear, lung, brain, and bowel are “most susceptible” to primary blast injuries, the report states. It’s similar to having repeated concussions over and over again.

The Epoch Times spoke to Dr. Robert Beckman, co-founder and executive director of TreatNOW.org, an organization that has had success treating concussions, traumatic brain injuries, and post-traumatic stress disorder with hyperbaric oxygen therapy. The former Air Force KC-135 pilot and veteran of the Vietnam War said that “the rapid compression and decompression, ricochet and rebound, of air emboli [gas bubbles] from the effect of a blast wave cause damage to the body—even to the point of death.”

Dr. Mary Lee Esty agreed, describing blast wave injuries as a “pressure wave pulsing with lightning speed from zero to massive pressure as it passes through the entire body, damaging all body tissues.” The repetitive pressure causes cavitation, a process that produces tiny bubbles that damage tissues, explained Esty, a leading researcher in the field of neurotherapy.

“The longer each exposure, and with multiple exposures,” she said, “the more damage occurs in our veterans’ bodies and brains. ... The symptoms of damage are invisible, unavoidable, but explainable.” Based on years of neurofeedback treatment and research, she said that recovery of function is possible, if the symptoms are appropriately treated.

For thousands who survive an explosion, blast overpressure injuries that go untreated can lead to long-term behavioral, psychological, and physical degradation, Beckman said.

Incidents of traumatic brain, sensory, and musculoskeletal injuries have steadily increased since 2015. In collaboration with the Navy Marine Corps Public Health Center in 2018, the Headquarters Marine Corps Force Preservation Directorate began to examine the health of 56 service members from the 2/10 Fox Battery—the battalion that took over when Ortiz and his battalion ended their tour in Syria.

Like those in the 1/11 Alpha Battery, service members from 2/10 Fox “fired an unusually high number of artillery rounds” during their April to September 2017 deployment to Syria. Unsurprisingly, according to the study, “initial analysis revealed that these [service members] suffered a higher rate of [TBIs] than the rest of the artillery community.”

**Ortiz’s Ongoing Battle**

Years later, Ortiz continues to experience multiple symptoms and ailments, including abdominal pain, bilateral hearing loss, chest pains, chronic aches, double vision, and post-traumatic headaches. The Epoch Times has viewed Ortiz’s medical file and documentation corroborating his claims.

“I have a lot of physical pain, more than someone 28 years old should be experiencing,” he said.

But the vigor of his ambition to serve his country came at an additional cost. Like thousands of other soldiers before him, he was haunted by the atrocities of war, which were vastly underreported at the height of the conflict. Media interest was waning, and the

FROM LEFT: COURTESY OF JIM PHELPS, U.S. MARINE CORPS; PHOTO BY LANDE OHL ZACHERY LANNING/RELEASED



*U.S. Marines with the 11th Marine Expeditionary Unit carry 155 mm rounds to an M777 howitzer gun line in preparation for fire missions in Syria on March 21, 2017.*

experiences of these men were being forgotten.

In addition to the physical pain caused by his time in Syria, Ortiz said, he soon began to suffer mentally from the experience. Post-deployment, he said, “is when things got a little different,” and he had come to the realization that “a lot of people died.” At the time, it was easy for Ortiz to engage in warfare because he was driven to be the best, even if his best would mean others would have to die. He was determined that nothing would stand in the way of the deadly job he was called to do.

Ortiz sought therapy and was diagnosed with PTSD in September 2017. Up to 20 percent of veterans may experience PTSD, particularly those with a history of war zone deployment, according to the National Center for PTSD. But the diagnosis of PTSD did not address all of the physical health issues he experienced.

To help Ortiz ward off the effects of his condition, a doctor prescribed him multiple medications in 2017. He reports taking “a cocktail of five medications” at one point.

“I do not recall very well, but I was definitely on some of them for one or two or three months,” he said. “But my time was coming for eligibility to reenlist, and I couldn’t reenlist if I was on profile [with psychological limitations].”

Making a decision he would later regret, Ortiz began

using alcohol in early 2018 to cope with his struggles and open the door to continuing his service to the country. “I reenlisted as a functioning alcoholic,” he said.

So just 13 months post-Syria, in July 2018, he reenlisted for four more years. A few months later, he received a Good Conduct Medal. Roughly one year later, in August 2019, Ortiz was promoted to the rank of sergeant. And years later, he received orders to the Marine Corps’ esteemed Officer Candidate School.

But while showing signs of improvement externally, Ortiz continued to suffer on the inside.

“I’ve had meltdowns with occasional thoughts of suicide,” he said. “More than anything, I was detaching myself from reality, living in a constant daydream and experienced constant episodes of déjà vu.”

At the prompting of a combat veteran in his family, Ortiz continued on the path of self-medicating rather than seeking medical help that wasn’t working. He began experimenting with cannabis on Oct. 31, 2020. “Cannabis never interested me and was never in the picture, but I didn’t know any safe way to keep myself grounded,” he said.

“I needed guidance and help from the Marine Corps, but I didn’t get that. People knew something was going on, but they just kept ignoring it.”



Smoke billows in the embattled city of Raqqa, Syria, on Sept. 3, 2017. That year was “the deadliest year for civilians in Syria from explosive weapons,” according to Action on Armed Violence.

In November 2020, just three days after his initial use of cannabis, Ortiz felt compelled to report to his health care provider for “experimenting” with the drug.

He then refocused on therapy, and at the turn of the year, he felt he was “holding strong.”

But things came tumbling down again. Ortiz was presented with administrative separation proceedings in February 2021. “It blind-sided me, because that’s not what I expected at a time I was back giving everything I could to the Marine Corps,” he said.

“I knew I did something wrong, and I tried to make it right,” Ortiz said about his cannabis use. “But they presented me with involuntary separation anyway and eventually stripped me of my rank.” And now, officer candidate school (OCS) was also “off the table.”

“I risked my own life; my own marriage was at risk while I was deployed. I felt betrayed, knowing I gave everything, but the Marine Corps took a different approach”—an approach Ortiz considers unjust and abusive.

His superiors, he said, labeled him “a junkie” and a “disgrace” to the Marine Corps. He was even told that eventually he would end up homeless. And after four months of therapy, in April 2021, a behavioral health provider at Naval Health Clinic Quantico in Virginia determined that Ortiz’s poor decision had nothing to do with PTSD, stating in a report viewed by *The Epoch Times*, “The presence of PTSD/TBI in this service member may not reasonably be considered to be a contributing factor in the behavior or activities which now lead to the recommendation for involuntary administrative separation.”

### Legal Fight

In June 2021, his rank was reduced from sergeant to corporal.

Legal options were limited for Ortiz, as there was never a trial. While he had the right to request a court martial, he refused. He owned up to what he had done, hoping for a positive outcome that never came.

It wasn’t long before Ortiz was encouraged to reach out to the Uniformed Services Justice & Advocacy Group (USJAG), a nonprofit organization that provides legal, forensic, and investigative services in administrative and judicial proceedings for members of the military. The organization acts as a rapid response team, inserting itself between the Department of Defense (DOD) and injured active-duty service members to ensure both policy and procedure are followed during the discharge process.

According to Robert Alvarez, USJAG founder and chief operating officer, policy and procedure were not being followed in Ortiz’s case—and his rights were being violated. Ortiz’s story differs little from thousands of others seen by the organization.

“They grabbed Javier’s file, took a look at it, and authored a short line saying that his conduct had nothing to do with his injuries,” Alvarez said, adding that nothing could be further from the truth.

Within three days of the previous assessment, a nurse practitioner and a clinical social worker at the same clinic at Marine Corps Base Quantico assessed that Ortiz’s diagnosis of PTSD “may have been a contributing factor for his conduct resulting in the basis for separation.”

“[His] misconduct,” they wrote, “was secondary to attempts to manage intrusive memories and flashbacks, and to avoid thoughts and negative emotional states arising from his combat traumas, which are components of his PTSD symptomology.”

“If this was indeed the case,” Alvarez said, “it should have been the reason for Javier to be put into a medical retirement process, but that never happened, even though that’s what the law says needed to happen.”

Nic Gray, CEO of USJAG, describes Ortiz’s situation as the entrance to the “valley of death.” The valley of death is a term used in describing the journey of an injured service member from serving in combat to sustaining injuries and being wrongfully discharged from the military under other-than-honorable conditions.

According to Gray, the five phases of the valley of death are deployment, medication, behavioral issues, wrongful discharge, and suicide.

“During deployment,” Gray said, “service members go off to war, and many come home damaged with TBI, PTSD, and/or missing limbs.” The military’s solution, he said, is to place these injured service members on medication, which often results in adverse side effects.

“All too often, the adverse side effects of the medications manifest themselves in behavioral issues, which results in the injured service members acting out and being reprimanded under UCMJ [Uniform Code of Military Justice],” Gray said. “And punishment under UCMJ results in injured service members being wrongfully discharged and stripped of all benefits.”

The Marine Corps didn’t return multiple requests for comment from *The Epoch Times*.

### Looking Ahead

While the after-effects of participating in a deadly conflict have clearly taken their toll on Ortiz and others, Ortiz refuses to criticize the Marine Corps. “Now, could they have handled my situation differently?” he asked before adding, “Yes.”

“I never feared death and was more than willing to sacrifice all to protect and defend the Constitution of the United States and what it truly stands for,” Ortiz said. “But personnel should also be informed that they could experience harm and damage to their bodies for simply doing the task they’ve been assigned to do. [They should know that] if you’re going to be in artillery, some bad things might happen.”

Because of the toll it has taken on his mind and body, Ortiz said, “My life has not been easy, and I never want any Marine to be in my shoes—and I sure as hell don’t want to see the future families of America in a situation like mine.”

**“[The artillery battalion] fired more rounds in five months in Raqqa, Syria, than any other Marine artillery battalion, or any Marine or Army battalion, since the Vietnam War.”**

*Army Sgt. Major John Wayne Troxel*

“It’s a tough pill to swallow, sacrificing my sanity and potentially my life, and this be the outcome,” he said. “I feel disregarded and still have a big fight ahead of me.”

On Ortiz’s behalf, USJAG continues that fight.

“We conducted a forensic investigation, including statements from the Marine Corps’ own Blast Overpressure Report, submitted a detailed report about Ortiz to his command, and they still disregarded it,” Gray said. “The Marine Corps knew exactly what they were doing, damaged Ortiz and others, and didn’t do anything about it.”

“Ortiz’s story is going to open up a can of worms the DOD doesn’t want you to see.”

Today, Ortiz is 90 percent disabled and unemployable, according to the Department of Veterans Affairs. According to Alvarez, this “vindicates” Ortiz’s injuries and is evidence he should have been medically retired. As a result, Alvarez said, “We are appealing for 100 percent and will apply for a reversal of his separation, asking for the Marine Corps to medically retire him.”

As for Ortiz? “It would mean a lot to have my discharge corrected,” he said. “I would no longer have to hide my [discharge documents], a constant reminder of my past.

“In my heart, I know I’m a good person and gave all I had. All I wanted was to be the best example to my family, and be a good Marine.” ■

BORDER CRISIS

# THE BORDER RUSH

*A closer look at the 'Yuma Gap' more than 2 years into lax border policies*

By Brad Jones & John Fredricks

*A shotgun shell sits just across the U.S.-Mexico border wall in Yuma, Ariz., on May 18. Empty shotgun shells from the cartels are often scattered along the border.*

PHOTO BY JOHN FREDRICKS/THE EPOCH TIMES

**Y**UMA, ARIZ.— Every night at the “Yuma gap,” where the California, Arizona, and U.S.–Mexico borders meet along the Colorado River, dozens or hundreds of migrants huddle in the thick brush waiting for their chance to come to America for a better life—a promise Mexican drug cartels have sold them for \$500 to \$5,000 a head.

But that dream is still more than 100 yards away, down a steep embankment and across the river to where the 30-foot-tall iron border wall ends at the Cocopah Indian Reservation.

Behind them, the cartels patrol a road

along the riverbank. They drop off two or three carloads of migrants at a time near a narrow part of the river about a half-mile trek to an eight-foot-wide gap between the wall and barricades designed to block vehicles—not people.

Empty shotgun shells from the cartels are scattered along the riverbank near a path to the opening where thousands of migrant footprints are embedded in the dry sand.

The cartels house migrants near the Morelos Dam at Hotel Del Valle, just blocks from the border in Los Algodones, in Mexico’s Baja California state, according to a source who spoke on condition of anonymity for fear of retaliation.

On the American side, U.S. Border Patrol agents wait with unmarked white

buses to apprehend the illegal immigrants who cross the river under the cover of darkness behind the brightly lit American side of the border wall and Border Patrol vehicle headlights.

As one bus leaves, another one arrives, from dusk to dawn.

After midnight on May 19, more than 150 illegal immigrants surrendered peacefully to Border Patrol agents at the site—just one of several known illegal border crossings in the area.

Five buses—one empty—transported the asylum-seekers to a U.S. Customs and Border Protection facility a few miles away in San Luis, Arizona, to be processed.

Further up Yuma Levee Road along Salinity Canal, large stockpiles of ma-

terials to complete the border wall sit untouched.

### Behind the Wall

Behind the wall that night, a Mexican man, who said his name was David, waited in the shadows on the Mexican side while a Border Patrol agent briefed the new arrivals.

As they boarded the bus, he scavenged items they dropped and discarded before crossing the border.

Displaying paper currency from Mexico, South America, Europe, and Asia, David told The Epoch Times he makes about \$500 a week, collecting foreign money, clothing, and cellphones that people leave behind.

Most of the migrants, he said, deliber-

ately throw away their identification in Mexico so they are received as “undocumented migrants” when they enter the United States.

Scattered among phone cards, pharmaceuticals, toothbrushes, and shoes strewn across the sand and rocks along the wall are discarded documents: passports, asylum cards issued in foreign countries, and flight records.

David said he picks up garbage near the wall to stay in good graces with the Border Patrol agents and always knows when migrants are moving through the brush.

“The birds announce when someone is coming,” he said.

In the last year, since he has been scavenging at the border wall, David said he has witnessed tragedy and the kindness of Border Patrol agents who’ve tried to save the lives of illegal immigrants, including a 98-year-old Cuban man who suffered a heart attack after crossing the river with his daughter on a cold night last December.

The agent tried to revive the man, but it was too late. He was already gone, David said.

On another occasion, agents sent in a helicopter to rescue a woman who had experienced a severe epileptic seizure, he said.

David said that one day he hopes to cross legally into the United States with a work permit, but for now he’s making a living in Mexico.

### A Bigger Picture

Michael Yon, a former Green Beret turned writer-photographer, has spent several years exploring the border crisis. After serving in the U.S. Special Forces in the early 1980s, he was embedded with American and British troops in Iraq and has written six books since he left the military in the mid-’90s.

Yon was at the illegal crossing in Yuma on May 19 from dusk till dawn after stints in New Mexico and Texas.

“I’ve been up and down the border quite a lot,” he said. “I just got in from Panama—the Darién Gap.”

The Darién Gap is a Central American region between Panama’s Darién Province and the northern part of Colombia that links the North and South American continents. It is a 66-mile “gap” in the Pan-American Highway between Yaviza,

Panama, and Turbo, Colombia, where a road has never been built.

Yon said he’s been spending more and more time in the Darién Gap area because it’s a hub where many migrants start their journey northward. In that area, as in Mexico, migrants run the risk of being raped, robbed, and murdered, or sold into the sex trade on their way to the United States, he said.

In Colombia, Yon said, the United Nations hands out International Organization for Migration supplies—which he described as “pre-rape kits”—to women and girls crossing the Darién Gap.

The kits include female condoms and abortion pills, he said, as he displayed the items in a video call to The Epoch Times on May 22.

“[The women] get raped a lot, and the men are murdered, or they break their legs with baseball bats, if they ... try to get through without paying,” he said. “It’s unbelievable.”

“Some of the aliens who come through [the U.S.–Mexico border] have been through Darién.”

Some others fly to El Salvador, Managua, Nicaragua, and Mexico City to make the trek to the United States, and still others, especially Chinese migrants, land in Cancún, Yon said.

“The Chinese have a lot more money than the rest of the migrants here. Even the Chinese that come to the Darién Gap will go through an easier route. They’re more sophisticated in all of their approaches,” he said. “The Chinese have it all worked out. They have maps and TikTok videos and everything showing you how to get from here to there and all that.”

In contrast, the poorer migrants, such as many Haitians, usually take a more “helter-skelter” approach, Yon said.

In Yuma, flight information found along the Mexican side of the border wall indicated that many of the migrants flew from Lima, Peru, to Panama City to Mexico City before reaching the U.S.–Mexico border.

“Here we’ve seen ... quite a few from Peru, Colombia, scatterings from Brazil, and a lot of Venezuelans,” Yon said.

Some illegal immigrants told him they came from West African countries, including Ghana and Senegal, and the previous night, some said they came from Turkey, Pakistan, Uzbekistan, and the



“David” from Mexico looks at items left behind by migrants crossing illegally into Yuma from Mexico. He says that he makes about \$500 a week by collecting foreign money, clothing, and cellphones that people leave behind.

ALL PHOTOS BY JOHN FREDRICKS/THE EPOCH TIMES



A cross near the border in Yuma. Migrants run the risk of being raped, robbed, murdered, or sold into the sex trade on their way to the United States.

former Soviet republic of Georgia, he said.

The next night at Yuma, cartels shone high-powered green lasers at Yon and Anthony Rubin, the founder of Muckraker.com, who was traveling with him along the border.

Manny Bayon, a National Border Patrol Council union leader in San Diego, told The Epoch Times in a text message that cartels use the lasers to interfere with infrared detectors and night-vision capabilities. The lasers can also be used to guide illegal border-crossers and temporarily blind Border Patrol agents.

“You also never know if that laser is attached to a rifle,” he said.

### Yuma to California

All illegal immigrants apprehended in Yuma are transferred to California, Bayon said.

After more than two years of lax border policies under the Biden administration, tens of thousands of illegal immigrants have been bused from overcrowded facilities in Yuma to Border Patrol stations in California, such as Otay Mesa and San Ysidro in San Diego County and

**“The Chinese have it all worked out. They have maps and TikTok videos and everything showing you how to get from here to there and all that.”**

*Michael Yon, former Green Beret turned writer-photographer*

Blythe, Indio, and Murrieta in Riverside County. From there, illegal immigrants who claim asylum are released to non-governmental agencies, or NGOs, which help them arrange travel to destinations across the United States.

On May 20, near Jacumba in south-

eastern San Diego County, an unmarked white tour bus with dark-tinted windows pulled into a gas station. The bus was empty and was headed back to San Luis after dropping off illegal immigrants at San Ysidro and Otay Mesa, according to the Border Patrol agents.

Riverside County Sheriff Chad Bianco told The Epoch Times that Riverside has received more than 75,000 illegal immigrants in the past two years.

“We are the only non-border county in the country to get Border Patrol drop-offs,” Bianco said.

Illegal immigration has become an industry for NGOs, he said.

It’s projected that from March 2021 to June 2023, the county will have paid \$10.4 million to NGOs, and those funds will be matched by federal and state funding. The state also pays \$1.3 million per month for hotel rooms to house illegal immigrants, Bianco said.

Meanwhile, proposed legislation introduced by California state Sen. María Elena Durazo, Senate Bill 227, would pay unemployment benefits of \$300 a week for up to 20 weeks to all unemployed workers,



Illegal immigrants prepare to be transported by bus to processing facilities in Yuma. On the American side, U.S. Border Patrol agents wait with unmarked white buses to apprehend people who illegally cross the river.

regardless of their immigration status.

Health and Human Services already gives each illegal immigrant with refugee status \$3,500 to start their new life in the United States, and they automatically qualify for government assistance, Bayon said.

“That’s going to overwhelm the system,” he said. “We can’t even take care of our homeless people here who are citizens, some of them, and we’re just allowing these people to come in and give them \$3,500 and qualify for welfare, public assistance, housing, and medical?”

NGOs, many of them Catholic charities, help illegal immigrants settle in the United States while they await their immigration hearings, but according to authorities, only 1 in 10 illegal immigrants shows up for his or her final hearing, and the courts are backlogged for years in some parts of the country.

The Regional Center for Border Health and its subsidiary the San Luis Walk-In Clinic, Inc., run by former Democratic Arizona state Sen. Amanda Aguirre, is one of the NGOs that helps asylum-seekers in the Yuma area.

“The main one is Border Health,” said Rafael Rivera, president of the National Border Patrol Council Local 2595 union in Yuma. “They have a clinic. They do assessments ... and then they help out with housing them and send them to different locations and transport them to the airports.”

### Border Patrol

Rivera confirmed that busloads of illegal immigrants are sent to Border Patrol stations in San Diego and Riverside County from the Yuma station.

He agrees the border crisis has become an illegal immigration industrial complex.

“We’re not securing the border. We just became clerks. We’re either asylum officers or immigration processors. That’s all we do,” he said.

Currently, the Border Patrol is expediting asylum claims for illegal immigrants from certain countries, Rivera said.

When they arrive at the border, most of the illegal immigrants already have someone to stay with in the United States and a job, he said.

Most never utter the word “asylum,” but claim they’re afraid to return to Mexico, he said.

Illegal immigrants have to pay off the lead cartel representatives in a region or town and are controlled by “coyotes,” who smuggle drugs and people into the United States and are known for their brutality, according to Rivera and Bayon.

“Every square mile is owned by somebody,” Rivera said.

Besides the risk of being robbed or raped by coyotes, many illegal immigrants die in the desert heat or drown in the rivers and canals.

“Everybody thinks about the river, but they forget about the canals, and a lot of people die in the canals”; some are deep with swift currents that can “take you under,” he said. “In the summertime, we do a lot of rescues.”

Two weeks ago, the Border Patrol at Yuma responded to 10 rescue missions, an unusually high number, Rivera said.

A day before Title 42 restrictions were lifted, Brandon Judd, president of the National Border Patrol Council, a union that represents 18,000 agents and support



**(Above Left)** Illegal immigrants are apprehended by a U.S. Border Patrol agent in Yuma. **(Above Right)** The 30-foot-tall border wall, which ends at the Cocopah Indian Reservation, in Yuma. Mexican cartels sell to migrants a promise of a better life in the United States for \$500 to \$5,000 a head.

personnel, accused the Biden administration of misleading the public with its claim that people who cross the border illegally will be ineligible for asylum.

Judd called it “a half-truth at best.” Rivera also criticized U.S. Secretary of Homeland Security Alejandro Mayorkas for pointing out at a May 10 press conference that illegal immigrants can still claim asylum under reinstated Title 8 policies if they have a “credible fear” of returning to their country of origin.

“He basically gave them the playbook,” Rivera said.

While Rivera calls former President Donald Trump’s border wall more of “a tactical fence,” he says it allows the Border Patrol to respond more effectively because it funnels illegal cross-border traffic to specific areas agents can target.

Rivera also criticized Mayorkas for failing to finish construction of the border wall to close the Yuma gap.

“If we had it completed, we would be able to control the traffic better and just focus on those areas, because we don’t have the manpower,” he said. “Back in the day, before all of this chaos ... you would see an agent every other mile. Right now, you’ll see an agent every 5 to 6 miles. The majority of the workforce is not out there trying to combat the cartels.”

Meanwhile, Mayorkas urged poten-

tial migrants not to risk their lives and life savings only to be turned away at the border and implored them not to trust human smugglers who’ve told them the border will be open.

“It will not be. They are lying,” Mayorkas said.

#### Title 42 Chaos

When Title 42—a Trump-era policy that restricted immigration for public health reasons during the pandemic—expired just before midnight on May 11, a Border Patrol agent behind the wheel of a bus was swarmed by illegal immigrants who wanted to board the vehicle, Rivera said.

“He had to step back, close the doors, and wait until he could get more backup out there,” he said.

The scene erupted into chaos as the illegal immigrants began arguing over who would be first to board, Rivera said. Even some news reporters stepped away from the scene because they “felt unsafe,” he said.

The border wall and the combination of Trump-era “Remain in Mexico” policies and Title 42 restrictions helped to stem the flow of illegal immigration.

“Before he left office, our numbers were the lowest that they’ve ever been,” Rivera said.

But still, Rivera would like to see a re-

turn to enforcement policies that were in place before President Barack Obama’s catch-and-release plan.

In 2005, the Bush administration implemented Operation Streamline, under which illegal immigrants faced federal criminal charges for crossing the border illegally. It served as a “big deterrent” to illegal immigration, Rivera said.

The policies worked, he said, and the region saw a sharp decrease in cross-border crimes.

“But President Obama removed that, and then from there on out, we’ve just been overrun,” he said.

Rivera dismissed the Biden administration’s claims it has operational control of the border.

According to Rivera, the Border Patrol in Yuma is so overwhelmed and understaffed, it can’t even keep track of illegal entries.

#### Cartels Hiring Americans

Pinal County Sheriff Mark Lamb told The Epoch Times he’s concerned about military-age men, mainly from Mexico and Guatemala, crossing the border illegally into his jurisdiction from neighboring counties such as Yuma, Pima, and Cochise.

Situated between Tucson and Phoenix, Pinal County has seen a 377 percent in-

crease in traffic stops involving human smuggling, a 461 percent increase in pursuits involving human smuggling, and a 600 percent increase in fentanyl confiscations, he said.

The cartels are paying Americans via social media to transport illegal immigrants from southern U.S. border towns to more northern destinations.

“They’re hiring kids and regular Americans to come down and pick them up. So those people are now employed by the cartels making \$1,000 per person to drive them from Cochise County or the deserts of Pinal County up to Phoenix,” he said. “And they like kids, because if the kids get caught, they know the judicial system here in America is pretty lenient.”

Pinal County is more likely than Yuma to receive illegal aliens who are cartel members running drug and human-trafficking operations in the United States, Lamb said.

Human smugglers, known as “coyotes,” will wear camouflage and so-called carpet shoes, which hide footprints, to improve their chances of going undetected in the desert.

“They run from us, while we’re chasing them around in a helicopter,” he said.

When Lamb’s deputies stop suspected illegal immigrants, they hand them over to the Border Patrol.

“We might be saving them from the cartels enslaving them in the sex trade...

**220%**

YUMA DETENTION FACILITIES are already 220 percent over capacity.

**\$1.3 MILLION**

The state of California pays \$1.3 million per month for hotel rooms to house illegal immigrants, says a sheriff.

or extorted them here in America. Even if they get released by the Border Patrol, at least they’re not in the clutches of the cartels anymore—at least temporarily,” he said.

The cartels “are so evil and so violent” and have no regard for human life, Lamb said.

Even smuggling people in the trunk of a car is “inhumane,” he said.

“We had two vehicles with 25 people running in tandem,” he said. “We had three vehicles with 40 people in them ... so that’s what we’re dealing with.”

A week earlier in Yuma County, 6,700 illegal immigrants from 44 different countries—including criminals and military-age men from Russia and Ukraine—were apprehended, Lamb said.

“They had a little bit of everything,” he said.

Yuma detention facilities are already 220 percent over capacity at 4,000 people, so illegal immigrants have been released throughout Arizona, as well as in places such as Riverside County, he said.

Lamb urged the federal government to bring back Trump-era border policies because they worked, he said.

Aside from getting Mexico to cooperate, the United States needs “more boots on the ground” to patrol the border, Lamb said.

“And, we’ve got to finish the wall,” he said. “You can’t have all these gaps in the wall. We’ve already paid for it. I mean the wall’s just sitting there in piles in my county, and in several areas along the border. It’s just sitting there unfinished. You’ve got to use the technology that’s underground that hasn’t been turned on under this administration.”

#### Calls for Impeachment

Meanwhile, Republicans have renewed calls to impeach Mayorkas, who has repeatedly denied that there’s a border crisis and blamed Congress for failing to fix the “broken immigration system” for more than two decades.

U.S. House Speaker Kevin McCarthy (R-Calif.) told reporters on May 16 that Mayorkas has “failed at his job, and that Americans don’t believe him.”

He scoffed at Mayorkas’s claims that the border is secure while Americans watch news coverage showing “thousands of people just walking into America.”

“Nobody believes that,” he said. “I bet if you hooked Mayorkas up to a lie detector test ... he could not pass.”

Mayorkas dismissed Republican calls to impeach him in the House and told CNN’s Dana Bash he is focused on the work in front of him.

#### America in Decline?

Yon, the former Green Beret, believes the United States is on the verge of disaster as the nation faces such a massive immigration problem, as well as an economic decline and food shortages.

It’s more than just an economic slump, he said, it’s a moral and social decline reflected in everything from rampant drug addiction and homelessness to human trafficking and the illicit sex trade to social media.

The border crisis, he said, is a deliberate attempt to overwhelm America and leave it vulnerable to aggressive authoritarian regimes such as the Chinese Communist Party, which has clearly stated its desire for world dominance.

Yon attributes much of the chaos to a worldwide “information war” fueled by the World Economic Forum and China and to “weak men” who are either too complacent or too afraid to speak out against what he calls “invasion migration.”

Most Americans, he said, don’t see the border crisis from a global perspective as he does.

“I spent a lot of time in Europe, a lot of time in Asia. I spent more than half of my life down range, mostly out of the country—not in it,” he said. “The United States is collapsing, as is Europe.” ■



# How Biden Attempts to Redefine Freedom

*News Analysis* By Nathan Worcester



*Making 'freedom' akin to liberal values of care and fairness, rather than liberty*

President Joe Biden delivers a prime-time speech from Philadelphia on Sept. 1, 2022.

PHOTO BY JIM WATSON/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

**I**N AMERICAN POLITICS, PEOPLE don't always agree about the meaning of "freedom."

President Barack Obama declared in his second inaugural address that "preserving our individual freedoms ultimately requires collective action."

Sounding a little like President George W. Bush, whose second inaugural address "pledged America to the ultimate goal of ending tyranny in the world," Obama linked freedom to expansive foreign policy.

"We will support democracy from Asia to Africa, from the Americas to the Middle East, because our interests and our conscience compel us to act on behalf of those who long for freedom," he said.

By contrast, President Donald Trump's inaugural address outlined a different vision, one in which freedom was tightly bound to national loyalty.

"Whether we are black or brown or white, we all bleed the same red blood of patriots. We all enjoy the same glorious freedoms, and we all salute the same great American flag," he said.

Trump also sounded different from Obama on foreign policy.

"We have defended other nations' borders, while refusing to defend our own," he declared.

President Joe Biden's inaugural address, delivered amid the COVID-19 pandemic, didn't include the word "freedom" at all, though "liberty" does appear twice.

By the 2021 holiday season, the president had little positive to say about individual freedom, at least when it came to certain COVID-19 restrictions and mandates.

"To folks who are not vaccinated: You may think you're putting only yourself at risk, but it's your choice. Your choice is not just a choice about you; it affects other people," he said on Dec. 21, 2021.

Just three months later, with the Russia-Ukraine war underway, Biden spoke about freedom when justifying sanctions on Russia and the shipment of U.S. materiel to Ukraine.

"In the perennial struggle for democracy and freedom, Ukraine and its people are on the front lines fighting to save their nation," the commander-in-chief declared.

As he gears up for 2024, freedom is cropping up in Biden's rhetoric more often.

In his campaign's first television advertisement, released in late April, a narrator says that freedom is among the things

“we hold most dear as Americans.”

Freedom and other core American values are, the narrator says, “under attack by an extreme movement that seeks to overturn elections, ban books, and eliminate a woman’s right to choose.” Meanwhile, Jan. 6 protesters bearing Trump flags flash across the screen.

The narrator claims that “Joe Biden has made defending our basic freedoms the cause of his presidency” before running through a list of “basic freedoms,” none of which is listed in the Constitution or the Bill of Rights:

“The freedom for women to make their own health care decisions, the freedom for our children to be safe from gun violence ... for seniors to live with dignity, and to give every American the freedom that comes with a fair shot at building a good life.”

That message rings hollow to Republican strategist Wes Farno.

“I think the ad is pure hyperbole to cover the complete disaster of the Biden administration and a lackluster attempt at best to change the reality of his administration,” he told *The Epoch Times* in a May 23 email.

“He uses the imagery of a little kid putting up an American flag, only to discuss the right to kill babies moments later,” Farno added.

Democratic politician and strategist David Carlucci said he sees it differently.

“Democrats are seizing the word freedom from the Republican lexicon because Republicans are making it easy. A party that wants to ban books, tell a woman what to do with her body, and censor businesses for policy disagreement is a party that deserves to be presented as anti-freedom,” he told *The Epoch Times* in a May 22 email.

Farno said the “freedom” message could hinge on activating voters who care about abortion. It was a live issue in the 2022 midterms, in which many believe that the Republican Party underperformed after the Supreme Court overturned *Roe v. Wade*.

“The reality is that 60 percent of Americans don’t support abortion on demand, which is what they are ultimately pushing,” he said, citing an April 2023 poll from NPR/PBS NewsHour/Marist that found that two-thirds of



After Trump’s inauguration, in Washington on Jan. 20, 2017. President Barack Obama in his second inaugural address linked freedom to expansive foreign policy. By contrast, President Donald Trump’s inaugural address outlined a vision in which freedom was tightly bound to national loyalty.

Americans, including 90 percent of Republicans, want the procedure restricted to the first trimester.

### Moral Foundations

Conservatives may find it easy to caricature their liberal opponents, and vice-versa. But, by stepping back, it’s easier to understand where both sides are coming from.

Psychologist Jonathan Haidt’s research on the moral foundations of liberals and conservatives is a useful starting point for reckoning with different conceptions of freedom.

Haidt has argued that liberals and conservatives draw on different values. He has found that liberals strongly emphasize care—a value associated with sympathy and generosity—and fairness.

According to Haidt, conservatives honor care and fairness, too, though slightly less than liberals..

But conservatives also put stock in values that liberals generally don’t consider important: loyalty, sanctity, and authority, the stuff of any speech from Trump or Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis.

“Liberals speak for the weak and oppressed; they want change and justice, even at the risk of chaos,” Haidt argues. “Conservatives, on the other hand, speak for institutions and traditions.

They want order, even at some cost to those at the bottom.”

Haidt has since added a sixth moral foundation to his model—liberty and oppression. He has used it to study the psychology of libertarians.

Almost all the “basic freedoms” in Biden’s first 2024 TV ad are grounded in appeals to care or fairness.

They’re also a close cousin of two of the “four freedoms” in President Franklin Roosevelt’s famous 1941 State of the Union address.

The first two of Roosevelt’s freedoms—freedom of speech and freedom of religion—are in keeping with the First Amendment. The others, “freedom from want” and “freedom from fear,” depart from the Bill of Rights in the direction of greater power for the state.

Liberals’ strong focus on care and fairness and somewhat weaker concern with liberty also explain Biden’s COVID-19-era messaging and the consistent attacks from that wing on “freedumb.”

In the left or liberal mind, the decision not to wear a mask or not to get vaccinated could count as a weightier act of violence against human life than the conscious choice to terminate a pregnancy.

Conservatives and others who value sanctity and authority—the latter ultimately derived from God—may find that

FROM: KEVIN DIETSCH - POOL/GETTY IMAGES  
JOHANNES EISELE/AFP/VIAGETTY IMAGES

The Statue of Liberty in New York on May 7, 2020. Almost all the “basic freedoms” mentioned in President Joe Biden’s first 2024 TV ad are grounded in appeals to care or fairness.



position hard to fathom.

But for liberals and those with a similar psychological makeup, appeals to sanctity and authority mean very little. At the same time, beliefs about what is most fair and least harmful to the expectant mother can lead them away from pro-life conclusions.

Likewise, concerns about care and fairness can override liberty for those who believe that masks and injections make a significant difference to the health and safety of their neighbors.

Of course, while leftists tend to caucus with Democrats and rightists with Republicans, the quirks of the electoral system and the demands of coalition-building sometimes lead to strange political bedfellows.

On the streets of liberal, Democratic Chicago, for example, a traditional Islamic mosque might adjoin a house flying the rainbow “Progress Pride” flag.

It’s hard to imagine a shared view of freedom bridging that gap—and yet common perspectives on immigration, economics, and, in particular, the Repub-

lican Party (and the Republican base) are apparently enough to deliver wins at the ballot box.

### A Calculated Message

In the eyes of conservatives and libertarians, Biden’s use of the American flag might seem cynical and insincere.

But Biden’s message isn’t aimed at them. As in his 2020 campaign, he’s making a pitch to independents in crucial battleground states, many of whom likely share at least some moral foundations with conservatives.

Peter Ditto, a psychology professor at the University of California–Irvine and a collaborator on “moral foundations” research with Haidt, said he agrees that the imagery reflects a careful attempt to draw support from nonliberals.

“Because liberals and conservatives have been shown to have different moral sensibilities, a message is often more persuasive to the other side when it is couched in ways that appeal to that side’s particular moral sense,” he told *The Epoch Times* in a May 22 email.

Using the moral foundations vocabulary, the flag is a keystone for loyalty, authority, and sanctity—loyalty to the nation, respect for government authority, and a belief in the American system’s sanctity.

“He is making a case for traditional liberal policy positions like support for abortion rights and LGBTQ rights (mentioning more contemporary controversies as well, like support for democracy and accusations of book banning), but framing them all in terms of support for patriotism and freedom, as a way to appeal more to conservative morality,” Ditto said.

By trying to claim the word “freedom,” Biden wants to make that trans-foundational case a stronger one.

“The freedom framing is particularly potent I think,” Ditto said.

“This election is a fight for the middle,” Carlucci, the Democratic strategist, said. “And the campaign will gather more support by showing voters what they will lose with Republicans rather than what they will gain with Democrats.” ■

## DURHAM REPORT

# FBI REPEATEDLY HAMSTRUNG

*Top FBI officials delayed, pushed back on Clinton probe: Durham report*

## CLINTON INVESTIGATIONS

BY PETR SVAB

**F**BI OFFICIALS INTERVENED AGAIN AND AGAIN AHEAD OF the 2016 election to limit the ability of agents to investigate potential criminal activity related to former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton or her presidential campaign, according to a recent report by special counsel John Durham.

The report contrasts the bureau's treatment of Clinton-related matters with those related to her opponent, Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump.

The Clinton-related cases emerged from local field offices only to run into delays and pushback when seeking approval and cooperation from the headquarters in Washington. Top FBI officials responded to the probes with hostility and tried to pick apart their bases, the report details.

By contrast, the investigation of Trump's campaign members was quickly and unanimously approved at the highest levels and pushed forward by the officials despite them being predicated on vague, unverified claims, according to the report.

### Foreign Influence Campaign

In late 2014, the FBI learned from an informant that a foreign government was planning "to contribute to Clinton's anticipated presidential campaign, as a way to gain influence with Clinton should she win the presidency," the report said.

Not only was the informant "well-placed," but the FBI was able to independently corroborate the information, it said.

The field office handling the informant "almost immediately" sought a Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA) warrant to monitor the foreigner. It tried to get the warrant approved quickly, but headquarters left the application "in limbo" for four months, the special agent in charge (SAC) at the field office said, according to the report, which noted that the delay was also in part due to waiting for confirmation of a new attorney general.

"Everyone was 'super more careful'" and "scared with the big name [Clinton]," another agent said.

"They were pretty 'tippy-toeing' around [Clinton] because there was a chance she would be the next president."

The higher-ups suggested to the SAC that "they did not want a presidential candidate on a tape," the report said. ♦



*Then-FBI Director James Comey at the agency's headquarters in Washington on June 23, 2014. FBI leadership, including Comey, distanced themselves from probes of the Clinton campaign, but initiated a "full" investigation into Trump right off the bat.*

PHOTO BY MARK WILSON/GETTY IMAGES



Cases related to former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton ran into delays and pushback when approval was sought from FBI leadership.

Ultimately, the FISA warrant was conditioned on the FBI's giving "defensive briefings" to the Clinton campaign and other candidates targeted by the same foreign government. The briefings serve to warn an American that he's being targeted by a foreign government operation.

### Another Foreign Influence Campaign

In November 2015, the same informant told the FBI that he was approached by an insider of another foreign government who asked him to set up a meeting with Clinton in order to propose "something." The informant understood it meant "campaign contributions on behalf of" the foreign government "in exchange for protection of [the government's] interests should Clinton become president," the report said.

The FBI knew that the insider had "foreign intelligence and criminal connections" and the proposed campaign contributions allegedly involved "a significant sum of money," according to Durham.

The insider wanted to attend a November 2015 Clinton fundraiser, but ultimately didn't and asked the informant to instead deliver a "message of support" for Clinton at another fundraiser in January 2016. The informant was authorized by the FBI to deliver the message, but after the fact, the informant reported that he also made a \$2,700 contribution to the campaign on behalf of the insider. Giving to a campaign on behalf of a foreigner is illegal, Durham noted.

"They [the campaign] were ok with it," the informant reported. "Yes, they were fully aware from the start."

The illegal campaign donation wasn't documented in the case file. And nobody, from the handling agent to the higher-ups at headquarters, could provide Durham with

any explanation why—if they admitted remembering anything about the donation at all.

But Durham uncovered internal messages that showed some higher-ranking agents at the headquarters were aware of the donation and were at the time urgently seeking more information about it.

In the end, however, the investigation appears to have been snuffed out, the report indicates.

The handling agent, "responding to direction," the report said, told the informant:

"Do NOT attend any more campaign events, set up meetings, or anything else relating to [Clinton's] campaign. We need to keep you completely away from that situation. I don't know all the details, but it's for your own protection."

"The FBI effectively removed their sole source of insight into this threat," the report said.

### Clinton Foundation Probes

Starting in January 2016, the FBI field offices in Washington, New York, and Little Rock, Arkansas, started investigations of possible criminal activity related to the Clinton Foundation.

The Little Rock office based its probe on an "intelligence product and corroborating financial reporting," the report said, indicating that an "industry likely engaged a federal public official in a flow of benefits scheme, namely, large monetary contributions were made to a non-profit, under both direct and indirect control of the federal public official, in exchange for favorable government action and/or influence."

The Little Rock and New York offices also had received an allegation from an informant that foreign govern-

ments "had made, or offered to make, contributions to the Foundation in exchange for favorable or preferential treatment from Clinton," the report said.

The Washington office's probe was based on allegations made by author Peter Schweizer in his book "Clinton Cash."

The New York and Washington probes were only "preliminary," Durham wrote, because their basis hadn't been verified.

On Feb. 1, 2016, the offices held a meeting with each other and with headquarters officials, as well as Department of Justice (DOJ) and local prosecutors.

One of the DOJ officials involved, Ray Hulser, derided the investigations as "poorly presented" and otherwise "downplayed" some of the information when he later talked to Durham's team. He claimed the information from financial records involved "de minimis" sums of money, according to the report. In fact, the sums involved went into the hundreds of thousands, Durham noted.

Another official recalled the DOJ's reaction to the investigations was "hostile," the report said.

Three weeks later, another meeting took place at FBI headquarters, this time led by then-Deputy Director Andrew McCabe.

McCabe initially told the offices to shut the cases down, but relented upon some pushback.

One official from the Washington Field Office, Paul Abbate, later described McCabe as "negative," "annoyed," and "angry" during the meeting.

"[The DOJ] say there's nothing here," McCabe said, according to Abbate. "Why are we even doing this?"

In the end, the offices were ordered to seek approval directly from McCabe before taking any overt investigative steps.

The restriction "essentially remained in place until August 2016," the report said.

Local agents left the meeting frustrated with the restrictions, Abbate said.

Diego Rodriguez, then-head of the New York Field Office, recalled that one of the top FBI officials called him in May 2016 on behalf of then-Director James Comey and told him to "cease and desist" from the Clinton Foundation probe due to an undisclosed counterintelligence reason. Durham, however, couldn't find any such reason.

There was another meeting in August, this time a videoconference. The Little Rock and Washington offices were told to shut down the probes and turn them over to the New York office, which was also authorized to seek subpoenas in the case from the New York federal prosecutors in their area.

But when the office tried to get the subpoenas, the prosecutors refused to issue them, the report said.

### Contrast

Durham repeatedly pointed out the contrast between the probes involving Clinton and the one involving Trump.

The FBI opened an investigation of Trump campaign staff in July 2016 based on a single uncorroborated claim

that a campaign aide, George Papadopoulos, had "suggested" during a casual talk with an Australian diplomat that the campaign had received "some kind of suggestion" that Russia may help it by releasing information damaging to Clinton. Durham later learned that Papadopoulos may have never made any such suggestion to begin with.

Despite the flimsy basis, FBI leadership, including Comey and McCabe, were unanimous in launching the probe as a "full" investigation right off the bat, a fact that Durham criticized.

Moreover, most of the officials involved didn't recall even discussing whether to give the Trump campaign a defensive briefing, the explanation being that they didn't want to tip off the campaign because the FBI didn't know whether Trump's team was, in fact, colluding with Russia.

**"They were pretty 'tippy-toeing' around [Clinton] because there was a chance she would be the next president."**

*FBI agent*

Durham pointed out that in one of the cases involving Clinton, the FBI also didn't know whether her campaign was colluding with the foreign government involved, but still gave Clinton, through her lawyer, a defensive briefing.

Furthermore, the FBI didn't hesitate to seek a FISA warrant on another Trump campaign aide, Carter Page, using unverified claims from the infamous Steele dossier, which they knew was being pushed by the Clinton camp.

FBI officials put the dossier claims into a FISA application just two days after obtaining them, before even attempting to verify them. The warrant was pushed through in a month.

The dossier was a mishmash of public information and fabrications, the report indicated. The FBI has acknowledged that the later renewals of the FISA warrant were invalid and resulted in illegal surveillance. ■



Special counsel John Durham repeatedly pointed out in his report the contrast between the probes involving Clinton and Trump.

FROM L. JUSTIN SULLIVAN/GETTY IMAGES; TENG CHEN FOR THE EPOCH TIMES

Navy SEALs participate in training in Kodiak, Alaska, in this file photo. Navy SEALs are maritime special operations forces that strike from the sea, air, and land.

PHOTO BY PHOTOGRAPHER'S MATE 2ND CLASS ERIC S. LOGSDON/U.S. NAVY VIA GETTY IMAGES

APPROPRIATIONS

# Special Ops Forces Set to Repurpose

*China, Russia the new focus, replacing the Middle East*

BY JOHN HAUGHEY

**F**OR MORE THAN 20 YEARS after 9/11, U.S. special operations forces (SOF) were primarily engaged in counterinsurgency campaigns and operations against terrorist organizations, mostly in the Middle East.

But now, the special ops units are engaged in a “great power competition” against China and Russia, a transition that’s exposing deficiencies in force structure and resources, witnesses told a Senate panel on May 17.

“We are no longer trying to defeat most of these terrorist groups across the globe,” Jonathan Schroden, Cen-

ter for Naval Analyses’ research program director for countering threats and challenges, told the Senate Armed Forces Committee Emerging Threats Subcommittee.

The plan now is to “monitor, disrupt, degrade” terrorist groups that have the capability to “harm the homeland,” with a focus on countering Chinese and Russian state aggression, according to Schroden.

“This has translated into a reduction in requirements for counter-intelligence, which has freed up some SOF,” he said. “There is some capacity to repurpose now.”

There’s a bit of déjà vu with a return to strategic competition with adversarial nation-states, former Army Special Operations Commander Lt. Gen. Kenneth E. Tovo said.

“Some of our current SOF organizations were created to meet the requirements of the last period of strategic competition, the Cold War with the Soviet Union,” he said.

“In some ways, this is a return to our roots.”

But it’s a whole new world now, Tovo acknowledged.

“As a nation, we are faced with an incredibly complex and dangerous global

security environment,” he said in his testimony. “The rules-based international order created after WWII is under significant attack: at best, faltering; at worst, crumbling.”

## **Less Money, More Demand**

U.S. special forces operations are coordinated and conducted by the U.S. Special Operations Command (USSOCOM), the only joint combatant command created by an act of Congress, which also oversees Army, Marine Corps, Navy, and Air Force SOF component commands.

There are about 6,400 contractors, 6,875 civilian employees, and nearly

67,000 active-duty military, including 36,000 from the Army and 19 from the newly created Space Force, in USSOCOM, which is headquartered at MacDill Air Force Base in Tampa, Florida.

According to the Pentagon, about 6,000 SOF “operators” are currently stationed in more than 80 countries.

USSOCOM’s \$9.68 billion Fiscal Year 2024 budget request is about \$437 million less than this year’s enacted spending plan. Its largest projected expenditures are \$3.37 billion for “theater forces” and \$2 billion for combat development activities.

Schroden and Tovo both said the

overall spending request, which is about \$3 billion to \$4 billion less than SOF spending a decade ago, is inadequate, especially when several service branches are either flattening or cutting special operations budgets, most notably the Army by at least 10 percent.

Tovo said the Army is trimming its SOF component by 10 percent or perhaps by 20 percent.

“That would be crippling,” he said. “We are a force enabled by our Intelligence Community. Without the intelligence capability, our operational capabilities are hobbled at best. If the cuts are taken there, that would be devastating.”

Schroden said not only could special forces and intelligence operations use more funding, but the proposed budget should be responding more closely to “demand signals for SOF.”

He said in assessing SOF force structure, it isn’t geared to meet “a higher demand for psyops, civil affairs, under-sea warfare, and maritime capabilities.”

There’s a need to expand in the face of increasing demand for those capabilities, “yet the supply [SOF] has remained static for quite some time,” according to Schroden.

“There is a lot of capacity for counter-terrorism that hasn’t been repurposed yet,” he said.

### ‘Change the Ecosystem’

Tovo said the current SOF command-and-control procedures are “lacking a strategic vision” and need to be streamlined.

“The challenge is two-fold,” he said, noting the statutory authorities and procedures for approving a SOF operation “is very hard” to get through a chain of command that’s structured to only handle “one op at a time in its approval process.”

Tovo said that up and down the decision-making process, there’s no uniting vision, which makes it difficult “for decision-makers at any level to view these ops and say, ‘Yes, this supports national strategy. This is an effective tactical action’ ... appropriate to meet strategic objectives within a framework that has been approved.”

Among his ideas is “pushing authorities and approvals further down the chain of command.”

But it still requires action rather than dithering by the Pentagon, according to Tovo.

“Our challenge is often moving from authority to permission,” he said.

Schroden said restructuring the force to allow for greater and faster flexibility is “the million-dollar question.”

But one confusing element is clear.

“There is no single entity in the Department of Defense that you could point to and say, ‘That entity is in charge. [It is] the lead [entity] for global competition campaign against the likes of China,’” he said.

For instance, Schroden said, the Indi-



Members of the 22nd Special Tactics Squadron jump from an MC-130H Combat Talon II during training over Hurlburt Field, Fla., in this file photo. The squadron is a unit under the U.S. Air Force Special Operations Command.

an-Pacific Oceans Command (IndoPaCom) was restructured to be a “global integrator, global synchronizer,” but “I think it is pretty clear for anyone who looks at IndoPaCom capabilities and where its focus areas are, that that mission exceeds its ability to conduct, and that mandate is not something IndoPaCom can reasonably fulfill.”

There has been discussion about making SOF and cyber defense separate military branches and debate about whether special operations should come under the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

Schroden said being an advisory board rather than an operational command, the Joint Chiefs of Staff wouldn’t be suitable to oversee SOF functions. But, he said, the Center for Naval Analysis is “in the midst of assessment of the uni-

fied commands plan” that will “lay out some options.”

Tovo said there’s some movement toward a more streamlined structure being organically developed within the service SOF commands, noting that the Army’s First SOF Command has “stood up an integrating headquarters to try [to get] a global view of these campaigns against Russia and China.”

The command not only has its own forces to deploy but has created a platform “to sense and see what the environment is and what our adversaries are doing, particularly on the information domain, but also to synchronize operations.”

Overall, Tovo said, “the authorities are pretty well drawn” in laying out when to deploy SOF or conduct an in-

FROM U.S. AIR FORCE PHOTO BY STAFF SGT. MARLEAH MILLER/RELEASED WIN/MONAME/GETTY IMAGES

telligence operation, such as Section 1202 in the 2018 National Defense Authorization, but there are “some quirks” that need to be ironed out.

“We had some programs, according to open source, being executed in Ukraine under these authorities that had to cease once war started,” he said. “I don’t think that was ever the intent of Congress but” Department of Defense (DOD) attorneys made the call.

“As a result, we stopped programs for our partner in Ukraine at the very moment they needed our help the most.”

“Just the fact that there is no single entity” coordinating SOF is alarming, according to Sen. Joni Ernst (R-Iowa).

“We have to have the right [command structure] and we do not have that right now,” she said.

That was evident in her meetings with military commanders in Afghanistan, Ernst said, recalling a visit with Navy SEALs when “most of the conver-

## BREAKDOWN OF US SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND

- **Contractors:** 6,400
- **Civilian Employees:** 6,875
- **Active-Duty Military:** 67,000

sation was with the JAG [Navy lawyers], about what would be legal and what would not be legal.”

“There were many who can say ‘no’ to moving out [and launching an operation] but very few who can say ‘yes,’” she said.

The “overly bureaucratic” decision-making process “is risk-averse, and I think it undermines our ability to effectively compete with our adversaries,” according to Ernst.

“Instead of empowering them to think creatively, the bureaucracy has literally forced them to fight with one hand tied behind their back,” she said.

Tovo said, “They’re being told, ‘You need to compete against China,’” but “without an overarching strategy that defines what we are trying to achieve, it is hard for decision-makers. God bless our SOF operators.”

### Irregular Warfare

Schroden said SOF’s “biggest gap is in the information operations space” where “DOD capabilities, organization, doctrine, use of terminology” has little coordination or consistency.

“It is about as big a mess as you can imagine. None of the services use the same terms. When you say information warfare operations, they are all talking about different things, developing different capabilities in those areas,” he said. “There is no synchronicity across the department when it comes to the use of information or even how to think about the use of information.”



Jonathan Schroden, director of countering threats and challenges program at the Center for Naval Analyses.

For instance, what the Army calls the “information dimension” is the “information environment” referred to by “the joint world,” as the Army calls USSOCOM.

Tovo said information operations are a key component of “irregular warfare” that gets lip service from the Pentagon but little attention from military planners, despite the mandate from Congress to create an Irregular Warfare Center.

“There is a challenge with definitions” here, too, he said. “Everybody has a different view of what ‘irregular warfare’ means. In plain English, I would offer that conventional warfare is very enemy force-focused, whereas the suite of capabilities we call ‘irregular warfare’ is more often focused on the human terrain, the population, nations, or partner allies we are working with.”

These types of operations are “what the Green Berets were purpose-built for.”

Schroden said that as a result, particularly in information operations, “I don’t think we are very strong. And

I don’t think we are likely to get stronger because, in my view, we are not putting enough emphasis on that.”

He said discussion about irregular warfare, specifically information operations, is “a glaring absence” in the Pentagon’s 2024 National Defense Authorization and that it needs to be examined closely because if done poorly, the stakes now could be higher than they were when levied against terrorist groups and insurgencies.

“Certainly irregular warfare against the likes of China and Russia carry much higher degrees of escalatory risk compared to counter-terrorism,” Schroden said, noting the risk surfaces “in wargaming.”

To master this, the military must better “think about escalation dynamics in these operations, especially an irregular warfare one.

“So, I wouldn’t be able to look you straight in the face and say, ‘We have a good understanding now of what those escalation ladders look like and how to manage them,’” he said. ■

*A view from a cedar sauna overlooking the Hocking Hills region of Ohio at Magical Earth Retreat.*

PHOTO BY JEFF LOUDERBACK/THE EPOCH TIMES

EDUCATION

# 'WE'VE LOST OUR WAY'

*High demand for an old-school boot camp in Ohio teaching self-sufficiency skills*

BY JEFF LOUDERBACK

**V**INTON COUNTY, OHIO— People from all walks of life across 25 states and Canada flocked to the Old School Survival Boot Camp for a three-day event over May 12–14 in the Appalachian foothills of southern Ohio, where they gathered to learn skills that teach self-reliance.

More than 140 classes taught by instructors from around the country included butchering, canning, herbalism, emergency medicine techniques, food preservation, blacksmithing, beekeeping, and gardening.

Tara Dodrill and her husband, Bobby, are the boot camp's founders. They live on a 60-acre farm in Vinton County, not far from the fairgrounds, where the event is held. The closest community is McArthur, a one-stoplight village a few miles away.

"There is a misconception that self-reliance is synonymous with fully living off-grid," Tara Dodrill said.

"At a time when food prices are high and supply chain issues impact availability, there are questions about ingredients and chemicals in food. Leading a self-sufficient lifestyle is being embraced by everyone from city dwellers with no land and suburbanites with quarter-acre lots to farmers and homesteaders with an abundance of space."

Dodrill is a freelance writer who has authored articles about self-reliance. A few years ago, the couple attended a prepper gathering in North Carolina, which inspired them to start the boot camp.

**'We've Lost Our Way'**

"We are far too dependent on modern luxuries," she said. "We've lost our way as a society because it is less common to know how to provide your own resources than it was even 75 or 100 years ago."

"The boot camp is a hands-on, interactive event. You learn better from hands-on experiences, and the more you do something, the more comfortable you get."

Most attendees have conservative beliefs, Dodrill noted, but that isn't the case for everyone.

"A vegetarian went to the butchering class because her doctor said she needed to introduce meat protein into her diet,"

she said. "She attended classes all three days, and by the third day, she learned to butcher by herself. This is a woman in her 20s who is a city-based liberal with her beliefs but recognized the importance of learning a skill to make her better prepared and improve her health."

Beth Levering lives with her husband and three children in a southwest Ohio neighborhood. She was raised on a farm and has experience with planting and growing. She brought her kids to the boot camp in 2021 "when there was not a lot happening in person because of COVID shutdowns."

"I'm a constitutional conservative and believe in freedom causes, but I'm not a prepper," Levering said. "I think the COVID pandemic brought more attention to the possibility of supply shortages and mandates where you can't go where you want. It is important to be prepared."

Judi Phelps and her husband, Scott, live on a 32-acre property a few miles from the Vinton County Fairgrounds. They have a firearms training company called On Guard Defense and a shooting range, they grow their own vegetables and fruits, and they raise chickens for eggs and meat. They also have freeze driers that operate around the clock, she said, for dehydrating foods that have a 25-year shelf life.

"Volatility in the world; hyperinflation on gas, food, and utilities; and food shortages from supply chain issues are some of the reasons why people are concerned about what's ahead," Judi Phelps said. "I think people are really understanding that and trying to just prepare themselves the best they can and secure their own family. That is the heart of what the boot camp is all about."

**Self-Sufficiency Is 'Empowering'**

"We get our beef from a local farmer who does not use hormones, and it's all grass-fed. We acquire raw milk through a local dairy farmer. And so we make our own yogurt, butter, and cream cheese. Knowing how to safely and effectively use firearms is critical for self-sufficiency, for hunting and self-defense, and that is empowering."

"When you know how to grow and raise your own food, that minimizes



*The Old School Survival Boot Camp has more than 140 hands-on classes for adults and children.*

your dependency on grocery stores, and you know what is actually in your food. That is empowering, too."

Michelle and Leah Svensson, who are sisters, co-host a podcast called "The Resistance Chicks" and homestead on just a little over an acre in a small town outside of Cincinnati. They started with a garden and expanded to chickens, pigs, and bees.

They teach multiple classes at the boot camp, including suburban homesteading.

TIM EVANS

"You don't have to live on 5 or 50 acres to learn how to provide for yourself and your family," Michelle Svensson said. "Homesteading is being as self-sufficient as you can with the space God has given you in that time."

With shutdowns, mandates, and supply chain issues during the COVID-19 pandemic, concerns about food shortages, and uncertainty about the ingredients and chemicals found in grocery store foods, more Americans are showing an interest in homesteading or, at

the least, introducing self-sufficient principles," Leah Svensson said.

"Every day we wake up, it seems like another right is being taken away. The only way to fight back is to get out of the system as much as you can so you are not reliant on supply chains."

"A lot of people say they will start as soon as they get their land," Michelle Svensson added. "You don't have to wait for that. You can start even if you live in an apartment or live in the city."

Preserving food for long-term use is

one of the skills taught at the boot camp.

"One part of homesteading is growing food, but a bigger part is preserving it," Michelle Svensson said. "You can start preserving food no matter where you live. Learn how to ferment, dry, and can tomatoes, for example, so when you're ready to grow, you know what to do with them."

**Changing Chicken Regulations**

The Svenssons teach a class on how to get "no chicken" regulations repealed in communities. ❖





“Many cities thought chickens were dirty, so they stopped allowing them,” Michelle Svensson said. “There is a growing movement to repeal chicken laws, and our class empowers them to do so.”

A previous year’s class inspired Levering to take action about raising chickens. For several years, she said, her family kept chickens in the backyard of the home within city limits.

“I thought I was permitted to have them until the city code officer showed up at my door and said I couldn’t keep these chickens here,” Levering said. “I formed a citizens committee to get the ordinance changed, and now we are allowed to have chickens in our backyard.”

Her chickens not only provide eggs but also offer firsthand animal care lessons for her homeschooled children, she said.

“It’s a lot about going back to the ways that our parents or grandparents or great-grandparents lived,” she said. “It helps them know where their food comes from and gives them another skill

to provide their own food in the future.”

Ryan Lehman, who lives in the Hocking Hills region of Ohio, teaches beekeeping and cast-iron preservation classes. He was introduced to beekeeping about 10 years ago when a friend told him that an abandoned church nearby his house that was built in the 1800s had colonies of bees in the walls. The church was starting to crumble, and the county bee inspector joined him to remove the colonies.

“He gave me a colony of bees and mentored me, and now I mentor others who want to learn,” Lehman said.

The population of bees is in decline due to factors such as pesticides and urbanization. Bees provide multiple benefits to people leading a self-sufficient lifestyle; honey has medicinal properties, and bees’ role as pollinators makes them essential for crop and plant growth.

“Every spring, honeybees swarm, and if you understand how to put out traps, you can collect honeybees for your hive,” Lehman said.

An Air Force police officer for 14 years, Lehman now works in law enforcement at the VA Medical Center in Columbus, Ohio.

“From my experience in law enforcement, and my interest in beekeeping and cast iron, I have some knowledge that people there might find useful,” he said. “If you connect with one person and give knowledge, it gives that person a better sense of security and gets them in the right direction for learning more.”

#### Event Creates Eco-Tourism

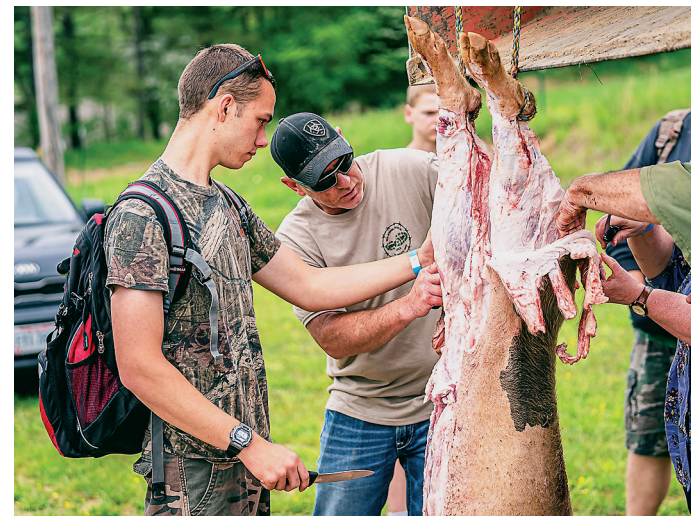
The Old School Survival Boot Camp bolsters eco-tourism in a region rich with natural treasures such as Ash Cave and Cantwell Cliffs, Dodrill said. Hocking Hills State Park and Wayne National Forest cover more than half of Vinton County.

Phelps points to a family-operated lodging destination featuring energy-efficient, hobbit-themed cottages built into the side of a hill as an example of how the area embraces eco-tourism

CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: LUDERBACK/THE EPOCH TIMES COURTESY OF MICHELLE SVENSSON; MATTHEW WALTER/AP VIA GETTY IMAGES; TIM EVANS



*(Clockwise from L) The Magical Earth Retreat is a lodging destination of hobbit-themed cottages built into the side of a hill. Leah Svensson (L) and Michelle Svensson (R) are among the instructors at the Old School Survival Boot Camp. Raising chickens is a great way to provide eggs and meat, as well as to offer firsthand animal care lessons. The hands-on butchering class is a favorite at the Old School Survival Boot Camp.*



and self-sustained living that fit into the boot camp’s mission.

Karina Elschwarby and her children, Mervat and Ron Elschwarby, own Magical Earth Retreat off a remote narrow road about 10 miles from the fairgrounds. The accommodations include six cottages, four of which are hobbit-themed and two that are inspired by Morocco.

The Elschwarbys are from New York, live in South Florida, and refurbish and build homes around the world. The idea to construct hobbit-themed cottages as vacation rentals originated during a trip to New Zealand. They initially considered a Western state such as Montana or Wyoming as the location, and they were a day away from moving forward on a contract in Asheville, North Carolina, but they saw an 11-acre property

in Hocking Hills and felt that it was “perfect” for what they wanted to do, Karina Elschwarby said.

The temperature doesn’t dip below 58 degrees Fahrenheit in any of the cottages, which is vital for their ongoing commitment to energy efficiency, Mervat Elschwarby said.

“We incorporated recycled materials into our design in each cottage, and we used reclaimed wood for an entire wall and whiskey barrels to create our bathroom sinks,” she said. “We have a green space where we grow organic fruits.”

Future plans include more cottages, a lake, and a wedding venue. They added a cedar sauna that offers a view of the rolling hills.

“People who go to the boot camp stay here because it reflects the self-sustain-



ing theme,” Ron Elschwarby said.

Dodrill said that some attendees stay on-site at the campground, while others make cabins and cottages their home base during the boot camp. Many people develop camaraderie amid the classes, events, and entertainment.

“We also see people from all experience levels, including homesteaders who have lived in rural areas for years, city dwellers who want to learn how to become self-sufficient, and people who are ready to make a change and get property and learn how to lead a self-sustaining lifestyle,” Dodrill said. “We get people from all walks of life who, for a day or a weekend, are like-minded and have a shared purpose that could one day save their lives and the lives of their families.” ■



SPOTLIGHT

## Annual Migration

**FLAMINGOS STAND IN A POND IN NAVI**  
Mumbai, India, on May 22. Flamingos flock to this richly biodiverse region during their annual migration.

PHOTO BY PUNIT PARANJPE/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

## HEALTH CARE

# ‘I Want to Live’: Star Wars Toy Designer’s Last Words

COVID-19 patient dies after 16-month battle against hospital protocol

By Alice Giordano

**T**OY DESIGNER MARK Boudreaux has died after being left on a ventilator by a Cincinnati hospital for more than a year following his diagnosis with COVID-19.

“We lost Mark this morning,” his wife, Judy Boudreaux, said in a text sent to The Epoch Times on May 14.

Mark Boudreaux designed some of America’s most iconic toys—including the beloved Millennium Falcon spaceship from “Star Wars” and the sail barge known well among fans as the Khetana.

For fun, he gave characters from the iconic movie franchise, such as Stormtroopers, Endor Rebels, and an AT-ST driver, his own face.

The Cincinnati native also designed action figures, including a Batman figure, and playsets based on the movies “Transformers,” “Ghostbusters,” and “Jurassic Park.”

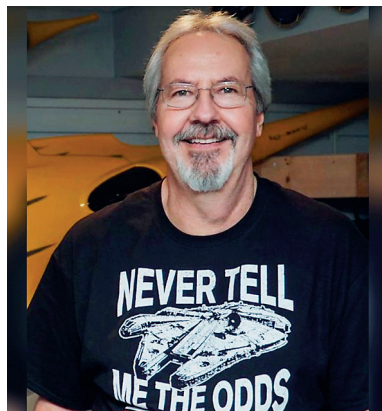
As reported in previous stories by The Epoch Times, a long trail of medical and court records chronicles the 16-month battle as the Toy Hall of Famer fought to live, during which his devoted wife Judy waged her own galactic battle to save him.

Judy Boudreaux went from trying to get him weaned from the mechanical ventilator to fighting to keep him on it after he suffered so much ventilator damage to his lungs that he couldn’t breathe without it.

When doctors declared that the only way Mark Boudreaux would breathe on his own again was with a lung transplant, she called dozens of transplant centers around the United States, but none of them would even consider his case.

“No one would help us,” Judy Boudreaux told The Epoch Times.

Bethesda North Hospital, where Mark Boudreaux had been hospitalized since February 2022, never responded to repeat-



(Top) Mark Boudreaux in healthier times. (Above) Boudreaux designed some of America’s most iconic toys, including the beloved Millennium Falcon spaceship.

ed inquiries from The Epoch Times about the case. Its parent company, TriHealth, also never responded to repeated inquiries from The Epoch Times.

## Breach of Hippocratic Oath

Following news of Mark Boudreaux’s death, nationally recognized physician Dr. Pierre Kory, who got involved in Boudreaux’s case after The Epoch Times stories ran, said he has never seen a hospital so unwilling to help a patient.

According to Kory, when he lined up a Food and Drug Administration (FDA)-approved treatment that has shown prom-

ising results for patients such as Mark Boudreaux, the hospital refused to sign the forms to authorize it.

“No one there was willing to help him, to do anything for him,” Kory said. “It was basically a complete failure of the Hippocratic Oath.”

The hospital also sought a court order to take Boudreaux off a dialysis machine he was on after his kidneys were damaged from prolonged ventilation use.

Court records show that the hospital argued that Mark Boudreaux’s living will indicated that he didn’t want his life artificially prolonged.

His living will does say that, but it specifies that he didn’t want his life sustained through an artificial feeding tube—which is what he was on during his entire hospitalization.

But as Judy Boudreaux pointed out to The Epoch Times, Mark’s living will stated that he only wanted an attending physician to have the power to withhold life-saving treatment if he was unable to make decisions regarding his medical treatment.

Although bedridden and no longer able to talk, Mark Boudreaux wrote several times on a piece of paper “I want to live.”

His living will also stated that he wanted his life ended only if he had an “incurable or irreversible condition.”

The treatment Kory had lined up for Boudreaux is a type of therapy containing stem cells and exosomes—a fatty sac found inside a cell that has properties that can locate and reduce inflammation and promote healing.

The exosome and stem cell therapy has performed well enough to win approval from the FDA as an investigational new drug (IND).

Kory said he and other medical practitioners have used it successfully to treat



Mark Boudreaux wrote “I want to live” just days before he was to be taken off a life-saving machine on March 17.

COVID-19 patients and others suffering from substantial pulmonary distress.

“We started treating a few patients, and our first patient within two days already showed significant benefits,” he said.

Kory also said the drug is easy to administer. It involves three intravenous doses over the course of a week.

## Bethesda North Refused Release

It’s only drawback is that the therapy is expensive and not covered by insurance, Kory said. But that wasn’t an issue for Mark Boudreaux.

The problem, according to Kory, was that Mark Boudreaux’s treating physicians refused to sign off on a “compassion use” form, which is required to administer an IND treatment.

Dr. Charles Thurston, a retired doctor and now a patient advocate, who also got involved in Mark Boudreaux’s case, told The Epoch Times that when he found a long-term acute care facility in Missouri willing to take him,

Bethesda North wouldn’t sign the release unless Judy Boudreaux, Mark Bourdeaux’s legal guardian, agreed to a variety of conditions.

They included inoculating Mark with the COVID-19 vaccine, something Judy Bourdeaux previously told The Epoch Times that both she and Mark Bourdeaux were opposed to and that she constantly fought with the hospital over.

“I feel like they just really wanted him to die,” Thurston said.

Kory called Mark Bourdeaux’s death a result of “pure arrogance” on the part of his treating physicians.

## Fans Bid Farewell to an Icon

“Had he had a real doctor—and when I use the saying ‘real doctor,’ I mean someone who puts the patient as the primary consideration, not the rules, not the protocols—and decides what’s the best thing that you can do for them on a risk-benefit basis and follow that and do everything you can for the patient,” Kory said.

## “No one would help us.”

Judy Boudreaux,  
wife of Mark Boudreaux

However, Mark Bourdeaux did have his cheerleaders.

After learning of his situation, complete strangers started online petitions asking Bethesda North to “seek every avenue possible” to save Mark Bourdeaux.

A group of colleagues from Hasbro, where Mark Bourdeaux worked for more than four decades, was working on a fundraiser for him.

Star Wars fans also paid homage to him on social media and on a variety of fan outlets, including Jedi Temple Archives, which headlined the sad news: “The Passing of an Icon: Star Wars Designer Mark Boudreaux Is One With the Force.” ■

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: COURTESY OF JUDY BOUDREAU; GREGORZ CZAPSKI/SHUTTERSTOCK

HEALTH

# LONELINESS AS UNHEALTHY AS 15 CIGARETTES A DAY

*Social media addiction  
and COVID lockdowns  
have left Americans  
less connected*

BY BETH BRELJE

*A student studies at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill on Aug. 18, 2020. The school halted in-person classes during the pandemic.*

PHOTO BY MELISSA SUE GERRITS/GETTY IMAGES



**H**EALTH WARNINGS ON CIGARETTE packages started in 1969 after the release of a report from the U.S. surgeon general about risks related to smoking. Now, the surgeon general's office has found something as dangerous as smoking 15 cigarettes per day: loneliness.

The recently released 82-page report, "Our Epidemic of Loneliness and Isolation," takes a troubling but hopeful look at who's lonely and why it matters. The report offers recommendations that individuals can try right away to feel more connected, such as disconnecting from excessive social media use and spending less time in front of screens and more time in front of people. The report pulled information from many studies.

Loneliness is more than just a bad feeling. It harms individual and societal health, according to the report. It's associated with a greater risk of cardiovascular disease, dementia, stroke, depression, anxiety, and premature death. The mortality impact of being socially disconnected is similar to smoking up to 15 cigarettes per day and is even

*A woman wearing a mask walks past a live music venue during the pandemic in Washington on April 29, 2020. A study found a 16 percent decrease in personal network size during the pandemic from June 2019 to June 2020.*

greater than obesity and physical inactivity.

Large population studies have documented that among initially healthy people tracked over time, those who are more socially connected live longer, while those who experience social deficits, including isolation, loneliness, and poor-quality relationships, are more likely to die earlier, regardless of the cause of death, according to the report.

"The harmful consequences of a society that lacks social connection can be felt in our schools, workplaces, and civic organizations, where performance, productivity, and engagement are diminished. Given the profound consequences of loneliness and isolation, we have an opportunity—and an obligation—to make the same investments in addressing social connections that we have made in addressing tobacco use, obesity, and the addiction crisis," Surgeon General Dr. Vivek Murthy wrote in the study's introduction.

He called for building more connected lives in a more connected society.

Failure to connect with others will bring increased risk to personal and collective health, ultimately causing society to splinter and divide

until we can no longer stand as a community or a country, Murthy said.

"We are called to build a movement to mend the social fabric of our nation. It will take all of us—individuals and families, schools and workplaces, health care and public health systems, technology companies, governments, faith organizations, and communities—working together to destigmatize loneliness and change our cultural and policy response to it," he wrote. "Each of us can start now, in our own lives, by strengthening our connections and relationships. Our individual relationships are an untapped resource—a source of healing hiding in plain sight. They can help us live healthier, more productive, and more fulfilled lives. Answer that phone call from a friend. Make time to share a meal. Listen without the distraction of your phone. Perform an act of service. Express yourself authentically. The keys to human connection are simple but extraordinarily powerful."

#### Most at Risk of Loneliness

Anyone can experience loneliness and isolation, but some people are at higher risk. They're those with poor physical or mental health, those with disabilities, those struggling financially, those who live alone, single parents, and younger and older populations, according to the report.

While the highest rates of social isolation are found among older adults, young adults are almost twice as likely to report feeling lonely than those older than 65. The rate of loneliness among young adults has increased every year between 1976 and 2019.

Adults with lower incomes are more likely to be lonely than those with higher incomes. Sixty-three percent of adults who earn less than \$50,000 per year are considered lonely, which is 10 percent higher than those who earn more than \$50,000 per year.

Other groups with a heightened risk include individuals from ethnic and racial minority groups, LGBT individuals, rural residents, victims of domestic violence, and those who experience discrimination or marginalization.

#### Diminishing Traditional Values

Many traditional indicators of community involvement, including religious groups, clubs, and labor unions, show declining trends in the United States since at least the 1970s. According to the study, in 2018, only 16 percent of Americans reported feeling very attached to their local community.

Membership in organizations that have been important pillars of community connection has declined significantly. Research produced by Gallup, the Pew Research Center, and the National

Opinion Research Center's General Social Survey shows that since the 1970s, religious preference, affiliation, and participation among U.S. adults have declined. In 2020, just 47 percent of Americans said they belonged to a church, synagogue, or mosque. That's down from 70 percent in 1999. It's the first dip below 50 percent in the history of the survey question.

"Religious or faith-based groups can be a source for regular social contact, serve as a community of support, provide meaning and purpose, create a sense of belonging around shared values and beliefs, and are associated with reduced risk-taking behaviors," the report reads. "As a consequence of this decline in participation, individuals' health may be undermined in different ways."

Family size and marriage rates have been in steady decline for decades. The percentage of Americans living alone has also increased from decade to decade. In 1960, single-person households accounted for only 13 percent of all U.S. households, according to the report. In 2022, that number more than doubled to 29 percent of all households.

The reasons people remain single, have smaller families, and live alone are varied, but these changes contribute to more social disconnection and fewer supports to draw upon in times of need.

A fraying of the social fabric can be seen more broadly in society, according to the report; trust in each other and major institutions is at near-historic lows. Polls conducted in 1972 show that roughly 45 percent of Americans felt they could reliably trust other Americans. That proportion shrank to roughly 30 percent by 2016.

#### Social Media Makes Us Less Social

Social media does have benefits. It can foster connection by providing opportunities to stay in touch with friends and family, offer support groups and information about social participation for those with disabilities, and create opportunities to find community.

The benefits are as familiar as the harms listed in the report. Social media displaces in-person engagement, monopolizes our attention, reduces the quality of our interactions, and diminishes our self-esteem. This can lead to greater loneliness, fear of missing out, conflict, and reduced social connection.

For example, frequent phone use during face-to-face interactions between parents and children or between family and friends creates distraction and reduces conversation quality. This lowers self-reported enjoyment of time spent together in person, the report states.

Social media, smartphones, virtual reality, remote work, artificial intelligence, and assistive technologies changed how we live, work, ❖

**63%**  
OF ADULTS WHO earn less than \$50,000 per year are considered lonely. Lower-income adults are more likely to be lonely than those with higher incomes.

**16%**  
OF AMERICANS reported they felt very attached to their local community, according to a study.

**47%**  
OF AMERICANS in 2020 said they belonged to a church, synagogue, or mosque. That's down from 70 percent in 1999.

OLIVER DOULERY/AFP/VIAGETTY IMAGES



communicate, and socialize.

Nearly all teens and adults younger than 65 years of age—96 to 99 percent—and 75 percent of adults 65 and older say they use the internet. Americans spend an average of six hours per day on digital media, and 1 in 3 U.S. adults aged 18 and older report that they're online "almost constantly."

The percentage of teens aged 13 to 17 who say they're online "almost constantly" has doubled since 2015.

When looking at social media specifically, the percentage of U.S. adults 18 and older who reported using social media increased from 5 percent in 2005 to roughly 80 percent in 2019.

*Social media displaces in-person engagement, which can lead to greater loneliness.*

## Studies have shown that people who are more socially connected live longer.

Among teens aged 13 to 17, as of 2022, 95 percent reported using social media, with more than half reporting that it would be hard to quit social media.

### Fewer Friends

The number of close friendships has also declined over several decades. Among people not reporting loneliness or social isolation, nearly

90 percent have three or more confidants. Yet 49 percent of Americans in 2021 reported having three or fewer close friends—only 27 percent said that in 1990.

Social connection declined more during the COVID-19 pandemic, with one study finding a 16 percent decrease in network size from June 2019 to June 2020 among participants.

Not only are social networks getting smaller, but levels of social participation are also declining.

Measures of social exposure from 2003 to 2020 found that social isolation—determined by average time spent alone—increased as follows:

**2003:** 285 minutes per day; 142.5 hours per month spent alone.

**2019:** 309 minutes per day; 154.5 hours per month spent alone.

**2020:** 333 minutes per day; 166.5 hours per month spent alone.

It amounts to an increase of 24 hours per month spent alone.

During this time, social participation in various relationships declined. The amount of time respondents engaged with friends socially in person decreased as follows:

**2003:** 60 minutes per day; 30 hours per month spent with friends.

**2020:** 20 minutes per day; 10 hours per month spent with friends.

That's 20 fewer hours per month engaging with friends. For young people aged 15 to 24, time spent in-person with friends reduced by nearly 70 percent over almost two decades, from roughly 150 minutes per day in 2003 to 40 minutes per day in 2020.

### COVID-19

"Many of us felt lonely or isolated in a way we had never experienced before. We postponed or canceled meaningful life moments and celebrations like birthdays, graduations, and marriages. Children's education shifted online—and they missed out on the many benefits of interacting with their friends," the report reads. "Many people lost jobs and homes. We were unable to visit our children, siblings, parents, or grandparents. Many lost loved ones. We experienced feelings of anxiety, stress, fear, sadness, grief, anger, and pain through the loss of these moments, rituals, celebrations, and relationships."

Frontline workers had different experiences than those who could work from home.

Parents managing their own work and their children's online school had a different experience than single young people unable to interact in person with friends.

One survey shows that by April 2021, 1 in 4 individuals reported feeling less close to family members than they did at the beginning of the pandemic. But at the same time, about 1 in 5 said they felt closer to family members. This may mean that the pandemic exacerbated existing family dynamics of connection or disconnection, the report states.

### People Need People

Social connection is connected to human behavior, such as nutrition, sleep, and physical activity. It's tied to psychological processes such as the sense of meaning, purpose, feelings of stress, safety, or hopefulness.

The report makes five broad recommendations:

1. Strengthen social infrastructure in local communities: Invest in local institutions that bring people together.
2. Enact pro-connection public policies: Consider social connection when writing policy.
3. Mobilize the health sector: Train health care providers and assess patients.
4. Reform digital environments: Establish and



*As children's education shifted online during the pandemic, they missed out on the many benefits of interacting with their friends, the report says.*

implement safety standards and support the development of pro-connection technologies.

**5. Deepen our knowledge:** Increase public awareness.

The report recommends that workplaces put in place policies that protect workers' ability to nurture their relationships outside work, including respecting boundaries between work and non-work time, supporting caregiving responsibilities, and creating a culture that supports these policies.

Recommendations for parents include investing in their relationships with their children by recognizing that strong, secure attachments are protective and a good foundation for other healthy relationships. And modeling healthy social connection, including constructive conflict resolution; spending time together; staying in regular contact with extended family, friends, and neighbors; setting time aside for socializing away from technology or social media; and participating in community events.

Recommendations for individuals include minimizing distraction during conversation to increase the quality of the time spent with others.

Don't check your phone during meals with friends, important conversations, and family time. And look for ways to serve and support others, either by helping your family, co-workers, friends, or strangers in your community or by participating in community service.

Reflect on how you approach others in conversation and actions. Ask yourself, how might kindness change this situation? What would it look like to treat others with respect? How can I be of service? How can I reflect my concern for and commitment to others? ■



*People visit St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York on Nov. 27, 2020. Religious or faith-based groups can be a source for regular social contact, the report says.*

CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: ARTIST/PHOTOGRAPHY/GETTY IMAGES; ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES; SPENCER PLATT/GETTY IMAGES

A sign reads “We’re sorry” for supply shortage in a children’s pain and fever remedy section of a pharmacy in Burbank, Calif., on Dec. 6, 2022.

PHOTO BY MARIO TAMA/GETTY IMAGES



**We're sorry.**  
The supplier is temporarily unable to supply this product to retailers.

children's pain & fever support\*

CVS PAINFVR LQ CHR 4Z 207688 YOU PAY \$6.49	CVS APAP LIQ CHRY 8Z 32723 A03 2/78990 09/16/22 YOU PAY \$8.79	TYL CH D/F CHRY LQ 4Z 16604 A03 2/9209 09/16/22 YOU PAY \$8.29	CVS PAINFVR DF CHR 4Z 57845 A03 304350 08/24/22 YOU PAY \$6.99	CM GR
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MEDICINE

# US FACES SHORTAGE OF LIFE-SAVING DRUGS

*As profit-driven production limits drug supply, doctors face ethical burdens prioritizing patients*

By Vance Voetberg

**A**CCORDING TO A RECENT Senate report, drug shortages increased to nearly 30 percent between 2021 and 2022.

“Drug shortages are increasing, lasting longer,” the Senate report reads. “The number of active drug shortages in the U.S. reached a peak of 295 at the end of 2022.”

Although drug shortages aren’t uncommon, the current shortage is sparking renewed interest among lawmakers.

“Congress, the executive branch, and industry must work together to respond to this decades-long problem,” the report reads.

## Doctors Lack the Most Effective Medicines

From basic asthma medication to certain chemotherapies, doctors are finding it increasingly challenging to acquire the medicine they need to treat patients. The shortage places doctors in complicated positions of prioritizing certain patients’ needs above others, an increased ethical burden for health care professionals.

In a 2022 study published in the American Society of Oncology’s JCO Oncology Practice journal, 75 percent of oncologists couldn’t prescribe the preferred chemotherapy agent because of shortages. When the preferred chemotherapy treatment isn’t available, doctors are forced to choose less effective alternatives, delay treatment, or reduce treatment dosages.

Yoram Unguru, an assistant professor of oncology at the Johns Hopkins Kimmel Cancer Center, wrote: “Surprisingly, little formal guidance exists to help oncologists make these tragic choices. Should we prioritize lifesaving chemotherapeutics, and if so, what criteria should we employ? Should children receive preference over adults? Perhaps patients with a better prognosis deserve priority access?”

Oncologists aren’t the only doctors facing difficult medical decisions.

Commonly used drugs such as al-

buterol, used when asthma patients experience life-threatening asthmatic attacks, are also in shortage. Amoxicillin, a generic antibiotic widely used to stop the spread of pneumonia, is needed. There’s a scarcity of epinephrine, which is used to treat severe allergic reactions. Children’s cold and flu medicine is also sparse.

“The majority of these medications are relatively simple to make and have been available for decades. How is it that they are unavailable in the United States—the wealthiest country in the history of human civilization?” Dr. Alex Oshmyansky said on May 11 in front of Congress’s Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations, which is investigating the root cause of drug shortages.

“The rates for morbidity and mortality for pediatric cancers in the U.S. have gone up in recent years, as the medications necessary to treat them are increasingly unavailable.”

## Profit-Driven Motives?

While the reasons for the drug shortages are multifactorial, such as production malfunctions or insufficient raw materials, “the overarching theme is that almost all of these products are low-cost generic sterile injectables with low-profit margins,” according to Dr. William L. Dahut, chief scientific officer for the American Cancer Society.

“This means manufacturers have little incentive to invest in process upgrades, expanded capacity, or redundancy in production facilities,” he told The Epoch Times.

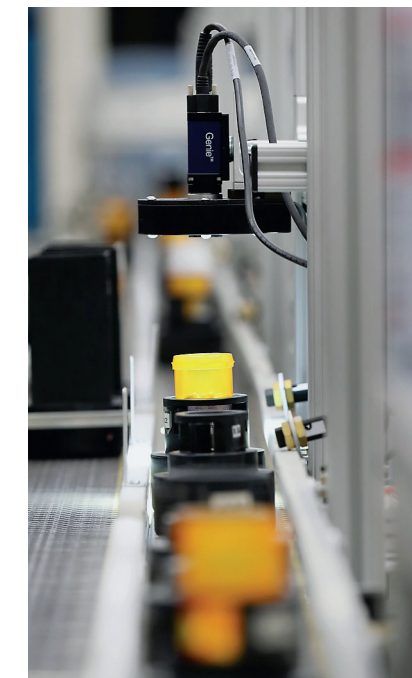
“Companies make business decisions to discontinue manufacturing certain drugs, particularly generic drugs, based on profitability or other business considerations without always ensuring the continued manufacture of the drug elsewhere.”

The pharmaceutical industry doesn’t generate its desired profits by creating common drugs, even though they’re in high demand. What do produce higher profits are newer drugs.

In February, Akorn Pharmaceu- ♦

**“Manufacturers have little incentive to invest in process upgrades, expanded capacity, or redundancy in production facilities.”**

Dr. William L. Dahut,  
chief scientific officer,  
American Cancer Society



Bottles of prescription drugs on a production line in Midvale, Utah, on Sept. 10, 2018. The pharmaceutical industry doesn’t generate its desired profits by creating common drugs.



ticals, a drug company solely focused on making generic drugs, went bankrupt and was forced to shut down all U.S. operating sites. Akorn was the sole manufacturer of a particular form of albuterol used in hospitals for patients with serious respiratory complications.

“It’s important to note that these products are manufactured by private companies, and the FDA cannot require a pharmaceutical company to make a drug, make more of a drug, or change the distribution of a drug,” the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) wrote on Twitter in response to news of Akorn’s closure.

Because it’s outside of its statutory powers, the FDA doesn’t have the authority to compel drug companies to upregulate production. Democrats and Republicans are united in attempting to provide a solution to drug shortages. However, the solution is far from simple, given that the authority of agencies such as the FDA is a contentious topic among lawmakers.

But as the Senate’s report on drug shortages pointed out, neither the industry nor the federal government has end-to-end visibility of the pharmaceutical supply chain.

“This lack of transparency limits the

**75%**  
OF ONCOLOGISTS COULD not prescribe the preferred chemotherapy agent due to shortages, a 2022 study showed.

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**90%**  
“THE FOUR LARGEST [middlemen] control 90 percent of the medical supply market,” Rep. Morgan Griffith says.

federal government’s ability to proactively identify and address drug shortages,” the report reads.

**The Problem With Pharma Middlemen**

In the May 18 hearing, Rep. Morgan Griffith (R-Va.) drew attention to the controversial practices of pharmaceutical middlemen. Middlemen are group purchasing organizations and pharmacy benefit management firms (PBMs) that negotiate drug rebates and fees,

*The FDA doesn’t have the authority to compel drug companies to upregulate production.*

create drug formularies and surrounding policies, and reimburse pharmacies for patients’ prescriptions.

They’re the link between pharmaceutical and insurance companies that have “enormous influence over the U.S. prescription drug system,” Federal Trade Commission Chair Lina M. Khan said in a statement.

“Middlemen,” Griffith said, “do not care to look for ways to mitigate shortages.

“The four largest group purchasing organizations control 90 percent of the medical supply market and have massive market power. They could help end drug shortages by prioritizing generic drugs’ availability and quality. Instead, they use their market power to force ‘race-to-the-bottom’ pricing without consideration for quality or availability.”

The questionable methods of middlemen have come under scrutiny; the Federal Trade Commission started an inquiry in June 2022 to investigate their effect on the accessibility and affordability of pharmaceuticals. Initially, the inquiry included the six largest PBMs in the United States, but as of May 17, the commission included two more PBMs that will be required to provide information and records of their business practices.

“The largest PBMs are integrated with the largest health insurance companies and wholly-owned mail-order and specialty pharmacies. They influence which drugs are prescribed to patients, which pharmacies patients can use, and how much patients ultimately pay at the pharmacy counter,” the Federal Trade Commission stated on May 17.

Although the commission hasn’t stated when it’ll release its findings, the inquiry “is aimed at shedding light on several PBM practices.” But for now, it appears that the solutions to end drug shortages remain in the dark. ■

THIS PAGE: SARAH SILBERG/GETTY IMAGES



# Perspectives



*Hollywood writers fear that ChatGPT and similar AI applications will replace human writers, columnist Milton Ezrati says.*

PHOTO BY DADO RUVIC/ILLUSTRATION/REUTERS



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INSIDE



# Thomas McArdle



## Corporate Espionage, Chinese Style

*The free world must wake up to Beijing's multipronged mission*

SOME CONSIDER THE very first case of international industrial spying to be the 18th-century letters of the missionary superior general of the French Jesuits, François-Xavier d'Entrecolles, describing the manufacture of the exquisite porcelain of Jingdezhen in southeast China, where the origins of what are recognized as the finest ceramics in the world trace back to the sixth century. It wouldn't be long before d'Entrecolles and his fellow priests, despite a long tenure dating back to 1579, would be cast out by the imperial Chinese.

In the 21st century, the Lazy Susans—or canzhuo zhuanpan, as they're called in restaurants in mainland China—have turned, as in the case of former Apple software engineer Weibao Wang. The Department of Justice (DOJ) announced on May 16 that it has charged Wang with six counts pertaining to stealing Apple technology and providing it to a Chinese smart car company. Wang is the third ex-employee of Apple charged with stealing trade secrets from the global tech giant.

The DOJ, in a possible distraction from the Chinese threat, also outlined charges filed in Brooklyn against a Greek NATO defense contractor it accuses of “helping to fuel Russia's war effort,” and charges filed in Arizona against two Russian nationals who sent aircraft parts to Russian airline firms; not to mention charges filed in the Southern District of New York against 39-year-old “Joe Hansen,” a native of the People's Republic of China whose real name is Xiangjiang Qiao, for sanctions evasion, money laundering, and bank fraud offenses in utilizing a Chinese company to sell weapons of mass destruction production materials to Iran through the U.S. financial system. Like Wang, Qiao is

within the PRC, beyond the reach of U.S. authorities.

Does this mean that even the left is waking up to the economic warfare of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), whose designs entail military and economic supremacy in the world by mid-century? Not if the Biden administration is telling us that China's spying can casually be categorized with Moscow's and Tehran's. The Ayatollah and Vladimir Putin know very well, as does Kim Jong Un in North Korea, that a nuclear attack on the United States or another NATO country is national suicide; their threat to the free world is of a much lesser magnitude than Beijing's.

### Wang is the third ex-employee of Apple charged with stealing trade secrets from the global tech giant.

From the spy balloon that early this year just happened to wind its way from the Aleutian Islands to across the continental United States, to the National Security Agency discovering China-linked hackers breaching U.S. telecom networks last year; from the penetration of the computer systems of government agencies of at least six U.S. states to the discovery last year of Chinese-government infiltration of email accounts of *The Wall Street Journal* for years—all of these well-documented episodes are only a sample of the CCP's broad strategy designed to emasculate the United States and the rest of the free world.

In sync with this, Beijing's agents are making a concerted effort to soften up the cultural foundations of the West. For decades, even before Xi Jinping ascended to the party's Cen-

tral Committee in 2002, Beijing was cultivating an “international army of friendly propagandists” for China, through the spending of more than \$6 billion over the past decade and a half on the expansion of Chinese media friendly to the CCP around the world, such as the Xinhua News Service, the *Global Times*, CCTV, and China Radio International, as well as enticing or co-opting foreign dignitaries and journalists to spread the news that mainland China is benevolent.

Even a decade and a half ago, the Canadian Security Intelligence Service was warning of the underlying purpose of the projection of China's “soft power” by the Beijing Ministry of Information's many dozens of Confucius Institute chapters in educational institutions around the world.

“For China to achieve its goals, people must admire China to some degree,” Jim Judd remarked while he was director of the Center for Strategic and International Studies and was monitoring Chinese operatives. “While academics debate the relative importance of hard power—tanks, missiles, guns, and the like—versus soft power, the People's Republic of China government views the soft power concept as useful.”

After nearly a century and a half of European missionary efforts within China, and tens of thousands of conversions, the Qing emperor in 1724 pronounced Christianity “heterodox” after coming to the conclusion that the evangelists' work was a threat to his dynasty and the Chinese way of life. The free world doesn't have anywhere near the luxury of a century and a half to wake up to the nature of Beijing's multipronged mission aimed at unseating the United States and its allies in military and economic global dominance.

# Anders Corr



## The Big Tech Spy Hunt

*From China to Russia, Iran, and South Korea, economic espionage grows*

THE UNITED STATES AND South Korea are getting tougher on technology leaks. The two countries have extensive tech industries to protect. Most important is their technological lead, along with the Netherlands, in small and powerful computer chips used for economic and military applications around the world.

Countries that steal these technologies include China, Russia, and Iran. As U.S. adversaries, they could use them against us and our allies.

On May 16, the Department of Justice (DOJ) revealed five related cases investigated by its new Disruptive Technology Strike Force.

Two of them, both in California, include the alleged theft of source code by Chinese nationals for delivery to competitors in China.

On May 5, a senior technology engineer was arrested for alleged theft of “metrology software which is used in ‘smart’ automotive manufacturing equipment,” the DOJ said in a press release. The tech could help China build nuclear submarines and military aircraft.

The other case is of a Chinese national and former Apple engineer who allegedly stole “thousands of documents containing the source code for software and hardware pertaining to Apple's autonomous vehicle technology,” according to the DOJ.

He escaped back to China the same night in 2018 that FBI agents searched his home and discovered the documents. It is unclear why the FBI didn't immediately arrest the suspect and why it has taken this long to bring charges.

A third case, in New York, involved a sanctioned “Chinese procurement network established to provide Iran with materials used in weapons of mass destruction and ballistic missiles,” the DOJ said. The defendant is a Chinese national who allegedly used

a front company to try to provide Iran with isostatic graphite, used in the rocket nozzles and reentry vehicle nose cones of intercontinental ballistic missiles. He is at large in China.

French officials arrested a Greek national in a fourth case for alleged links to Russian intelligence and acquiring 10 different types of controlled technology for illegal export to Russia.

### As the United States has increased the pressure on economic spies, those from China have gone elsewhere to get similar technologies.

“As alleged, while ostensibly operating as a defense contractor for NATO and other ally countries, the defendant and his Aratos Group were double-dealing, helping to fuel Russia's war effort and their development of next-generation weapons,” U.S. Attorney Breon Peace said.

The Aratos Group operates defense and technology companies in Greece and the Netherlands, which, as NATO countries, can import some controlled U.S. tech. Since 2017, Aratos has allegedly smuggled tech to Russia that can be “used in military applications, including quantum cryptography and nuclear weapons testing, as well as tactical battlefield equipment” by Russian nuclear and quantum research facilities and intelligence services, according to the DOJ.

Two other Russian nationals were arrested in Arizona in a fifth case for allegedly lying and using front companies and foreign bank accounts to attempt to ship export-controlled aircraft parts to sanctioned Russian commercial airlines.

As the United States has increased

the pressure on economic spies, those from China have gone elsewhere to get similar technologies. In South Korea, for example, confirmed leaks of core technologies increased from 3 in 2017 to 10 in 2021, according to the *Financial Times*. In the first quarter of 2023, there have already been three such leaks from large automotive, display, and semiconductor companies. Headhunters from China operate front companies and lurk outside South Korean chip fabrication plants in an attempt to poach talent. On offer are salaries three to four times existing incomes.

The chip industry is so important that Seoul now monitors the foreign travel of its semiconductor engineers. Arrests for tech leakage have increased dramatically, but only about 6 percent result in convictions. South Korean authorities are also concerned about tech leakage to U.S. companies through joint ventures.

How many of these leaks are illegal and can be proven in a court of law is another matter. But they increase the temperature and concern about foreign nationals from adversary countries with access to sensitive U.S. and allied technologies and data.

Perhaps in retaliation, China is also increasing the heat on U.S. and Japanese companies with access to sensitive Chinese business data. Reports emerged on May 18 that China's spymaster, Chen Yixin, is in charge of investigating U.S. due diligence companies operating in China.

The result will be increased business risk and decoupling from China by not only U.S. companies but also the European Union, Japan, South Korea, and other allies. Although the Chinese Communist Party appears unfazed by the risk of decoupling, now adopted by many G-7 countries under the more moderate term “de-risking,” it will likely hurt China's innovation economy going forward.



## Are Fears of AI Justified?

Today's widespread AI fears apply an old story to something new

**A**RTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI) has created some enthusiasm and even more fear. The fears center partly on matters of privacy and the upending of social relationships, but mostly on job destruction.

Such concerns are far from new. They have emerged with every technological advance since the Industrial Revolution began in the late 18th century. They are an old story attached by today's commentators to something otherwise very new. If this technological history has anything to teach, it is that both hopes and fears about AI are overstated.

The latest example of how job loss dominates commentary comes through the strike among Hollywood writers. The strikers are, of course, concerned with wages, but they also fear that ChatGPT and like AI applications will replace human writers. Surveys universally show similar concerns about AI applications in all industries. The prestigious investment bank Goldman Sachs predicts that AI will bring the loss or degrading of some 300 million jobs. Many attach such fears to warnings of mass unemployment and the need for a universal basic income to alleviate the ensuing poverty. Leaders in the tech sector seem especially concerned.

This is all reminiscent of reactions to past innovations, whether spinning and weaving machines more than two centuries ago or railroads, automobiles, telephones, computers, or automatic teller machines. But for all the fear expressed at each stage of technology's advancement, the innovations, as they destroy jobs, have helped create at least as many jobs as were lost. And because the innovations have expanded productive capacities, these disruptive transitions have always occurred amid a greater material abundance than previously.

The fears, whether in response to AI in Hollywood today or the spinning jenny of the late 18th century, are easy to understand. Usually, it is obvious which jobs are vulnerable. But it takes imagination to see what new jobs will be created in response. When, for example, the computer eliminated thousands of clerical positions, no one could have imagined how the founders of Federal Express and similar firms would use the same technologies to create services that promise and track fast and reliable deliveries, an industry that now employs thousands, if not millions, at every level.

### If this technological history has anything to teach, it's that both hopes and fears about AI are overstated.

If the innovations were not facilitating as much new as they were eliminating, each wave of technology would have seen an ever-shrinking part of the population at work. But in reality, developed economies, through all the waves of worrisome innovation, have managed, on average, to provide work for some 94 to 95 percent of the people who want to work. They create at least as much new as they destroy the old. Almost 60 percent of today's jobs, for example, did not exist in 1940.

A bit of this history is worth recounting. When spinning and weaving equipment was introduced into English manufacturing in the late 18th century, workers, to protect their jobs, formed an organization called the Luddites that set out to destroy the equipment. They failed, but in a relatively short time, the equipment brought efficiencies and growth that

enabled the hiring of many more than previously. Fast forward to the 1960s, when a group of prominent academics—some Nobel laureates—wrote that “new kinds of automation” had “broken” the once-secure “link between jobs and income.”

John F. Kennedy addressed their concerns and spoke of the “dark menace of industrial dislocation, increasing unemployment, and deepening poverty.” He created an Office of Automation within the Labor Department to “maintain full employment at a time when automation has become a byword.” His successors, Lyndon B. Johnson and Richard Nixon, expressed similar concerns. Yet for all this anxiety, the 1960s are now considered something of a “golden age” of American manufacturing.

In that same decade, longshoremen fought containerization. The technology did eliminate jobs, but it also facilitated a 2,000 percent rise in world trade in only five years and almost as dramatic a rise in the number of jobs in shipping and cargo handling.

In the 1980s and 1990s, the widespread introduction of personal computers and word processing eliminated many clerical jobs, and the people who had been working them, mostly women, were thrown out of work. The innovations, however, increased the scale and scope of office work. Within a few years, the number of women in paid employment increased from before these innovations were introduced, absolutely and relatively.

There can be no doubt that AI will bring dislocation and hardship, in this case, to some who had previously thought they were immune. The inevitability of such pain gives every reason to help these people adjust. But because history makes clear that the innovation will create other, perhaps better, jobs, it warns against suppressing the technology.



## Corporate Racial Quotas

A California case sets a precedent against race-based policies

**I**N A LANDMARK DECISION on May 17, a California district court blocked a state law mandating racial quotas on corporate boards, ruling that it violated the U.S. Constitution.

The California law, Assembly Bill (AB) 979, required that a minimum number of people from “designated racial, ethnic, and LGBTQ backgrounds” have a seat on corporate boards.

But the court ruling stated that the law “is unconstitutional on its face and Plaintiff is entitled to summary judgment in its favor as a matter of law.” The plaintiff in the case was the Alliance for Fair Board Recruitment.

“The Court made clear that California's attempts at racial engineering are per se unlawful,” Michael Bushbacher, a partner at Boyden Gray, which represented the plaintiff, said. “The Constitution prohibits diversity mandates in every circumstance.

“The Court also put private companies on notice by concluding that AB979 violates the Civil Rights Act of 1866, which applies to both state and private discrimination. Woke corporations that impose diversity mandates on their own are thus just as liable.”

Edward Blum, director of the Alliance for Fair Board Recruitment, said: “Racial diversity quotas are not only unconstitutional, they are immoral. Businesses should appoint board members based on their merit, not on their skin color.”

Boyden Gray recently also filed a lawsuit in the U.S. Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals against the Securities and Exchange Commission, charging that the commission assisted Kroger, a grocery chain, in imposing viewpoint discrimination on employees. In addition, they filed a lawsuit against the Nasdaq for imposing racial board quotas on companies, similar to what



### The California law required that a minimum number of people from ‘designated racial, ethnic, and LGBTQ backgrounds’ have a seat on corporate boards.

California has done.

Among the “underrepresented groups” that would be favored by the California law were “Black, African American, Hispanic, Latino, Asian, Pacific Islander, Native American, Native Hawaiian, or Alaska Native ... gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender.” The number of board seats they must hold varied according to the size of the company, but corporations that failed to comply were subject to a \$100,000 fine for the first violation and \$300,000 for any subsequent violation.

The plaintiffs argued that this law violated, among other things, the equal protection clause of the 14th Amendment. California conceded that the law granted race-based favoritism but argued that it should be allowed to stand because it's aimed at remedying past discrimination.

The court, however, found that “the Supreme Court has rejected racial and ethnic quotas and has declared them ‘facially invalid.’”

“Usually, when there's an inquiry into whether some race-based thing is constitutional under the 14th Amendment, the court will do what's called strict scrutiny; it will look at whether there's a compelling state interest and whether the means to achieve that interest are narrowly tailored,” Bushbacher told The Epoch Times. “One of the things that we argued, and what the court ended up going with, is that quotas are just per se unlawful. You can't ever do them. There's no amount of evidence, there's no amount of anything that you could do to justify them.”

This ruling will likely set a precedent, not only for government race laws, but also for corporations that set racial quotas. It's only the latest in a series of court decisions against recently passed race laws both at the state and federal levels.

Since 2021, the courts repeatedly blocked attempts by the Biden administration to include race and gender preferences in doling out pandemic aid. And in 2022, a small-business owner successfully sued the Biden administration over racial and gender preferences in the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act that prevented him from bidding on government contracts because he was white and male.

“The U.S. Constitution guarantees equality under the law, meaning that all Americans need to be treated as individuals and not members of racial groups,” the small-business owner's attorney, Daniel Lenington, told The Epoch Times at the time. “The U.S. Supreme Court and courts around the country have repeatedly struck down attempts to give preference based on race and gender.”

DANIEL LACALLE is chief economist at hedge fund Tressis and author of “Freedom or Equality,” “Escape from the Central Bank Trap,” and “Life in the Financial Markets.”

# Daniel Lacalle

## Inflation Expectations Reach 12-Year High

*Inflation is proof of an imbalance that is impoverishing everyone*



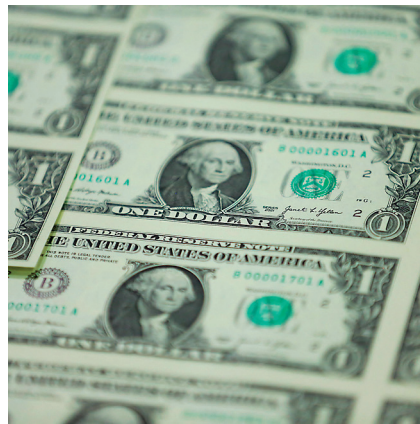
**A**CCORDING TO THE University of Michigan, inflation expectations for the next five to 30 years reached a 12-year high of 3.2 percent. At the same time, the consumer sentiment index declined to 63.5, compared with a pre-pandemic high of 300. The deterioration in the situation of consumers is evident.

The official narrative is that inflation is under control. However, many tend to forget that reducing inflation from 9 percent to 5 percent is relatively easy. The challenge is to bring it further down to the Federal Reserve’s target of 2 percent.

Inflation is a hidden tax. A government always tries to hide the loss of purchasing power or blame anything but itself, but the only reason most prices rise at once is printing money well above the actual demand for it.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, in April, the U.S. Consumer Price Index increased by 0.4 percent, seasonally adjusted, and rose by 4.9 percent over the past 12 months, and core inflation increased by 0.4 percent, up by 5.5 percent over the year. This means that the U.S. dollar has lost a purchasing power of 14 percent since 2019 and 35 percent since 2008.

The government’s failure to contain inflation is evident. Government spending has not been reduced at all, and that means a higher consumption of newly created units of currency. Rate hikes and a money-supply slump are only weakening the private sector while government continues to spend way above the levels of 2019. That is why the narrative is switching to try to make citizens accept an annual inflation of 3 percent instead of 2 percent. The message is that it is virtually the



**During periods of inflation, the state embarks on even more spending, assumes that extraordinary tax receipts are permanent, and instead of reducing debt, it continues to increase it.**

same, but it is not. Rather, it means a faster rate of impoverishment.

Many politicians try to convince us that now we must choose between inflation and growth, but that is a false dilemma. Inflation is generalized impoverishment, and, of course, it does not imply that there is growth. In fact, the evidence in most developed economies is of a phenomenon closer to stagflation.

U.S. gross domestic product (GDP) recovered its pre-pandemic level in 2022. However, public debt continues to rise faster than GDP, and the accumulated inflation in that period is 15 percent. It may not be stagflation technically, but it is strikingly close. The United States is a more dynamic economy than most de-

veloped countries, so the situation is not as dire as in those nations where government spending is now more than 40 percent of GDP.

Inflation is evidence of a dangerous imbalance that impoverishes everyone. It is evidence of an excess of currency in the economy that creates a widespread loss of the purchasing power of salaries and deposits savings. Inflation is a transfer of wealth from the productive sectors and families to the government, which is the only one benefiting from rising prices because it collects more tax receipts and dilutes part of its indebtedness. However, the voracious deficit-addicted state is not even capable of reducing its fiscal imbalances with inflation. During periods of inflation, the state embarks on even more spending, assumes that extraordinary tax receipts are permanent, and instead of reducing debt, continues to increase it.

Those who defend inflationism to reduce debt forget that the first inflationist, the government, always has the incentive to increase its fiscal imbalances even when it has record tax receipts. A government that uses all the tools of so-called Keynesianism always leaves a massive trail of debt and economic weakness. All the “stimuli” consumed in periods of recovery create a boomerang effect and make the inevitable recession worse.

Growth doesn’t come from indebtedness, public spending, or inflation. Growth comes with prudent savings and investments.

What we are experiencing these days is a slow expropriation of the wealth created by the productive sector with the sole objective of massively inflating political spending with an extractive and confiscatory strategy. Inflation is robbery.

ANDY JACOBSON/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

FANYU is an expert in finance and economics and has contributed analyses on China’s economy since 2015.

# Fan Yu

## Do Investors Underestimate Rate Hikes?

*Given persistently high inflation, the Fed has reason to be hawkish*

**M**OST INVESTORS and Wall Street research analysts believe that the Federal Reserve will pause its rate increases in June, keeping the benchmark interest rate unchanged, and that a rate cut later in the year is likely.

Just take one look at the yield curve. It’s still inverted with the one-month rate higher than the six-month or 12-month rate. With the banking industry still reeling from several regional bank failures, the financial system appears to be fragile and a rate pause would be prudent.

But they may be underestimating the risk of still higher rates.

Fed officials in their May meeting laid the groundwork for a rate pause in June but stopped short of committing to it. That has convinced investors that a pause is coming, but economic data and some experts suggest that rate hikes are still necessary, and the central bank may enact another 25-basis point increase in June.

In addition, systemic risks may force rates higher yet, regardless of Fed actions next month.

The consensus carefully managed by Fed Chair Jerome Powell over the past year appears to be breaking.

There’s reason for the Fed to be hawkish. Inflation today is still more than double the central bank’s target. Dallas Fed President Lorie Logan, who’s a voting member of the Federal Open Market Committee, noted that economic data “could yet show” that an interest rate is necessary.

This sentiment for more monetary tightening is based on evidence that the U.S. economy remains stable enough to ward off a severe recession for the time being.

For example, the labor market remains tight. And some of the more interest rate-sensitive sectors of the



**The probability of interest rates increasing next month is greater than investors’ expectations.**

economy that had been impacted by recent policy tightening—specifically the U.S. housing market—appear to be weathering the storm for the moment.

A recent study by the San Francisco Fed shows that U.S. households are sitting on half a trillion dollars’ worth of excess savings. That’s a staggering amount of cash and is enough to maintain current spending levels into next year, the central bank branch report noted.

“The consensus across the [Fed] speakers was broadly that non-housing services inflation has shown no signs of significant improvement while the labor market has slackened only marginally, but views on how the Fed should react were less uniform,” Morgan Stanley economists wrote in a note to clients. “On net, during the course of the week, investors interpreted the Fed’s speak as leaning hawkish and market pricing for a 25bp rate hike in June moved up to ~40%.”

However, the bank still doesn’t believe that a June hike is likely—effectively, Powell turned dovish.

“Then came Chair Powell. On Friday, he delivered carefully scripted responses that avoided commenting on near-term policy, but nevertheless seemed to tilt away from the need to hike further,” the economists wrote.

One of the reasons Powell believes benchmark rates might not need to rise as high as the Fed had originally planned is the recent banking industry turmoil. The regional banking crisis has effectively curtailed bank lending regardless of interest rates and serves as a proxy for the Fed’s monetary tightening.

Another argument for not raising rates is the ongoing debt ceiling negotiations in Washington. If Congress and the White House can’t agree and a technical default is declared or the Treasury Department invokes the 14th Amendment to issue through the debt limit, there are ramifications. Uncertainty will push rates higher. Investors will demand more interest for the same risk.

Even if any defaults are quickly resolved, there are still negative impacts. Rating agencies could deliver a downgrade of U.S. debt, similar to S&P’s downgrade on U.S. debt in 2011, despite a debt resolution.

In 1979, the Treasury missed an interest payment that was quickly rectified, but T-bill yields still jumped 60 basis points and remained elevated for months. All of these events could permanently increase borrowing rates for the U.S. government as well as businesses, banks, and the broader public.

In one way or another, the probability of interest rates increasing next month is greater than investors’ expectations.

THOUGHT LEADERS

# Secret to COVID-19 Recovery Lives in the Gut

*No bifidobacteria were found in the colons of those with severe cases, and vaccines may kill the beneficial microbes*

**Dr. Sabine Hazan,** a gastroenterologist and founder and CEO of ProgenaBiome.

ILLUSTRATION BY THE EPOCH TIMES, YORK DU/THE EPOCH TIMES



**“W**E DISCOVERED that people who had severe COVID lacked a certain bacteria called bifidobacteria,” says Dr. Sabine Hazan. In a recent episode of “American Thought Leaders,” host Jan Jekielek sat down with Hazan, a gastroenterologist and the CEO of ProgenaBiome.

In their discussion, she explained how a healthy gut affected outcomes from COVID-19. With her knowledge, experience, and clinical trials, she developed and patented treatment protocols combining vitamins, minerals, and drugs that increase bifidobacteria, including vitamin C, vitamin D, zinc, hydroxychloroquine, and ivermectin.

They also discussed how COVID-19 vaccines affect the microbiome, including the microbiomes of babies breastfeeding from recently vaccinated mothers.

**JAN JEKIELEK:** Here’s a recent headline in Newsweek: “It’s time for the scientific community to admit we were wrong about COVID and it cost lives.” I’m sure you’ve read this piece.

**DR. SABINE HAZAN:** Yes, and I’ve been saying that since I opened ProgenaBiome, my genetic research lab. I felt that even in microbiology we’ve been wrong. We always thought that we should find the bug, kill the bug, and that would be the end of the story. But it’s not.

It’s find the bug, kill the bug, but you may kill the microbiome at the same time. So it’s the beginning of a new story and a new problem. With COVID, I knew we were going to make the same mistake, which is, “Let’s find a vaccine.”

The answer to me was, “Let’s focus on the microbiome. Let’s focus on how to build immunity because our immunity is in the gut,” rather than focusing on, “Let’s kill the virus with a vaccine for a mutating virus.”

**“We always thought that we should find the bug, kill the bug, and that would be the end of the story. But it’s not.”**

**MR. JEKIELEK:** Please explain to everybody what microbiomes are.

**DR. HAZAN:** A microbiome is essentially all the bugs that are around you, that are on your skin and in your gut. It’s bacteria, viruses, and fungi. My focus is on the microbiome of the bowels, right in the colon. Why? Because everything you eat, put on your skin, and breathe goes into your colon. Put something on your skin, it goes into the blood vessels and ends up in your gut.

And so, if all those microbes eventually end up in the gut, we hypothesized that COVID has to be in the gut. We started back in January, analyzing the virus.

**MR. JEKIELEK:** January 2020?

**DR. HAZAN:** Yes. Dr. Thomas Borody, who’s the father of fecal transplant, and I were watching what was happening in China and Italy. As soon as COVID reached America, my first focus was to collect the stools. In March 2020, I had doctors helping all over the country, about 400 doctors that do clinical research.

We started looking at COVID in the stools, and the people that didn’t have COVID were the people that had been treated and no longer had symptoms. The hydroxychloroquine/Z-Pak [azithromycin] was the treatment being used.

That gave us an idea that maybe hydroxy and Z-Pak were killing off the virus. Because, like other bugs, you have to kill them and then boost

immunity. The first thing was finding COVID. We looked at the microbiomes and discovered that people who had severe COVID lacked a certain bacteria called bifidobacteria. But there were people in the same family who were exposed to COVID but never got it.

One farmer did this experiment. He kissed his wife, who had COVID, to catch COVID and get the immunity, but he never got it. I said to him, “I want to see your stools, and I want to see your wife’s.”

Sure enough, she had zero bifido. He had a lot. Why? Because he’s outside and in the sun, he’s playing with the cow manure, he’s drinking the raw milk from the cows. That started my train of looking at the microbiome.

I was known in the world of clinical trials for a bacteria called *Clostridium difficile* [C. diff], a bacteria that causes people to have diarrhea, and is caused by taking antibiotics. I was doing these clinical trials because medications weren’t working. These trials brought a new understanding of the microbiome.

**MR. JEKIELEK:** So you’re specifically interested in this particular bacteria that comes into the gut after antibiotics. Is this what you’re known for?

**DR. HAZAN:** Yes, this bacteria resides in the gut but becomes toxic when we kill the microbiome around it. It’s a microbe that sustains itself with other microbes, but once you kill the rest of the microbes, it starts flaring up.

When clinical trials didn’t work, I would do a procedure called fecal

transplant, taking stools from a healthy donor and putting them into the patient with C. diff. This eradicated the problem for 99 percent of my patients, which is huge.

One of my first cases was a physician who was dying. Miraculously, he lived after a fecal transplant. All we did was take the poop of his wife and put it in there. That's why I went into the microbiome technology. I thought, "If I'm achieving an improvement in C. diff, I'm going to understand C. diff better, because now I have the technology to look at these microbes."

So when COVID hit, I thought: "I've got a genetic sequencing lab and a clinical research company that submits protocols to the FDA. We have a portal and know how to write and run these protocols. Let's get involved."

And it was fascinating when I found COVID in the stools and when I saw that hydroxychloroquine/Z-Pak had an impact on COVID in the stools. So when the protocols of hydroxy became political, I was shocked.

**MR. JEKIELEK:** OK. I didn't quite catch how you figured out that this combination of hydroxy and azithromycin was impacting positively on COVID patients.

**DR. HAZAN:** At the beginning of the pandemic, we were all reading. We were translating journals in Italian. We were translating papers. I speak French, so I read Didier Raoult's paper.

I started looking at his protocol as a microbiome expert. Hydroxy has the capability of transforming the pH of the cells. When the virus goes into the cell, it's exposed to an alkaline environment. I thought it probably gets killed by the alkaline environment of the cell.

At the same time, I felt azithromycin probably killed the wall of the virus, and then zinc was blocking the



*"If all those microbes eventually end up in the gut, we hypothesized that COVID has to be in the gut," Hazan says.*

virus from penetrating. That was my mindset on the hypothesis of why this combination was working for Dr. Raoult. What I added to this, and that was by looking at papers from Italy and Japan, were vitamin C and vitamin D. There was data. At the beginning of the pandemic, patients were getting discharged from the hospital after IV infusions of vitamin C.

I knew what vitamin C did to the microbiome. I knew that vitamin D increases your bifidobacteria, your good microbes that were lost after severe COVID. That was the formula I started creating.

We created a pharmaceutical company called Topelia Therapeutics and started submitting to the FDA. Within 24 hours, the FDA called me at 3 o'clock in the morning and said, "Dr. Hazan, you can run your trial."

We wrote the protocol in mid-March. At the same time, I was treating people off-label. A hundred patients later, nobody dies. A thousand patients

later, nobody is dying. Even the worst of the worst weren't dying.

**MR. JEKIELEK:** So this combination you devised was helping them.

**DR. HAZAN:** It ended up becoming not just the combination of a hydroxy, Z-Pak, vitamin C, D, and zinc. For the severe cases, we added ivermectin, which became important for those with low oxygen. At the beginning of the pandemic, we got away with hydroxy, Z-Pak, vitamin C, vitamin D. Then, as the virus became stronger during the whole Delta period, we needed to up the game a bit.

At that point, we had figured out that vitamin C and vitamin D increases your bifidobacteria. We had also figured out that severe cases of COVID had zero bifidobacteria. We realized bifidobacteria was a key point, so we started focusing on nutrition with patients, fermented food, and ivermectin.

And just to backtrack a little bit, I was doing these trials, and the FDA had approved me. The FDA basically said, "Look, you can go ahead." So we hired New England IRB.

**MR. JEKIELEK:** What is an IRB?

**DR. HAZAN:** It's an independent board that basically looks over the protocol. We run it through the IRB, and on April 20, we got approved. Then all of a sudden on Twitter, a post goes off. "Dr. Hazan is doing unethical protocols with hydroxychloroquine, azithromycin, vitamin C and D, and zinc, five drugs in an open label."

I thought, "Five drugs? First of all, it's two drugs, two vitamins, and a mineral."

The next thing you know, a Stat News report goes off to all the agents of the FDA, which never made it to the media that basically said, "A tweet has been going around with Dr. Hazan doing five drugs in an open-label trial. We need to be doing placebo-controlled trials."

I said to myself, "Placebo control in the middle of a pandemic?" I ignored it, right? On Monday, I got a letter from the FDA, "Dr. Hazan, stop your trials. You need to do a placebo-controlled trial." I said, "Can we just stop the fire first? Then, go back and see what's happening, but let's first stop the virus from going its course."

Basically, I fought back about this. I said to the FDA, "Look, I'll do a placebo-controlled trial, but I'm giving vitamins on one side, and the hydroxy/Z-Pak with the vitamins on the other." My placebo was essentially not a placebo, it was vitamins, which got a lot of criticism. But I wasn't going to let people die. I couldn't just enroll them with a sugar-pill placebo.

Meanwhile, the vaccine trials had started rolling, and hydroxychloroquine became political. We started getting threatening phone calls,

**"I was treating people off-label. 100 patients later, nobody dies. A thousand patients later, nobody is dying. Even the worst of the worst weren't dying."**

"How dare you give a dangerous drug to kill patients?"

I'd say, "People are dying and you're calling me to say that I'm killing patients. I've never lost one patient."

Anyway, we tried to do that clinical trial. Some doctors who didn't want to be vaccinated joined the trial, and the key for that protocol was basically if you were exposed to patients and you weren't wearing a mask, you were at high risk and the protocol was just two pills of hydroxy every three months, plus the vitamins every day.

From there, we recruited a lot of patients in that study and discovered that ivermectin had a role. Ivermectin and doxycycline are pretty safe. Ivermectin is given to babies with scabies, and doxycycline is given to kids for acne. The two combinations should be fine with zinc, vitamin C, and D. When we started that protocol in July, we called it Ziverdox, and we got approved by the FDA in August. There were about 30 patients, so it was easy to run.

During these trials, the hypothesis started in my mind that perhaps Streptomyces is working by increasing the bifidobacteria at the time of the cytokines storm. My hypothesis was that the bifidobacteria would just take the cytokines and flush it out of your system, letting the lungs start circulating those cytokines back into the colon.

Finding the loss of bifidobacteria in

severe COVID, finding that vitamin C, vitamin D, and ivermectin increases the bifidobacteria, it's a whole story that's still being told.

**MR. JEKIELEK:** How many patients have you treated since the beginning?

**DR. HAZAN:** The young, I gave them vitamins and they were fine. The old, with no comorbidities, it was ivermectin, doxycycline, and zinc, and they were fine. With the severe, the hypoxic, I gave them Z-Pak, vitamin C, D, zinc, hydroxychloroquine, and ivermectin, and they were fine. No one died.

We are talking about thousands of patients. On top of that, I gave my protocol to a lot of doctors. We had formed an alliance, the C-19 group. We were in constant contact, helping each other and learning.

What I couldn't understand is, here I am reaching all these successes, yet there was this whole trashing of early treatment for one agenda. While they were trashing my treatment, I said, "Since the agenda is the vaccine, let's look at what the vaccine's doing in the microbiome." At the same time they started rolling out these vaccines, I started enrolling doctors that were getting vaccinated.

I said, "Can I get your stools before and after you get vaccinated?"

With the first four patients, I started noticing a month later, the bi- ❖

KENA BETANOUR/GETTY IMAGES

fidobacteria, this important microbe, is dropping in patients post-vaccination. I started asking myself, “What’s going on here? Is it creating a bifidophage?” Ten, 20, 30, patients later, we’re seeing this killing of the bifidobacteria. Well, there’s no way I was going to publish this, because nobody would have accepted it, so I decided to submit it to the American College of Gastro as a poster, where it won the best research award as a poster.

All my colleagues called me and said, “I saw your data. That’s incredible. How do you think this is happening? The vaccine is supposed to be improving your immunity. We all know bifidobacteria is a huge part of immunity. How do you think it’s happening?”

Then I said, “I think it’s creating a bacteriophage or bifidophage.” What we noticed in the four patients that we followed, who were in amazing shape, we followed them for 90 days and then next thing you know, their bifidobacteria dropped to zero—from a million to zero. It kept persisting.

Then, as we were looking at the microbiome of breastfeeding newborns, we started noticing that there was no bifidobacteria in them.

Newborns are supposed to have a ton of bifidobacteria. Ninety percent of the microbiome of babies is bifidobacteria. We asked, “How come these breastfeeding babies born to moms who were vaccinated have zero bifidobacteria? Is the spike protein going to the breast milk and into the baby’s gut?”

I had a different vision than everybody else. I was looking at how to treat the virus knowing something nobody knew. It was kind of epic, but at the same time I knew, “If they’re going to prove me wrong, let’s see why.” This definitely needs to be looked at, because the microbiome has such importance in neurological problems, in cancer, in Crohn’s, and in Lyme disease.

**MR. JEKIELEK:** What was the impact on you and your work when you were using these different treatments?

**DR. HAZAN:** We had threats when we started the hydroxychloroquine protocol. People hated Trump, especially. I’m a Malibu physician and I have a lot of Malibu clients. When I would say, “Look, I’m going to put you on hydroxychloroquine,” patients who hated him would say, “No, I’d rather die than take hydroxychloroquine.”

That’s when my anger during the pandemic came out. I was tough with them to save their lives. They were so thankful afterward. One guy couldn’t breathe and I told him, “Look, tomorrow you’re going to be dead. There’s nothing I can do about it unless you let me.” I didn’t want to be mean, but I meant to snap them out of that trend of fear.

This guy, the next day, he could breathe better. All my patients were like, “This stuff really works.” Meanwhile, our office was hammered with phone calls and threats. It was a crazy time.

**MR. JEKIELEK:** What happened with these patents that you filed?

**DR. HAZAN:** I created them and then realized somewhere along the line that because this was so political, I didn’t want my research jeopardized. People tried to buy these patents, but I didn’t feel comfortable selling them. I’m not convinced they should be a product, to be quite honest, because I feel that what I did during the pandemic was really the art of medicine.

I really feel that it is not a one-pill solution. It’s not one formula for all. Sure, the formula, the concept of hydroxy/Z-Pak, vitamin C, D, and zinc was great for a certain population, the population that probably had a destroyed microbiome to begin with. I’m not sure that for the healthy young

population this was the solution.

There will always be a population with something in their microbiome that is stronger. We need to figure out who has the resilient microbiome and learn from them rather than continuing with the same method of vaccinating everyone or giving medications to everyone. Let’s figure out how, when a person has a problem, to treat the problem. Treat the population that’s at high risk, and then the population that’s healthy.

The mistake we made in this pandemic is we generalized, we globalized. We thought everybody was equal in their microbiome. We’re not.

Africans, for example, have a different microbiome than Americans. They probably would have been fine with COVID because there is diversity in Africa. If you look at the Amish population versus a person in New York, it’s a completely different microbiome.

**MR. JEKIELEK:** From what I understand, a lot of people have used your formula and patents, and you’re not collecting on this.

**DR. HAZAN:** No, I’m not. First of all, I wanted to show there was a woman behind all this. All too often in science, we women do not get to be shown.

The second thing, it was my donation to humanity. It was like leaving a mark in history. The spending on all this research, it’s in the millions. Some of that was my savings and my retirement. But I felt this was something I needed to do.

It was my way to show people that if you do good, goodness comes back. How thankful I am that I’ve been fine this pandemic and that my family’s been fine. Health is the most important thing we can have. ■

*This interview has been edited for clarity and brevity.*

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# The Power of a Written Note

*Putting thoughts on paper gives them special meaning*

By Jeff Minick



**F**OR MOST OF US, THE daily mail brings bills, advertisements, a magazine or newspaper, political circulars in the appropriate season, and the occasional holiday or birthday card.

But a personal letter is as rare as a blizzard in July.

For two centuries, the U.S. Postal Service has maintained a dead letter office, the cemetery of undeliverable mail. Today, the practice of writing letters is itself nearly as dead, the victim of phones, emails, and texts. These means of communication are faster, less expensive, more dependable, and generally more convenient than sitting down to write out a letter to, for instance, a daughter at college, affixing a stamp, and getting it into the mail.

Before we close the lid on this mode of correspondence, however, let's consider the value of a letter written by hand and dispatched via snail mail to a family member or friend.

There's the element of surprise, of course. Texts and emails are commonplace, but the rare arrival of a note in the mailbox is an occasion. Moreover, the recipient of your written words knows the fuss and effort a letter entails as compared with tapping out a few lines into your phone while watching a baseball game on TV. Finally, handwriting a letter, or, if necessary, typing one, is a more formal and intimate act than sending a digital message. We tend to record our thoughts more slowly and

with greater deliberation when writing longhand, and so we become more reflective in what we say.

Here are some tips to enhance these compositions.

**Date your letters.** Often the recipients hold onto them, a bit of treasure, a keepsake, and the date will help them remember when you sent this special gift.

## Let your heart speak to the paper through the pen and let the words flow.

Write the letter. Only resort to the keyboard and printer if your penmanship is completely illegible. The note written by hand is warmer and more personal than a typed letter.

Unless appearance matters—a love letter, a note of condolence—feel free to scratch out mistakes or word changes. Here's a case where attempted perfection will drive you crazy. Just mark through the offending word, and move on.

And speaking of perfection, pay attention to grammar and spelling, but don't get hung up on exactitude of thought and emotion. As Mark Twain once wrote, "I didn't have time to write a short letter, so I wrote a long one instead." Let your heart speak to the paper through the pen and let the words flow.

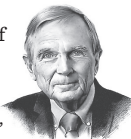
Unless you are giving a note of encouragement to a coworker, put the letter in an envelope, slap on a stamp, and send it via USPS. It doesn't matter whether the letter's going cross-country or to Grandma in the house next door; the idea is for that person to get a real treat in the mail instead of another ad from a real estate agent.

And your payoff for this effort? Your letter will bring sunshine to your 6-year-old granddaughter's day. It will do the same for your 75-year-old grandparents. A message of gratitude to an old college professor may offer a much-needed shot in the arm for that week's teaching. Your note to a friend may arrive at a hard time when this little boost is good medicine. Whether she's your wife or a significant other living hundreds of miles away, a letter to the woman you love can melt her heart.

This is part of the delight and the adventure when you post that letter. The odds are good that you'll bring someone at least momentary pleasure. The odds are almost as good that your note will turn someone's day from darkness into light.

Emails and texts are great most of the time, but a letter—that's a handshake or a hug made of paper and ink. ■

**Jeff Minick** lives and writes in Front Royal, Va. He is the author of two novels, "Amanda Bell" and "Dust on Their Wings," and two works of nonfiction, "Learning as I Go" and "Movies Make the Man."



# Unwind



Raising honeybees can be fairly approachable and is a good way to ensure a steady supply of raw honey as a healthy sweetener.

JUICE FLAIR/SHUTTERSTOCK

## Create a Sweet, Healthy Harvest 84

**LOCATED IN AN UPSCALE** community near a charming, laid-back city, this spacious estate is a great place to raise a family. **78**

**THE SHETLAND ISLANDS,** rugged and full of history, are worth a visit for much more than their fabled ponies. **80**

**AT NYC'S CHEF GUO, MASTER** Chef Guo Wenjun prepares what is described as the finest personalized gourmet Chinese cuisine in America. **83**

INSIDE



The rear of this estate is designed to enjoy the beautiful setting, with an outdoor kitchen and dining area looking out over the vast yard.

# Southern Style

A family-friendly North Carolina estate

By Bill Lindsey

**T**HIS ELEGANT RESIDENCE THAT WOULD be right at home in the English countryside is located within the upscale Teeter Farms Estates neighborhood outside of Mooresville, North Carolina. A 30-minute drive north of Charlotte, Mooresville is a bustling, family-oriented town with a population of 50,000 people and a Southern-style, laid-back atmosphere.

One of the largest homes in the community, this two-story, 7,571-square-foot stone-and-brick home has five bedrooms and 6 1/2 bathrooms and is a traditionally styled residence well suited to a large family. The large, manicured 3.3-acre lot bordered by mature trees provides plenty of room to play touch football on the sprawling lawn, as well as ensuring a sense of privacy for the occupants. A winding driveway leads to the home, where a fountain bubbles alongside the path leading to the double-entry doors tastefully accented with wrought iron.

Inside, the living room features a fireplace, built-in bookshelves, decorative pillars, marble flooring, a very attractive chandelier, and extensive crown moldings. Opposite, a seating

area backs up to the kitchen, which is equipped with stainless steel appliances, custom cabinets, and an expansive island/breakfast bar, with an adjacent dining area set into a cozy alcove.

The oversized first-level master bedroom has large windows and glass doors for a clear view of the surroundings, and a cavernous walk-in closet complete with shoe and apparel organizers and even a couch. The master bathroom is equipped with dual vanities, a soaking tub, and a fieldstone-lined walk-in shower.

The upstairs bedrooms have vaulted ceilings, generously sized windows, and private bathrooms. One room is used as an office. Another is used as a gym, with a pool table for use between sets.

At the rear of the home is a screened porch equipped with a fireplace and a sauna, with an outdoor patio beyond, where an outdoor kitchen is sheltered by a gazebo.

The detached two-story carriage house adjacent to the main residence features a two-car garage on the ground level, with a well-equipped one-bedroom, one-bathroom apartment on the second level. ■



**TEETER FARMS ESTATE  
MOORESVILLE, N.C.  
\$2,450,000**

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- 6 1/2 bathrooms
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- Two 2-car garages
- Gazebo with outdoor kitchen

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(Above) One room in the spacious home is set up for entertaining, complete with a custom bar and wine storage facilities. (Top Right) The family room features a wall of floor-to-ceiling windows that bring in natural light while providing a great view of the surroundings. (Right) The very airy living room features extensive crown molding, decorative pillars, marble flooring, built-in bookshelves, and a fireplace.



ALL PHOTOS BY CHARLOTTE VIRTUAL HOME TOURS/PREMIER SOTHEBY'S INTERNATIONAL REALTY



# Scotland's Edge

From famous ponies to a unique culture, the Shetland Islands are oceans apart

By Tim Johnson



**Birdwatchers watch** gannets and great skua at a seabird colony at Hermaness, the northernmost headland of Scotland's Shetland Islands.

PHOTO BY PHILIPPE CLEMENT / SHUTTERSTOCK

**I**F YOU SQUINT YOUR EYES A LITTLE, and really use your imagination, you can still see them: Huge wooden hulls built for long voyages in frigid, often-violent waters. Sail unfurled, perhaps snapping in a stiff wind. A long ship built to navigate what even today remain some of the world's most difficult seas.

As I stood on a ridge, bundling against cold spring gusts, a whole subarctic world unfolded at my feet: rugged, windswept hills, dark with heather; stone towers and sturdy homes that lined the shores of the gunmetal-gray inlet; a moody sky above; and out there, in the vast beyond of the North Sea, the waves that brought the Vikings to this land.

But this isn't Scandinavia—it's Scotland. Set at 60 degrees north, here the furthest reaches of the United Kingdom sit at a latitude shared with Alaska, Greenland, and Siberia. It's a place where worlds meet, historical quirks abound, and diverse cultures come together.

The Shetland Islands are almost always referred to in the singular, just "Shetland." It's an archipelago of about 100 islands, though only 16 of them are inhabited. They sit between the North Sea and the Atlantic, roughly halfway between mainland Scotland and the shores of Norway.

The Norse arrived here in the ninth century, and they settled. It was a hardy place, but the land and sea here provided everything they needed to farm, fish, and survive. They spoke Norn, a language that survived afterward for centuries, right into the 1800s. Most of the place names still teach it.

In one of those historical hiccups that could never happen today, the islands changed hands as part of a rather remarkable wedding. Margaret, the daughter of Christian I, king of Denmark and Norway, was set to marry the King of Scots, James III. The only problem was that her father didn't have the resources to pay her proper dowry.

Instead, he pawned the islands in May 1469. James formally annexed Shetland to the Kingdom of Scotland in 1472. The Danes repeatedly, and for hundreds of years, attempted to get the islands back, but the Scots simply ignored them. They now form the northernmost tip of the UK.

But the connection with Scandinavia endures. While residents speak English with a particular sort of brogue, you won't find kilts or clans here. People still identify strongly with their Norse roots. Even the flag looks like those of Sweden, Norway, and Denmark—a silver Nordic cross against a blue background.

Arriving, like the Vikings, on a ship, I only had time to visit one of those hundred islands. We landed in the harbor near Lerwick, the main town, which is home to between 7,000 and 8,000 people—about a third of the population of Shetland.

Fewer than **20** of the roughly **100** islands in the Shetland archipelago are inhabited.



**The Shetland Islands** are roughly 100 miles north of Scotland.

Shetland residents still identify strongly with their Norse roots.

Shetland ponies are no taller than 42 inches.



THIS PAGE FROM TOP: ILLUSTRATION BY THE EPOCH TIMES; ELANOR SCRIVEN / SHUTTERSTOCK



A view of the old Lerwick's Town Hall, built in 1883 in Lerwick, Shetland, Scotland.

Settling into the back seat of a coach, we wound into the dark hills, passing the old stone walls of Fort Charlotte, which date to the 1600s. These five-sided fortifications saw action in a series of three almost-forgotten wars between the English and Dutch over 17th-century trade routes. During the Third Anglo-Dutch War, its walls burned, but it was reconstructed later for the Napoleonic wars.

In the heart of Lerwick, the guide pointed out a house whose fame is much more recent: the home of Detective Inspector Jimmy Perez. I heard a few oohs and aahs from those around me, people who clearly had a subscription to BritBox. Based on a novel by Ann Cleeves, the BBC One crime drama series "Shetland" has become a global phenomenon, running seven seasons so far. A few minutes later, we passed



The Lodberrie, a historic stone cottage and the home of fictional TV detective Jimmy Perez from the series "Shetland," in Lerwick, Shetland, Scotland.

the sheriff's court, another building featured prominently in the show.

Getting out into the countryside, just a few minutes later, we spotted an even bigger star.

"Everyone, look to the left," the guide said with a little excitement in her voice. "You'll see our first Shetland ponies!"

Seeing the unmistakable mascot of these islands, everyone excitedly snapped photos through the windows of the coach. Soon enough, we arrived at a pasture, and I was chatting with a farmer named Carol about her adorable little horses. She told me that despite their famously small size, they're deceptively powerful.

"They're low, and strong," she said. "They can actually pull twice their own weight."

Literally workhorses, they served as beasts of burden for a long time in local coal mines. These ponies are basically native to these islands, with one uncovered bone dating back some 3,000 years.

"They were here in the Bronze Age, perhaps even longer," she said. So before the Scots, and the Norse, and probably anyone else.

It's a fact I reflected on as we made our way back to the ship. Soon, I'll be back on board, steaming north to Norway. And these rugged rocks will remain, with their little ponies, in these northern climes, set on frigid trade routes, for many centuries to come. ■

*Tim Johnson is based in Toronto. He has visited 140 countries across all seven continents.*

### If You Go

**Fly:** Flights from London, Manchester, Bergen, and several cities in Scotland land at Sumburgh Airport (LSI), so any trips from North America will involve at least one connection.

**Getting Around:** If you plan on a self-directed adventure, a rental car is essential. A guided tour of the mainland is recommended to learn about the highlights.

**Stay:** Busta House is located in a merchant home that dates to 1588 and has an on-site restaurant.

**Take Note:** The official currency here is British pounds.

THIS PAGE FROM TOP: MARGARET FLORENTI/SHUTTERSTOCK; ELEANOR SCRIVEN/SHUTTERSTOCK

## FIT FOR AN EMPEROR: WHY CHEF GUO IS AMERICA'S MOST EXPENSIVE CHINESE RESTAURANT

*The celebrated chef Guo Wenjun, who cooked for heads of state and garnered a string of awards in his home country, came to New York on a mission*

By Catherine Yang

**T**HE IDEA OF CHINESE food doesn't often bring to mind an elaborate, 19-course meal of meticulously composed dishes served in custom-made vessels.

"Chinese food has thousands of years of history and culture. It should be expensive," said chef Guo Wenjun, whose eponymous restaurant in New York, at \$518 per person for the tasting menu, is the most expensive Chinese restaurant in the United States. The windowless Midtown East location is meant to serve no more than 10 patrons a night.

Guo, who has served as executive chef at China's Diaoyutai Garden Villa International Club, Imperial Kitchen of the Palace Museum, and others, oversaw the decor, from sourcing stately seats from Indonesia weighing some 160 pounds, to curating the playlist, to handcrafting the faux ginkgo tree whose branches sprawl across the ceiling. It's a deliberate affair, meant to mirror the tradition of imperial banquets.

"When I came to America, I saw the standing of Chinese cuisine. I wasn't satisfied," Guo said. The cuisine encompasses myriad complicated and versatile culinary techniques, reflecting China's millennia-long history.

"I felt I needed to show the American people what Chinese cuisine is really about," he said.

**The first course,** "Butterfly Falls in Love With the Flower," is an exercise in delicacy and precision.



**Chef Guo's signature** black bean noodles are based on a secret recipe passed down from the imperial palace.



**Custom-made** servingware and decor give the space a regal air.



**Guo Wenjun,** chef and owner of Chef Guo in New York City.

### IF YOU GO

**Chef Guo:** 135 East 50th Street, New York, NY 10022

**Tasting menu:** \$518 per person, minimum 2 per table

**ChefGuo.com**

### Food With a Philosophy

Guo began his culinary training at age 14 under master chef Ding Guangzhou, a seventh-generation disciple in the line of royal chefs. In 1983, he furthered his training in the National Youth Chef program and then an international culinary training program in Hong Kong.

The menu is the culmination of 40 years of experience

and study, the best of the Chinese culinary arts, and the best of today's international food scene, Guo said. As a result, one can find elements of nutritional science both modern and ancient, the art of culinary presentation from both the East and West.

Guo follows the traditional imperial cooking philosophy passed on to him by his master: "A good meal is beneficial, the arrangement is paramount, the flavor is foremost, nutrition is essential."

The classic five elements of Chinese cooking are color, aroma, taste, presentation, and the vessel. To this, Guo adds style, temperature, sound, story, and nourishment.

The ingredients are treasures sourced from the world over: prized morels from China, Japanese A5 wagyu beef,

wild black rice from Canada, and wild-caught Australian lobster and sea bass.

The menu also includes three tea courses, meant to serve as palate cleansers: white hair silver needle tea (Baihao Yinzhen), which is the most prized of white teas; big red robe tea (Da Hong Pao), which originates from a scarce six mother trees on the cliff of Wuyi mountain; and a pu-erh tea Guo sources from Yunnan, where six 300-year-old bushes are reserved for him.

"In retrospect, everything on the path I've walked had a purpose," said Guo, who is determined to raise the profile of Chinese cuisine on the international stage. "I want to influence this direction ... I've always felt a responsibility. If I don't do it, who will?" ■

In addition to great taste, honey has health benefits, making a home bee hive worth consideration.

# HOW TO RAISE HONEYBEES

Those who love honey might want to consider raising honeybees

By Bill Lindsey

FOR THOUSANDS OF YEARS, humans have prized honey for its taste as well as its health benefits. By raising bees at home, beekeepers can harvest and enjoy their own honey.

There are two types of honey: raw and processed. Raw honey is collected from a beehive and consumed after it's passed through a filter to remove bits of beeswax and other debris. Honey processed for commercial sale is run through fine filters to remove pollen and impurities and then treated by an application of heat to make it smoother, clearer, and less sticky, while extending shelf life by eliminating moisture and yeast.

While the taste is a large plus, many honey devotees also swear by its health benefits, with some claims backed by the Mayo Clinic. Mostly composed of sugar, honey also contains amino acids, vitamins, zinc, iron, and antioxidants.

Studies have shown that the antioxidants in honey may be associated with a decreased incidence of seasonal allergies and a reduced risk of heart disease. It has been used as an effective treatment for coughs, and it may be able to relieve acid reflux and heartburn.

In addition, medical-grade honey has long been used to treat burns and other wounds, with Manuka honey found to have antibacterial prop-

## Honey devotees swear by its health benefits, with some claims backed by the Mayo Clinic.

erties. Note, though, that the Mayo Clinic advises against giving honey to children under the age of 1.

There are two ways to get honey: buy it or collect it. You can collect honey from a wild hive or your own. There are also "bee hotels," but these are intended to attract solitary pollinating bees rather than honeybees. There are many guides to building a beehive, but for the less mechanically inclined, there are numerous commercially made hives to choose from.

The many online forums focused on beekeeping are a good source of information on hives and most related topics. These forums provide a good way to explore the world of beekeeping and make new friends, and they're a great place to ask questions and learn about everything from protective beekeeper clothing to how to keep bees healthy.

### Building a Hive

The bees will travel quite a distance to find the nectar required to create

Beekeeping tools include a protective veil, a smoker, and a brush used to harvest the honey from the honeycombs.



Raw honey can be consumed straight from the honeycomb after being filtered to remove bits of beeswax and other debris.



A white-tailed bumblebee collects nectar to take back to the hive to be converted into the honey the colony uses as food.



Protective clothing is a must while harvesting honey, as bees can become aggressive during this process.

LEFT PAGE: SERGEY KOLESNIKOV/SHUTTERSTOCK; THIS PAGE CLOCKWISE FROM L: APPLE2499/SHUTTERSTOCK, PIXEL-SHOT/SHUTTERSTOCK, DIONISVERA/SHUTTERSTOCK, CHRIS TOPHER FURLONG/GETTY IMAGES



Beekeeping can be a family affair and is a great way for kids to learn about nature firsthand.

honey, but ideally, the hive should be located in or near a garden, away from homes or anywhere people may walk through the bee's flight path to and from the hive. It should be placed where it's protected from wind and gets sun but is shaded to prevent overheating.

With the hive in place, it's time to add the bees. Experienced beekeepers may be comfortable capturing wild bees, but for most newcomers, it might be better to purchase a colony from a local or online apiary. The apiary can provide assistance selecting the type of bee and how many are needed, based on the geographic location and size of the hive. Italian and Carniolan bees are popular choices for new beekeepers.

A "starter package" can contain approximately 10,000 bees, including one queen bee in a cage that protects her while the other bees accept her as part of the colony. Over the course of several days, worker bees will eat through a candy plug in the cage to release her so the hive can become active. A second option is to purchase a nuclear colony, which is an active, producing hive, complete with a queen bee and worker bees.

Adding bees to a hive can be daunting but is a straightforward process that is safe as long as the bees are handled with care and the beekeeper

wears a protective veil, gloves, and coveralls and uses a smoker. A smoker produces puffs of cool, white smoke that is used to help prevent the bees from attacking the keeper. It doesn't harm them; upon sensing smoke, bees rush into the hive and fill their stomachs with honey, which makes them less agile and thus less likely to use their stinger on a perceived attacker.

The hive requires ongoing care and maintenance to keep it in good condition and the bees within healthy and happy. If the bees feel threatened, the queen and her workers may abandon the hive. When wax caps are seen on the honeycombs, it's time to harvest the honey, taking care to not take so much that the bees can't survive. Beekeepers who plan to sell honey need to adhere to local, state, and federal rules and requirements, just as any other business must. ■



Fresh, raw honey is a golden delight, treasured for its taste and health benefits.

ET  
LIFESTYLE  
**NATURE'S SWEETENER**  
How to Raise Honeybees



1

**Busy Bodies**

Honeybees can travel far distances to find pollen to bring back to the hive to be converted into honey. Each hive has worker bees, drone bees, guard bees, and a queen bee.



2

**Stay Calm**

It's smart to be careful around bees to avoid getting stung, which is why beekeepers use a device called a smoker that can help prevent bees from attacking them.



3

**Honey for Health**

Studies show that honey can provide health benefits to those affected by seasonal allergies, sore throats, and even heart disease. But don't give honey to children 1 year old or younger.

THIS PAGE CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: L. KIRPGODI/SHUTTERSTOCK; ILLUSTRATION BY THE EPOCH TIMES; GALINSKI Y. ANDREY/SHUTTERSTOCK

**FAMILY FUN SUGGESTIONS**

An assortment of games just in time for 'Backyard Olympics'

By Bill Lindsey



**An Ancient, Fun Game**  
**GOSPORTS XL PORTABLE CORNHOLE SET**

\$49.99

Legend has it that cornhole was invented by a 14th-century cabinet maker who was inspired by watching his children tossing rocks into a groundhog's hole. It has since gone on to become a crowd-pleasing favorite around the globe. This portable set, which stores with eight beanbags in a handy bag between games, is perfect for games in the backyard, on the beach, or anywhere else.



**A Unique Team Sport**  
**SPIKEBALL SPIKEBRITE 3 KIT**

\$114

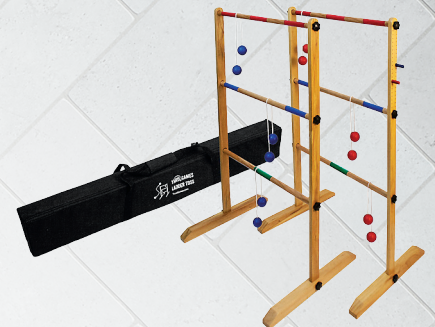
With aspects similar to volleyball, basketball, and tennis, Spikeball is an exciting, fast-paced game of skill and stamina. Invented in 1989, the game has two-person teams competing to volley the ball back and forth before spiking it onto a small, circular net facing up from the ground. It's still new to many, so be prepared to have neighbors ask if they can play, too. It comes with Spikebrite balls for after-dark excitement.



**Checkmate!**  
**MEGACHESS GIANT CHESS SET**

\$388

This game of strategic thinking was inspired by the game of chaturanga, played 1,500 years ago in India. Unlike most sets, however, this one has pieces an impressive 16 inches tall, set on a chess board that measures four feet by four feet. The sheer size makes it easy for spectators to follow each move and also helps teach chess basics to those new to the game.



**Your New Favorite Game**  
**DOUBLE LADDER BALL**

\$79.99

This game pits two to four players against each other as they vie to throw three botas so they hang on the rungs of the two ladders placed 15 feet apart. Players get three points for botas that hang on the top rungs, two for botas hung on the second rung, and one for botas hung on the bottom rungs. It looks simple but actually requires considerable skill to master.



**A Traditional Blast**  
**TRIUMPH PATRIOTIC PORTABLE BADMINTON SET**

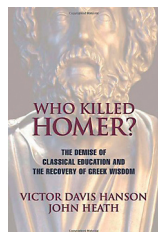
\$99.99

People have been enjoying rousing games of badminton for 2,000 years, and this patriotically themed set makes it easy for two or four players to enjoy a game in the backyard in minutes. The setup is simple: Set the base on the ground, extend the telescoping poles, attach the net, and start playing. The storage bag keeps the net, four rackets, and two shuttlecocks all neatly in place.

**RECOMMENDED READING**

*This week, we feature a witty guide to domestic and cultural sanity and an incisive look at the gifts Greek classics have bestowed on our culture.*

**CLASSICS**

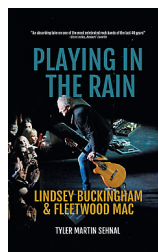


**'Who Killed Homer?'**  
By Victor Davis Hanson and John Heath

Though the book explores the decline of classical education and ways to revive it, Hanson and Heath also give readers many insights into ancient history and literature and its enormous influence on Western civilization. The authors rightly take to task the academics whose political views and disregard for our heritage have damaged their own departments, but they also do us all a great service by urging a restoration of classical studies, which would do much to restore our culture and our republic.

ENCOUNTER BOOKS, 2001, 323 PAGES

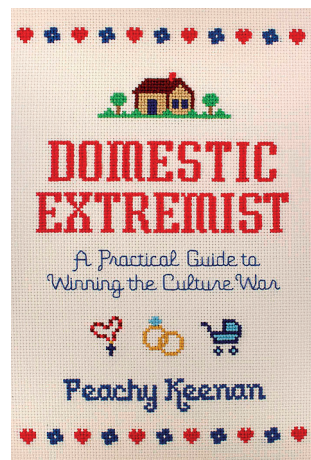
**MUSIC**



**'Playing in the Rain'**  
By Tyler Martin Sehna

In the 1970s and 1980s, the pop-rock group Fleetwood Mac dominated radio airways. Even today, it can't be dismissed as "your grandparents' music." This history follows Fleetwood Mac from its inception to the present, telling the story of each album and analyzing the music. It presents the group, the careers of individual members, and their breakups and reunions and argues that Lindsey Buckingham was most responsible for Fleetwood Mac's success, creating the Fleetwood Mac sound.

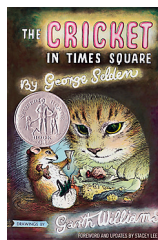
INGRAMSPARK, 2023, 324 PAGES



**'Domestic Extremist'**  
By Peachy Keenan

The new radical extremism calls for sanity! Imagine that! This enjoyable guide asks its readers to turn their backs on our present-day culture, particularly on today's third wave of feminism, and to go back to the basics of home, family, and virtues. Here is a tiger mom's roaring battle cry for marriage, children, and what used to be considered normal life. Keenan also offers a feast of wit and humor, seasoned with a good dash of biting snark, that will leave you chuckling or laughing outright.

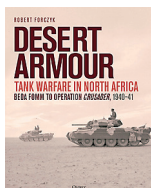
REGNERY PUBLISHING, 2023, 256 PAGES



**'The Cricket in Times Square'**  
By George Selden and Garth Williams

After riding a picnic basket from Connecticut to the center of New York City, a cricket named Chester meets a mouse, Tucker; a cat, Harry; and a boy named Mario, who makes Chester his pet. Mario's family's newsstand is struggling. Could a country cricket and his new friends possibly help? Add this enjoyable classic to the summer reading pile.

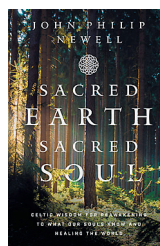
SQUARE FISH UPDATED EDITION, 2022, 160 PAGES



**'Desert Armour'**  
By Robert Forczyk

Military historian Robert Forczyk's work encompasses the World War II North African campaign during the years of 1940 and 1941. His study is specific to tank warfare and how it was used by the Italians, Germans, and British. While the European and Pacific Theaters often receive the most attention, this book points a necessary spotlight on the North African Theater. It's an exhaustive work presented in elaborate detail that will certainly inform even the savviest of World War II history buffs.

OSPREY PUBLISHING, 2023, 336 PAGES



**'Sacred Earth, Sacred Soul'**  
By John Phillip Newell

There is much wisdom in Celtic Christianity. John Phillip Newell is a Church of Scotland minister who encourages connecting to the sacred all around and within us. In this history, he introduces readers to Celtic prophets from Pelagius, a Roman Britain theologian from the fourth century, to Scottish academic and poet Kenneth White. Perhaps we have forgotten what lies inherently in our souls: that we are spiritual creatures. Perhaps it's time to be renewed and reawakened to the sacred.

HARPERONE, 2021, 288 PAGES



**Ian Kane**  
is a U.S. Army veteran, filmmaker, and author. He enjoys the great outdoors and volunteering.

**ENTERTAINMENT**

*This week, we feature a celebrated World War II miniseries and a family-friendly adventure about two siblings on a quest to save a magical land.*

**NEW RELEASE**



**'The Secret Kingdom'** (2023)

When siblings Peter (Sam Everingham) and Verity (Alyla Browne) move into a house from their father's childhood, they discover a mystical land beneath Peter's bedroom floorboards. There, a dangerous entity known as the Shroud holds the land in fear, and the two kids must team up with a cast of colorful characters to bring light back to the land and banish the Shroud once and for all.

This charming adventure features lots of action and light comedy and also shows the importance of family, friends, and helping those in need.

**ADVENTURE | FAMILY**

**Release Date:** June 9, 2023 (Limited)

**Director:** Matt Drummond

**Starring:** Alyla Browne, Alice Parkinson, Sam Everingham

**Running Time:** 1 hour, 38 minutes

**MPAA Rating:** PG

**Where to Watch:** Theaters

★★★★★

**A MUSICAL WITH 2 LEGENDARY ENTERTAINERS**



**'Summer Stock'** (1950)

A theater troupe, including Director Joe Ross (Gene Kelly), approach Jane Falbury (Judy Garland), who owns a struggling farm. Ross would like

to use the place for rehearsals, but sparks soon begin to fly between the two.

Although thin on plot, Garland and Kelly—two of

America's greatest performers—provide extraordinary singing and dancing sequences that are sure to entertain.

**MUSICAL | ROMANCE**

**Release Date:** Aug. 31, 1950

**Director:** Charles Walters

**Starring:** Judy Garland, Gene Kelly, Eddie Bracken

**Running Time:** 1 hour, 48 minutes

**Not Rated**

**Where to Watch:** Amazon, Vudu, Apple TV

★★★★★

**FAMILY PICK**

**'Tuttle Twins'** (2021)

Based on a popular children's book series that aims to develop critical thinking skills by introducing real-world concepts, this timely show deftly presents complex historical, economic, and philosophical topics in ways that are understandable to kids—all in a highly entertaining package.

This brilliant show is a wholesome antidote to what's being taught to children these days, especially in public schools. The series contains lots of humor but also



emphasizes the importance of our freedoms, the free market, and hard work.

**ADVENTURE | COMEDY | FAMILY**

**Release Date:** June 30, 2021

**Multiple Directors**

**Starring:** Jonny Vance, Blake Brust, Alex Elkin

**Running Time:** 20 to 25 minutes

**MPAA Rating:** Not Rated

**Where to Watch:** Amazon, Angel Studios

★★★★★

**A RIVETING WORLD WAR II DRAMA**

**'Band of Brothers'** (2001)

This award-winning TV miniseries follows the lives of Easy Company, 101st Airborne Division—from their training through to the end of World War II. The men endure the many agonies of war but also form a powerful bond forged in battle.

Featuring a stand-out cast and stellar production value, this gripping war drama will have viewers caring about its well-drawn characters, who sometimes die or are gravely injured.



This miniseries, based on historian Stephen E. Ambrose's book, is a truly epic watch.

**DRAMA | HISTORY | WAR**

**Release Date:** Sept. 9, 2001

**Multiple Directors**

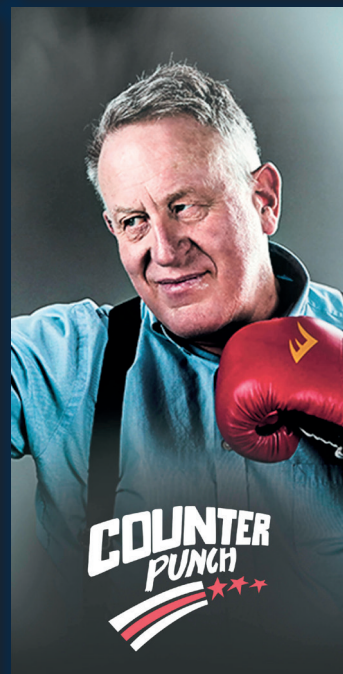
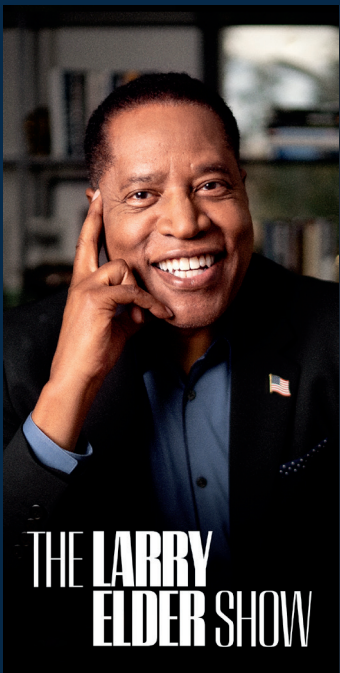
**Starring:** Scott Grimes, Damian Lewis, Ron Livingston

**Running Time:** 9 hours, 54 minutes

**MPAA Rating:** TV-MA

**Where to Watch:** HBO Max, Hulu

★★★★★



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## Public Manners

*Making a good impression while out and about*

In our busy daily lives, it can be easy to inadvertently let manners slide, so here are a few tips to ensure proper behavior while shopping, traveling, or relaxing.

By Bill Lindsey

### 1 Space: The Final Frontier

It can be a challenge to not accidentally invade someone's private space while traveling on the subway, in an elevator, or while exiting an airliner, so whenever possible, sit back and wait for the herd to move along. There will be another elevator or subway along shortly, and by waiting for those folks who insist on rushing off the plane to make their way to the terminal, your exit will be more dignified.



### 5 Leave Only Footsteps

When out in public places, take care not to inadvertently create a mess. After finishing a cup of coffee or a pretzel purchased from a kiosk or the movie theater's snack bar, don't leave the empty cup or wrapper anywhere other than in a trash receptacle. While at the beach or park this summer, pick up your empty soda and water bottles when you head home.

### 2 Smiles Are Free, Yet Priceless

When out in public, slow down and enjoy the passing scenery, taking a brief moment to smile and acknowledge those around you. This is especially important when you interact with service providers, saying thank you when they are handing you a cup of coffee at a kiosk, bringing your meal to the table, picking up the plates after you've finished the meal, or simply being very pleasant as they ring up your order at the hardware store.

### 3 Practice Patience

If, while shopping, you notice a display with horrendous spelling or overhear an associate mispronouncing the name of an herb or pasta, let it go. Life is too short to be the grammar or spelling police. The same applies when you are stuck in line behind someone who is finding creative ways to extend what should be a very brief interaction. Take a deep breath, hold it for a few seconds, and then slowly, quietly let it out—don't let it get under your skin.

### 4 Set a Good Example

When out shopping, dining, or traveling with young children, or even teenagers, pay attention to them and interact without stifling their enthusiasm. It can be fun to see the world through their eyes, and it's a great opportunity to bond with them. Give them kudos for being polite to others they encounter, from servers to passing families with children of similar ages. Other parents may be inspired to share these moments with their kids rather than herding them like sheep.

CSA IMAGES/GETTY IMAGES

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“It’s a magazine that’s FOR the American people, not against.”

*Vanessa Morrison, medical records clerk*

“Well thought out material, thoroughly investigated, and I trust [the] sources.”

*Gail F. Sauve, homemaker*

“It is straightforward, rather than a lot of speculation or pontificating.”

*Jan Hamilton, retired professional*

“[Insight] reminds me that there are still a LOT of wonderful, good, and dedicated people in this country.”

*Creed Haymond, surgeon*

“Unbiased reporting. Short, impactful articles.”

*Mark Naumann, photographer*

“I can trust what I read and make up my own mind how I feel about the subject.”

*Jim Edwards, retired*

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