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The Homeland Security News Briefing

TO: THE SECRETARY AND SENIOR STAFF

DATE: WEDNESDAY, APRIL 13, 2016 5:00 AM EDT

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Leading DHS News:

MCCAIN CALLS ON JOHNSON TO REQUEST MILITARY DRONE ASSISTANCE ON SOUTHERN BORDER. [The Hill](#) (4/12, Neidig, 862K) reports Sen. John McCain wrote a letter to Homeland Security Secretary Jeh Johnson calling "for military unmanned aerial vehicles to be used along the Mexican border for surveillance." The Department of Defense (DOD) can assist civilian law enforcement if requested, and McCain called on Johnson to "make this request for support to the DOD immediately and begin coordinating with Ft. Huachuca to take advantage of these available air assets as quickly as possible."

ICE SUED FOR HOLDING IMMIGRANTS WHO CAN'T BE DEPORTED. The [Minneapolis Star Tribune](#) (4/12, Ross, 1.25M) reports the American Civil Liberties Union of Minnesota, the University of Minnesota Law School's Center for New Americans, and Dorsey & Whitney filed a lawsuit arguing "that the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement's 'blanket policy' to hold" for 90 days or more immigrants a judge ruled cannot be deported is unconstitutional. The suit was filed on the behalf of Rushinga Muzaliwa, a

refugee from the Democratic Republic of Congo whose deportation was stopped by a judge because Muzaliwa would face torture in his native country. The suit seeks class-action status. The [St. Paul \(MN\) Pioneer Press](#) (4/12, Eccher, 466K) reports Muzaliwa “was convicted in Michigan three years ago of domestic violence and child abuse, served his time and was released.”

[WCCO-AM](#) Minneapolis (4/12, 70K) reports on its website that the lawsuit “argues that holding immigrants after a judge grants protection violates the U.S. Constitution, national ICE policy and Supreme Court precedent.” On its website, [KSJR-FM](#) Collegeville, MN (4/12, Lillie, 45K) reports, “ICE declined to comment on pending litigation.”

IMPLEMENTING VISA WAIVER SCREENING PROVISION VEXES ADMINISTRATION. [Politico](#) (4/12, Toosi, 1.07M) reports the “Administration is struggling to implement” part of a new law aimed at preventing terrorists from entering the US through the Visa Waiver Program. At issue is that citizens of countries covered by the program must get visas if they also are nationals of Iran, Iraq, Syria, or Sudan. Part of the problem is “that there is no international agreement on the rules of nationality and that many people are dual nationals even if they do not wish to be.” Meanwhile, the Administration “is refusing to release clear criteria” for its determinations, “frustrating both critics and supporters of the measure who worry the new screening process is at best confusing, at worst discriminatory and ultimately ineffective at catching would-be enemies of the United States.” Meanwhile, forms for the Electronic System for Travel Authorization, used to implement the screening, “are confusing” and require applicants to be “familiar with the (often unclear) nationality laws of various countries in play.” A senior DHS official said, “The way we’re approaching this is to try to make sure we’re not over-inclusive in imputing dual national status to someone who may have only limited links to the countries in question.” He called it “an honor system with checks and balances.”

DHS WORKING WITH MLB ON SECURITY. The [St. Louis Post-Dispatch](#) (4/12, McDermott, 808K) reports the Major League Baseball Commissioner’s Office’s spending on lobbying Congress and federal agencies was down to \$330,000 last year. The focus has also shifted “from steroids and other drug-related issues at the turn of the century...to stadium security and relationships with Cuba.” DHS spokesman Scott McConnell said DHS Secretary Jeh Johnson met with owners at Baseball’s winter meetings to “discuss ongoing collaboration for the upcoming season.” McConnell added that the collaboration includes “vulnerability assessments, training and guidance, and raising public awareness about the importance of reporting suspicious activity through the Department’s ‘if you see something, say something’ campaign.”

DHS SUV STOLEN, RECOVERED. The [Spokane \(WA\) Spokesman-Review](#) (4/12, Alexander, 173K) reports someone cut through the fence at a federal facility in north Spokane, Washington, stole a Department of Homeland Security SUV, and “drove it through the chain-link fence surrounding the building to escape.” [KHQ-TV](#) Spokane, WA (4/12, 72K) reports Spokane police found the vehicle stolen from the Office of Information and Technology for US Homeland Security; it was parked outside an apartment complex.

Immigration and Customs Enforcement:

TEXAS SHERIFF TO MEET WITH ACTIVISTS ON 287(G) PROGRAM. The [Houston Chronicle](#) (4/12, Zaveri, 1.99M) reports Harris County, Texas Sheriff Ron Hickman is going to meet with immigrant rights activists “to hear the critics’ point of view on the 287(g) program and to educate them on how the program works.” The county is under pressure to end its participation in the program even as “the memorandum of agreement for the program between the sheriff’s office and U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement” is set to expire in June. Hickman said it would take “a very compelling reason” for him to not renew it.

Customs and Border Protection:

CBP SEIZES MORE THAN \$1.6 MILLION IN METH HIDDEN IN SUV’S TIRES. The [AP](#) (4/12) reports US Customs and Border Protection officials announced the seizure of more than \$1.6 million worth of

methamphetamine hidden in the rear tires of an SUV entering the Paso Del Norte border crossing from Mexico. The [Dallas Morning News](#) (4/12, 1.24M) reports Beverly Good, director of CBP for the El Paso crossing, said, "Smugglers spared no expense in their efforts to cross this sizable drug load." The meth was hidden in custom metal collars bolted to the rims of the back wheels. The driver, Matilda Perez, "was handed over to U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement to face drug smuggling charges."

LOCAL BORDER PATROL UNION DOESN'T REJECT TRUMP ENDORSEMENT. The [AP](#) (4/12) reports Border Patrol union Local 1929 in El Paso voted 14-13 to reject "a motion to break from the National Border Patrol Council's endorsement of presidential candidate Donald Trump." [USA Today](#) (4/13, Borunda, 5.45M) reports agents leaving the union meeting "said they could not speak to the media because they would get in trouble." Stu Harris, vice president of local 1929 National Border Patrol Council, "The endorsement from the national was basically an endorsement for border security. That's all it was."

VET SUES BORDER CONTROL FOR TRANSFER. [WDIV-TV](#) Detroit (4/13, MacDonald, 177K) reports on its website that a judge granted a temporary injunction saying "the government can't force" retired Army Sgt. Anthony Gazvoda "to return to Laredo or lose his job" as a Border Control agent. Doctors said the climate and terrain in Laredo brought flashbacks and induced post-traumatic stress disorder. He said his efforts to transfer were "caught up in a government tornado of paperwork and threats," leading to his decision to sue.

Transportation Security Administration:

LONG SECURITY WAITS PREDICTED FOR SAN FRANCISCO AREA SUMMER AIR TRAVELERS.

The [San Jose \(CA\) Mercury News](#) (4/13, KurhiEkurhi@, mercurynews.com, 648K) reports San Francisco Bay Area travelers "may be in for long delays this summer because of a shortage of Transportation Security Administration personnel that clogged security check lines in San Jose and other airports over spring break." Mineta airport spokeswoman Rosemary Barnes says the TSA increased staffing and brought in a dog team during certain peak hours, but warned "these solutions need to be permanent and long-term." Meanwhile, the airport has posted signs at the security line telling people to direct their complaints to the TSA. Other airports around the country have similarly "expressed frustrations with TSA staffing." Meanwhile, "TSA spokesman Nico Melendez said that even with additional staffing, there can be bottlenecks at airports that simply don't have room for more screening lanes and equipment."

TSA DOGS TO BE STATIONED AT LAMBERT-ST. LOUIS INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT. The [St. Louis Post-Dispatch](#) (4/12, Thorsen, 808K) reports Lambert-St. Louis International Airport will have Transportation Security Administration dogs "with special training to detect explosives...stationed in each terminal during peak travel times within the next several weeks." Passengers cleared by the dogs can use the TSA's PreCheck screening, bypassing the main line and keeping their shoes on.

FORMER FBI AGENT ARGUES AGAINST INCREASING SIZE OF AIRPORT SECURED AREAS.

Former FBI special agent and supervisory special agent Steve Moore, in an op-ed on [CNN](#) (4/12, Moore, 3.96M), criticizes calls for enlarging "security perimeters" at protected locations in the wake of the Brussels attacks, calling such a move "likely to be disastrous" because it "introduces problems that actually exacerbate, not alleviate risk." Adding the departure halls to the screened perimeter would put security checkpoints at the entrance to the airport terminal, "a place much more advantageous to terrorists." Such a location would be vulnerable to car bombs and bunch people together instead of the way they're spread out in departure halls. Additionally, "there might not be enough resources to adequately secure the" larger sterile areas. Moore argues "screening to prevent terrorism is the last line of defense, not the first," and suggests instead using "'human factors' detection as a means to identify potential terrorists."

PROGRAM OFFERS TRAVEL HELP FOR AUTISM SPECTRUM KIDS. [KVOA-TV](#) Tucson, AZ (4/13, Thacker, 23K) reports on the "Fly SAAFE" program (Southern Arizona Autism Flight Event), which prepares kids with Autism Spectrum Disorder for family travel. The Tucson Alliance for Autism, in partnership with the Tucson International Airport, Transportation Security Administration, and American

Airlines allows “families to participate in a ‘curb-to-plane’ experience at the Airport so they are better prepared to travel.”

SALINA FLIGHTS ON HOLD WITHOUT SCREENING AT AIRPORT. The [Salina \(KS\) Journal](#) (4/13, Horan, Unruh, 88K) reports Great Lakes Airlines nonstop flights to Denver from Salina Regional Airport haven’t yet started because the Transportation Security Administration says it doesn’t have the budget to begin screening services at Salina. Instead, it plans to screen passengers at Denver International Airport. However, Salina airport officials argue this “would cause delays in catching connecting flights in Denver and adding time to travel.” Meanwhile, the US House of Representatives will vote on the TSA Fairness Act, which would “ensure TSA passenger screening at small airports.”

US Citizenship and Immigration Services:

H1-B VISA APPLICATIONS UP. In continuing coverage, the [Wall Street Journal](#) (4/12, Jordan, Subscription Publication, 6.74M) reports US Citizenship and Immigration Services said it received more than 236,000 applications from US companies for H1-Bs visas, at least 3,000 more than last year’s record number. Only 85,000 are available each year, and federal officials said the computer-generated lottery selection for the visas was complete. CIS will return government fees to applicants who weren’t selected, although companies usually also have paid attorneys to prepare the petitions.

[CNN Money](#) (4/12, O'Brien, 2.9M) reports, “Some regions – Massachusetts, Colorado and most recently New York City – have introduced programs to help applicants get around the H-1B cap” with the help of universities.

GRASSLEY TO HOLD HEARING ON EB-5 PROGRAM. [Inside Sources](#) (4/12, Vyse) reports Senate Judiciary Committee Chairman Chuck Grassley will “hold his latest hearing” Wednesday on the EB-5 program. Intended to help “underdeveloped rural enclaves and impoverished urban areas,” it offers “wealthy foreigners visas in exchange for \$500,000 investments in American businesses,” but there is “mounting evidence” that “it’s susceptible to misuse.” Grassley said the Department of Homeland Security “has routinely allowed EB-5 money to be invested in projects in affluent urban areas with low unemployment and little shortage of available financing.” Additionally, last year the Government Accountability Office said the program “faced significant challenges in its efforts to detect and mitigate fraud risks.”

Immigration:

IRS SEEKING TO ADDRESS ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS’ USE OF OTHERS’ SSNS. [The Hill](#) (4/12, Jagoda, 862K) reports Internal Revenue Service Commissioner John Koskinen, at a Senate Finance Committee hearing, “said the agency is trying to figure out how to address the issue of illegal immigrants using others’ social security numbers – without discouraging them from filing their taxes.” He noted that social security numbers often were borrowed from friends or acquaintances with permission, “not the normal identity-theft situation.” Currently, “the IRS and the SSA don’t notify companies when there is false information,” and the IRS is barred from notifying victims of employment-related identity theft.

US SENTENCING COMMISSION PROPOSES LONGER SENTENCES FOR BORDER CROSSERS. [Vice](#) (4/12, Hoffman, 1.65M) reports that while the government is seeking to address “the country’s massive inmate population” by releasing drug offenders, officials are “pushing to increase federal prison time for crossing the border.” The US Sentencing Commission (USSC) proposed increasing suggested sentences for immigrants who illegally re-enter the country after being deported. Such cases make up “a hefty part of the criminal justice system,” quarter of federal sentencings. The Department of Justice supports the move. Michelle Morales, the DOJ’s acting director of policy and legislation, said “the Department applauds the Commission’s action to address this problem.” However, immigration advocates argue “harsh reentry penalties have the effect of overburdening prisons and federal courts” while not discouraging illegal border crossings.

NEBRASKA GOV. OPPOSED LAW TO GIVE LICENSES TO DEFERRED-ACTION IMMIGRANTS. The

[AP](#) (4/12) reports Nebraska Gov. Pete Ricketts wrote an open letter to state senators urging them to oppose a bill to “allow deferred-action immigrant youth to qualify professional and commercial licenses.” He argues it would undermine the rule of law and is unfair to immigrants who use legal channels.

INDIANA SENATE COMMITTEE TO HEAR FROM ANTI-IMMIGRATION LAWYERS. The [Indianapolis Star](#) (4/12, Wang, 616K) reports the Indiana Senate select committee examining immigration issues will, in its inaugural meeting, hear “from two well-known lawyers behind some of the nation’s strictest proposals against undocumented immigrants.” They are Kansas Secretary of State Kris Kobach, who said he advised Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump on the plan to make Mexico pay for the construction of a wall at the Mexican border, and Dale Wilcox, executive director and general counsel of the Immigration Reform Law Institute, which supports immigration restrictions. State Senate Democratic Leader Tim Lanane said the committee “has been created as a sounding board for anti-immigration policies.”

US Coast Guard:

COAST GUARD SEIZES 550 POUNDS OF COCAINE. [Space Coast \(FL\) Daily](#) (4/12) reports that during an at-sea interdiction in international waters northwest of Aruba, US Coast Guard and Dutch law enforcement teams seized 550 pounds of cocaine worth more than \$8.25 million. A suspect was detained.

COAST GUARD KEEPS CRUISE SHIP IN PORT OVER FAILED INSPECTION. [USA Today](#) (4/12, Sloan, 5.45M) reports the US Coast Guard in Miami held up the launch of start-up cruise line Fathom’s first voyage when “a routine inspection...turned up safety issues with” the company’s only ship, the 710-passenger Adonia. In a statement, the Coast Guard said the ship failed several parts of the inspection, with “the most serious remaining problem” being the “numerous” inoperable sliding fire screen doors.

Science and Technology Directorate:

DHS, CBP TO HOLD HOMELAND SECURITY DAY IN SILICON VALLEY. [Homeland Preparedness News](#) (4/12) reports the Department of Homeland Security Science and Technology Directorate and US Customs and Border Protection will host a Homeland Security Day in Silicon Valley on April 29. DHS Under Secretary for Science and Technology Dr. Reginald Brothers said, “Our Homeland Security Day in Silicon Valley and similar events in other locations allow DHS S&T to strengthen partnerships and discuss some of the Department’s toughest challenges with these important players in the tech industry.” CBP Deputy Commissioner Kevin McAleenan said, “We are excited to pursue new partnerships in Silicon Valley as we seek more efficient and effective capabilities across our diverse operational environments.”

Terrorism Investigations:

WHITE HOUSE NON-COMMITTAL ON DECLASSIFYING PAGES OMITTED FROM 9/11 REPORT. The [Washington Times](#) (4/12, Boyer, 285K) reports the White House on Tuesday “sidestepped questions about whether the president supports declassifying 28 pages omitted from a joint commission’s report on the 9/11 terrorist attacks that reportedly implicate the Saudis.” Press secretary Josh Earnest said the President “‘certainly has confidence’ that Director of National Intelligence James R. Clapper will consider the documents for release as part of an ongoing declassification review,” but would not say “whether the president has read the secret pages, or whether Mr. Obama believes they should be made public.”

The [Minneapolis Star Tribune](#) (4/12, Sherry, 1.25M) says Reps. Walter Jones (R-NC), Rick Nolan (D-MN), and “several members of the House Intelligence Committee” are pushing the President to “use executive authority to declassify the 28 pages.” According to Nolan, the pages “clearly points out who furnished money and resources to those at least partly responsible for the terrorist attacks.” Nolan and Jones “are leading a House resolution urging that the pages be unsealed – 42 members of Congress are in support so far.”

TERROR SUSPECT SEEKS HOME CONFINEMENT IN GEORGIA. The [Atlanta Journal-Constitution](#) (4/12, Estep, Wickert, 1.1M) reports that “an Ohio native accused of providing financial support to an al Qaeda leader is asking to be released on bail before his trial – so he can be placed under home confinement” in Gwinnett County, GA. Asif Ahmed Salim, 35, “was charged last November in a federal indictment that accuses him and three others of raising money through fraudulent credit card charges and sending the funds to Anwar al-Awlaki, whom the Department of Justice referred to as ‘a key leader of Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula.’” Salim “was already denied bail earlier this year, but his attorney, Linda Moreno, filed a new motion Saturday in U.S. District Court in Toledo, Ohio, calling him ‘neither a risk of flight nor a danger to the community.’”

NEW YORK TERROR SUSPECT ACCUSED OF TIES TO AL QAEDA, OTHER TERROR GROUPS. The [New York Daily News](#) (4/12, Marzulli, 3.7M) reports that “an accused Al Qaeda goon awaiting trial in Brooklyn Federal Court for conspiring to kill U.S. troops overseas had contact with top officials of the terrorist organization and participated in an ambush attack that left two servicemen dead on the Afghanistan-Pakistan border, prosecutors have disclosed.” Ibrahim Suleiman Adnan Harun was extradited from Italy three years ago “on the condition that he would not face the death penalty in connection with the deaths of Private 1st Class Jerod Dennis and Airman 1st Class Raymond Losano who were killed in action on April 25, 2003.” The Daily News adds that “federal prosecutors in Brooklyn have publicly revealed for the first time stunning details of the accused jihadist’s involvement not only with Al Qaeda, but with Boko Haram in Nigeria and the Algerian terror group GSPC.”

KEY WITNESS IN MINNESOTA ISIL PROBE ARRESTED AFTER GUN INCIDENT. The [Minneapolis Star Tribune](#) (4/12, Montemayor, 1.25M) reports that “a key informant in the government’s case against a group of young Twin Cities men accused of conspiracy to support ISIL was arrested last week on probable cause of illegally possessing a handgun, according to court documents filed this week.” Abdirahman Abdi Rashiid Bashiir “was released the next day, pending the filing of charges.” Bashiir, 20, “was at a Minneapolis apartment visiting friends late Friday evening when a semiautomatic handgun discharged accidentally as he attempted to modify it, according to a source familiar with the investigation.” The Tribune adds that, “reached by phone Tuesday, Bashiir said he couldn’t comment on the incident but characterized it as ‘some kind of misunderstanding.’ ‘It doesn’t have anything to do with the other case or my involvement,’ Bashiir said, referring to the ongoing ISIL recruit case in which he has cooperated with federal authorities.”

AL QAEDA SUSPECT AWAITS TRIAL IN NEW YORK. [CNN](#) (4/12, Sanchez, 3.96M) reports that “al Qaeda suspect Ibrahim Suleiman Adnan Adam Harun, who awaits trial on federal charges in New York, has declared that ‘our terrorism is not over’ and ‘threatened to kill’ prosecutors and courthouse personnel, according to a government memorandum in the case. ‘I am a warrior, and the war is not over,’ Harun said during a 2013 court appearance in Brooklyn, according to the court document.” Federal prosecutors “have asked a district court judge for an anonymous and partially sequestered jury in the trial of man who allegedly has extensive contacts among ranking al Qaeda members and participated in a 2003 ambush that killed two American soldiers and wounded several others.” CNN adds that a trial date has not been set and that a status hearing is scheduled for April 29.

SHABAAB MILITANTS KILLED IN US STRIKES IN SOMALIA. [Reuters](#) (4/12) reports the Pentagon said Tuesday around a dozen Al Shabaab militants were killed Monday and Tuesday in US airstrikes in southern Somalia. According to Pentagon spokesman Captain Jeff Davis, the targeted militants posed an “imminent threat to US personnel.”

TWO MORE CHARGED IN RELATION TO BRUSSELS TERROR ATTACKS. A brief report on [ABC World News Tonight](#) (4/12, story 6, 0:25, Muir, 14.63M) said two more suspects have been arrested in connection with the Brussels terror attacks. According to the Belgian prosecutor’s office, the [Washington Post](#) (4/12, McAuley, 8.98M) reports, the men “were linked to the rental of an apartment in Brussels that appeared to serve as a safe house before the March 22 attacks.” [USA Today](#) (4/12, Hjelmgaard, 5.45M) also reports on the charges, noting a statement from the prosecutor’s office “said no further information would be released, and that the investigation ‘is continuing actively day and night.’”

THREE SUSPECTS DETAINED IN CONNECTION TO PARIS ATTACKS. [Fox News’ Special Report](#)

(4/12, 1.53M) reported three suspects have been detained for their connections to the Paris attacks.

REPORT: BOKO HARAM INCREASINGLY USES CHILDREN AS SUICIDE BOMBERS. A report released Tuesday by UNICEF says Boko Haram has, in the last two years, “increasingly turned to a new tactic in their attacks in West Africa: child suicide bombers,” the [Washington Post](#) (4/12, Sieff, 8.98M) reports. According to the report, the “number of children involved in such blasts grew more than tenfold, from four in 2014 to 44 in 2015,” and more than “three-quarters of the children are girls – some as young as 8 years old.” Since 2014, the Post adds, “20 percent of all suicide bombings carried out by the group have been children.”

WAR COURT DEFENSE STAFF BANNED FROM STAYING AT GITMO’S CAMP JUSTICE. The [Miami Herald](#) (4/12, Rosenberg, 803K) reports Marine Brig. Gen. John Baker, who oversees Guantánamo war court defense teams, issued an order over the weekend forbidding his staff from staying at the Camp Justice compound following a health risk assessment naming “potential cancer risk and non-cancer health effects associated with” the camp. The Pentagon’s chief war crimes prosecutor, Army Brig. Gen. Mark Martins, said Tuesday his staff would continue to work at Camp Justice. Attorney Wells Dixon, who represents CIA captive Majid Khan, called the report “another compelling reason why Guantánamo should be closed without delay.”

MORAN BILL WOULD PLACE RESTRICTIONS ON TRANSFER OF GUANTANAMO DETAINEES. [The Hill](#) (4/12, Carney, 862K) reports in its “Floor Action” blog that Sen. Jerry Moran on Tuesday introduced a bill that would “require the secretary of Defense to certify that a detainee ‘no longer poses a continuing threat to the security of the United States, its citizens and its interests’” before transferring the individual from Guantanamo to another country. Moran said, “It is critical to our national security that Congress has a role in the transfer authorization process. The current process is entirely subjective and allows detainees to be transferred and released who may still pose a threat to our national security.”

Cyber News:

SENATORS CRITICIZE IRS FOR TAXPAYER DATA BREACHES. [USA Today](#) (4/12, Morris, 5.45M) reports a group of US senators on the Finance Committee spent a hearing on Tuesday criticizing the IRS over recent taxpayer data breaches. USA Today says Sen. Ron Wyden “and other senators questioned whether the Internal Revenue Service’s digital defenses were adequate, citing a breach discovered last May in which the IRS said that more than 700,000 taxpayer accounts were accessed by online attackers between January 2014 and May 2015.” USA Today adds that IRS Commissioner John Koskinen said that his agency is making strides in cybersecurity based on recommendations from the GAO, and “noted that IRS security systems withstand more than 1 million malicious attempts to access them every day.” USA Today notes that Sen. Wyden is advocating a plan “to authorize the IRS to streamline its hiring process for cybersecurity staff because cybersecurity specialists are in demand.” [NPR](#) (4/12, Naylor, 1.81M) presents audio clips from Tuesday’s hearing.

RANSOMWARE HACKERS USING CUSTOMER SERVICE TACTICS TO STREAMLINE PAYMENTS. [Reuters](#) (4/12, Finkle) reports law enforcement officials and security firms are finding that ransomware hackers are using customer service tactics to make it easier for a victim to pay a ransom. Reuters says ransomware viruses sometimes have a FAQ attached that give instructions on how to pay the ransom easily.

California Lawmakers Propose Legislation To Outlaw Ransomware. [Reuters](#) (4/12, Whitcomb) reports legislation to outlaw the use of ransomware passed the California state senate’s public safety committee on Tuesday. Reuters adds that the bill will allow the prosecution of ransomware hackers under the state’s extortion statute. Reuters says the bill will move to the state senate’s appropriations committee before being voted upon.

Security Researchers Find No Cure For Ransomware Infected Machines. The [Financial Times](#) (4/12, Kuchler, Subscription Publication, 1.36M) interviews security analysts and researchers who say that there is no current cure for ransomware, and victims will have to rely on backups or paying the ransom to

recover files.

CISCO SYSTEMS WARNS OF CRYPTOWORMS THAT WILL INFECT NETWORK WITHOUT HUMAN INTERACTION. The [AP](#) (4/11, Abdollah) details a new report by Cisco Systems Inc. that says “the age of self-propagating ransomware, or cryptoworms, is right around the corner.” Cisco’s findings suggest that cryptoworm ransomware is “programmed to spread automatically, without human interaction,” such as a “click[ing] a link or open[ing] an infected email attachment.” The AP says the Cisco recommends “maintaining updated and patched systems and safe backups” to avoid this new strain of virus.

SYMANTEC INTERNET REPORT FINDS GROWING NUMBER OF THREATS. [NBC News](#) (4/12, Weisbaum, 3.58M) reports Symantec released its Internet Security Threat Report on Tuesday, which found that “the data lost, the money stolen, and the disruption caused by cybercriminals is worse than ever.” NBC News says Symantec’s report found “more than 430 million new and unique pieces of malware in 2015, up 36 percent from the year before,” and an increase of 35% for encryption-style ransomware attacks. NBC News adds that Symantec found that programs such as Internet Explorer and Adobe Flash were specifically targeted because of their wide use. Symantec’s report says that the threat to mobile devices will continue to grow in 2016 as “ransomware that locks a smartphone has already been deployed.”

COMEY SAYS APPLE BATTLE WAS HARDEST PROBLEM HE HAS ENCOUNTERED. In remarks to students at Catholic University’s law school on Tuesday, FBI Director Comey discussed his agency’s legal battle with Apple over unlocking San Bernardino shooter Syed Farook’s iPhone, saying it “posed ‘the hardest problem I’ve encountered in my entire government career,’” [USA Today](#) (4/12, Johnson, 5.45M) reports. According to the [AP](#) (4/12, Tucker), Comey said he was glad the court fight is over because it “was creating an emotion around the issue that was not productive.” Comey said the FBI “was correct to ask a judge to force Apple” to help it unlock the phone, arguing, “That litigation...had to be brought, in my view, because that case had to be investigated in a reasonable way.” However, he added that generally, “lawsuits and court fights won’t resolve the broader collision between privacy and national security.” [AppleInsider](#) (4/12, Campbell, 15K) reports that Comey’s view that the courts cannot end the encryption debate brings the director into apparent agreement with Apple CEO Tim Cook, who has called upon Congress to debate the issue. [ExecutiveGov](#) (4/12, Edwards, 548) reports that during a speech at Kenyon College last week, Comey emphasized the need for “a thoughtful conversation about” encryption.

The [Wall Street Journal](#) (4/12, Gershman, 6.74M) reports that in his remarks, Comey likened some of the rhetoric in the encryption debate to that heard in the national discussion over gun control. [ABC News](#) (4/12, 4M) reports online that citing two ongoing cases in Boston and New York, Comey indicated “there will be plenty” more cases like the San Bernardino iPhone dispute. Encrypted devices, he said, are “by definition...going to affect the work of law enforcement.”

The [New York Times](#) (4/12, Subscription Publication, 12.03M) and the [Houston Chronicle](#) (4/12, Tucker, 1.99M) post the AP’s coverage to their websites.

FBI Used Professional Hackers To Crack iPhone. The [Washington Post](#) (4/12, A1, Nakashima, 8.98M) cites “people familiar with the matter” who say the FBI cracked San Bernardino shooter Syed Farook’s iPhone “with the help of professional hackers who discovered and brought to the bureau at least one previously unknown software flaw.” The information provided was used “to create a piece of hardware that helped the FBI to crack the iPhone’s four-digit personal identification number without triggering a security feature that would have erased all the data, the individuals said.” The researchers who helped with the case “were paid a one-time flat fee for the solution.”

Cellebrite Parent Company Hopes To Expand Operations. [Bloomberg News](#) (4/12, Yui, 2.92M) reports that the Sun Corp., a Japanese pinball machine maker and parent company of forensics firm Cellebrite, plans to work to help law enforcement counter terrorists who use digital devices. “Demand will never go away,” said Sun Corp. CEO Masanori Yamaguchi, adding that he hopes to expand his company’s ability to assist in counter-terrorism investigations. “Extracting mobile phone data is the fastest way to solve crimes nowadays.” According to Bloomberg, Cellebrite is “fast becoming the go-to guys when law enforcement needs to unlock smartphones.”

California Smartphone Decryption Bill Defeated. The [Sacramento \(CA\) Bee](#) (4/12, White, 569K) reports that a bill to penalize companies that fail to help the government unlock smartphones was defeated in the California legislature on Tuesday. “The bill did not receive a vote, with members of the Assembly Committee on Privacy and Consumer Protection worrying the measure would undermine data security and impose a logistically untenable requirement on California companies,” the Bee says. The bill would have authorized \$2,500 fines for companies that did not comply with decryption court orders.

Op-Ed: Politicians Lack Knowledge About Encryption. In a piece for [Newsy](#) (4/12, 1K), Leah Becerra and Evan Thomas examine encryption-related statements by several politicians. Among the quotations examined is one by FBI Director Comey. “And this disconnect has created a significant public safety problem we have long described as Going Dark,” Comey said. Security experts, Becerra and Thomas say, disagree with Comey’s assessment. The authors suggest that many politicians know little about encryption.

WHITE HOUSE EXPRESSES DOUBT THAT CONGRESS CAN PASS ENCRYPTION LEGISLATION. [The Hill](#) (4/12, Bennett, Williams, 862K) reports White House press secretary Josh Earnest told reporters on Tuesday that the White House doubts Congress’ ability to pass encryption legislation. The Hill quotes Earnest as saying “both their ability to pass legislation and put together constructive legislation that could pass are both questions that are significantly in doubt.” The Hill says that several legislative proposals are circulating in both chambers, “but lawmakers have yet to coalesce around a proposal.”

EMAIL PRIVACY ACT MOVING THROUGH CONGRESS. [The Hill](#) (4/12, Trujillo, 862K) reports the House Judiciary Committee is expected to pass an amended version of the Email Privacy Act on Wednesday “after years of delay.” The Hill says the legislation “would close off an outdated loophole, so that the government must get a warrant before forcing a technology company to hand over a customer’s emails or other electronic communications, no matter how old they are.”

US LAUNCHING CYBER ATTACKS AGAINST ISIL. [Reuters](#) (4/12, Shalal) reports Deputy Defense Secretary Work told reporters Tuesday the US military is, for the first time, launching cyber attacks against ISIL as part of an effort by US and coalition forces to put pressure on the group from every direction. Work said, “Those guys are under enormous pressure. Every time we have gone after one of their defended positions over the last six months, we have defeated them. They have left, they have retreated.”

CIO SCOTT CALLS FOR FASTER GOVERNMENT CYBERSECURITY HIRING. [Federal Computer Week](#) (4/12, Noble, 263K) reports Federal CIO Tony Scott is urging the government “to hire skilled cybersecurity professionals fast, starting with the federal chief information security officer.” Federal Computer Week adds that Scott “said requirements that job applicants have four-year degrees might not always be appropriate, and his office is working with the Office of Personnel Management to develop new approaches, including offering cybersecurity scholarships, hiring veterans and nontraditional applicants, and speeding up the famously sluggish federal hiring process.”

FINANCIAL TIMES ANALYSIS: RETAIL WEBSITES POSE RISK TO CONSUMERS DATA. The [Financial Times](#) (4/12, Megaw, Ahmed, Vandeveld, Subscription Publication, 1.36M) analyzes cybersecurity on retail websites with the aid of Silicon Valley’s UpGuard. The Financial Times found that consumers data may be at risk when using personal information for online shopping.

BOND, MCNAMARA: EU INVESTING BILLIONS IN CYBERSECURITY. In an op-ed for [The Hill](#)’s (4/12, Bond, Contributor, McNamara, 862K) “Pundits” blog, consultants Phillip J. Bond and Gerard McNamara detail the growing cybersecurity business market in the EU, which coincides with the EU’s \$470 billion Digital Single Market strategy. Bond and McNamara opine that “an effective partnership between government and industry would boost competitiveness and stimulate greater innovation within the cybersecurity and digital privacy sectors in Europe.”

REP. LIEU VOICES SUPPORT FOR ITMF LEGISLATION. [The Hill](#) (4/12, Bennett, 862K) reports Rep. Ted Lieu issued a statement Tuesday in support of Rep. Steny Hoyer’s proposed bill to establish a \$3.1

billion Information Technology Modernization Fund (ITMF). The Hill quotes Rep. Lieu as saying “the self-sustaining investment fund is an innovative way to rapidly upgrade our outdated and vulnerable IT systems while supporting our federal technology infrastructure for the future.”

CARLIN URGES AUTO INDUSTRY TO HELP CURB CYBERATTACKS. The [Detroit News](#) (4/12, Ramirez, 528K) reports that Assistant Attorney General John Carlin made a speech before the Society of Automotive Engineers on Tuesday and “called on the private sector to work with the federal government and law enforcement agencies to fight cyber attacks.” The [Detroit Free Press](#) (4/12, Baldas, 989K) reports Carlin made the speech “to encourage automakers to assess the security risks associated with connected cars before anything bad happens.” [Bloomberg News](#) (4/12, Strohm, 2.92M) also reports.

WEINGARTEN, SLAUGHTER: GENDER GAP AMONG CYBERSECURITY PROFESSIONALS MUST BE CLOSED. In an op-ed for [TIME](#) (4/12, Slaughter, Weingarten, 18.01M) , Anne-Marie Slaughter and Elizabeth Weingarten of the think tank New America call for the hiring of more women in the cybersecurity profession. Slaughter and Weingarten opine that “attracting a broader set of people and experiences and confronting the historically narrow idea of who belongs in the field is essential to the industry’s survival.”

National Security News:

OBAMA TO DISCUSS ISIL STRATEGY WITH NATIONAL SECURITY TEAM. [Roll Call](#) (4/12, 126K) reported the fight against ISIL shows “no signs of slowing down” and the President is set to “meet with his national security team Wednesday at CIA headquarters to discuss the administration’s strategy.” The group, “which grew out of al-Qaida’s branch in Iraq, has eclipsed its parent organization to become the preeminent global jihadi group,” and now “presents a more formidable adversary to Western counterterrorism efforts, in part because” it has “adapted its terrorism template based off of what worked and failed for al-Qaida.” ISIL “has broken away from al-Qaida’s highly centralized approach to terrorism, opting instead for a more flexible, opportunistic model for attacks in Europe that gives operatives more autonomy and presents fewer opportunities for Western security services to thwart plots, current and former US officials say.”

BLINKEN: SUCCESSES AGAINST ISIL IN IRAQ, SYRIA HAVE NOT STOPPED ITS EXPANSION. The [New York Times](#) (4/12, A1, Rosenberg, Cooper, Kulish, Subscription Publication, 12.03M) reports Pentagon officials says US airstrikes have killed 25,000 ISIL fighters in Iraq and Syria and “incinerated millions of dollars plundered by the militants.” However, those successes “have done little to stop the expansion of the militants to Europe, North Africa and Afghanistan.” Deputy Secretary of State Blinken told a congressional committee Tuesday, “Even as we advance our efforts to defeat Daesh on the front lines...we know that to be fully effective, we must work to prevent the spread of violent extremism in the first place – to stop the recruitment, radicalization and mobilization of people, especially young people, to engage in terrorist activities.”

IRAQI TOWN FREED FROM ISIL FINDS ITSELF ISOLATED. The [AP](#) (4/12, Szlanko) reports the Iraqi town of Rabia, “which was wrested from the Islamic State group 18 months ago,” finds itself “isolated and impoverished by the battle lines drawn around it.” To its east, Mosul is “still held by IS militants.” To its west is the crossing into Syria, which “has been closed by Iraqi Kurdish authorities,” leaving the “only way out” to the north and “Iraq’s largely autonomous Kurdish region, where authorities are suspicious of Rabia’s mostly Arab residents and require them to apply to enter.” The town’s economy is being strained by the isolation “making it difficult to bring in goods.”

IRAQI LAWMAKERS PROTEST DELAY OF VOTE ON NEW CABINET. The [AP](#) (4/12, George) reports Iraqi lawmakers “staged a protest inside the country’s parliament” after a vote on new Cabinet nominees proposed by Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi was postponed earlier. After the vote was postponed, “dozens of lawmakers refused to leave the parliament building’s main hall, demanding the resignation of the country’s top political leadership and an end to the current system of government.”

SYRIA PEACE TALKS TO RESUME WEDNESDAY. [USA Today](#) (4/12, Dorell, 5.45M) reports Syria peace talks are set to resume Wednesday in Geneva but their prospects “are complicated by a recent

spike in fighting between government troops and rebel factions around the strategic city of Aleppo.” State Department spokesman Mark Toner said, “We are very, very concerned about the recent increase in violence,” adding that the fighting includes “actions we believe are in contravention to the cessation of hostilities.” The [AP](#) (4/12, Mroue) provides an overview of the talks, including who is attending, who will be absent, and the main areas of disagreement.

Meanwhile, on the eve of parliamentary elections that are “expected to rubber-stamp an assembly loyal to President Bashar Assad” ahead of the resumption of the talks, the [AP](#) (4/12, Karam, Issa) reports Syrian government troops “pushed an offensive Tuesday against militants in the country’s north on the eve of parliament elections.” The offensive “seeks to retake an important hilltop village south of the city of Aleppo from militants, including al-Qaida’s local affiliate.”

The [New York Times](#) (4/12, Barnard, Subscription Publication, 12.03M) says the “fragile and partial cease-fire in Syria is coming under new strains.” France and Iran have “both issued warnings that the partial cease-fire, which has lasted far longer than any other and has reduced the daily death toll significantly since Feb. 27, faced the threat of collapse.” France and opposition negotiators “blamed new government attacks in the northern province of Aleppo and the eastern suburbs of the capital, Damascus, for endangering the agreement, while Iran blamed ‘armed groups’ fighting the government.” The [Wall Street Journal](#) (4/12, Entous, Subscription Publication, 6.74M) reports US and other officials say the CIA and its regional partners have devised a Plan B which, if the cease-fire collapses, would supply moderate Syrian rebels battling the Assad regime with weapons systems to aid them in launching attacks on regime aircraft and artillery positions.

TURKEY STRIKES ISIL TARGETS AFTER ROCKETS HIT BORDER TOWN. The [AP](#) (4/12) reports Turkish artillery units on Tuesday shelled ISIL targets across the border in Syria “hours after rockets fired from Syria struck a Turkish border town, killing a man and wounding seven people.” According to Turkish media, the targeted ISIL positions were located “around the villages of Sawran, Dabiq, Akhtar and Ehtemlat,” and the “intensive shelling” was continuing.

TALIBAN PROMISES SPRING OFFENSIVE WILL BRING “LARGE-SCALE ATTACKS.” The [Washington Post](#) (4/12, Craig, 8.98M) reports the Taliban signaled the beginning of its spring offensive in Afghanistan, vowing Tuesday to launch “large-scale attacks” and to challenge ISIS efforts to become “a dominant militant force in the country.” A statement from the Taliban’s leadership council “said its 2016 offensive will be called Operation Omari, named after the group’s former supreme leader, Mohammad Omar.” According to the statement, “The operation will employ all means at our disposal to bog the enemy down in a war of attrition that lowers the morale of the foreign invaders and their internal armed militias.” [USA Today](#) (4/12, Michaels, 5.45M) says the 2016 fighting season “is likely to be another significant test for Afghan security forces” as the Taliban “have emerged strong in parts of the country, including Helmand province, a significant opium growing region in the south, challenging local police and Afghan army forces.”

US, INDIA AGREE TO STRENGTHEN MILITARY TIES. The [New York Times](#) (4/12, Schmidt, Subscription Publication, 12.03M) reports the US and India on Tuesday “agreed in principle to a series of initiatives” between their militaries that the Administration hopes will strengthen US ties in the region “as it seeks to counter China’s growing influence.” The initiatives, announced by Defense Secretary Carter and his Indian counterpart, Manohar Parrikar, were “a further demonstration of India’s increased willingness to work with the United States on military and security issues,” but the measures are “largely symbolic.”

NORTH KOREA REPORTEDLY PREPARING MOBILE BALLISTIC MISSILE TEST. Barbara Starr reported on [CNN’s Situation Room](#) (4/12, 554K) that US spy satellites have detected “early signs” that North Korea may be preparing to test a mobile ballistic missile potentially capable of striking Guam and Shemya Island of Alaska. The missile launcher “can move quickly so an attack could come with little or no warning.” US officials are also closely watching two other mobile ballistic missiles that “have a longer range and are potentially able to hit the Pacific northwest.” While US officials don’t know if any of these missiles actually work, they “have to assume it does.”

[Reuters](#) (4/12, Kim, Brunnstrom), meanwhile, reports that ahead of a ruling party Congress next month,

North Korea is revealing details of its weapons development program for the first time. While information on the North's weapons program was previously hard to come by, in the past few weeks the North has published articles with photographic detail on a range of tests and other activities related to its efforts to build a nuclear-armed intercontinental ballistic missile.

CHINESE JETS DEPLOYED TO DISPUTED ISLANDS. Jennifer Griffin reported on [Fox News' Special Report](#) (4/12, 1.53M) that new satellite images show China has deployed J-11 jet fighters to a contested island in the South China Sea. Furthermore, the new photos show a "newly installed fire control radar system" on Woody Island, which, according to US Defense officials, makes China's surface-to-air missile launchers fully operational. Griffin said the new images provide further evidence that China is militarizing the disputed islands just days before Defense Secretary Carter visits the Philippines to finalize an agreement to station US troops there.

WPOST ANALYSIS: CHINESE FISHERMEN FIGHTING "COVERT WAR" IN SOUTH CHINA SEA. The [Washington Post](#) (4/12, A1, Denyer, 8.98M) says that in the disputed waters of the South China Sea, "fishermen are the wild card." China, it says, "is using its vast fishing fleet as the advance guard to press its expansive territorial claims" in the area, "introducing a degree of unpredictability that raises the risks of periodic crises." The Post notes that in recent weeks, tensions "have flared with Indonesia, Malaysia and Vietnam as Chinese fishermen, often backed up by coast guard vessels, have ventured far from their homeland and close to other nations' coasts."

CHINESE AUTHORITIES VIEW PROTESTS BY SMALL INVESTORS AS SECURITY THREAT. The [Wall Street Journal](#) (4/12, C1, Yap, Subscription Publication, 6.74M) reports small investors in China have become a new security threat to Chinese authorities because of their protests across the nation over lost savings and their belief that the government has betrayed them. According to the Journal, at least \$24.3 billion is owed to 1.6 million investors in wealth-management products. Investors say they've resorted to protests because the government hasn't helped recoup their losses. Some investors say authorities have attempted to curtail protests through threats, beatings, and detentions. These investors add to unrest among a larger population that is openly challenging the government and other Chinese authorities.

US REVIEWING PEACEKEEPING MISSION IN SINAI. [Reuters](#) (4/12, Stewart) reports the US military said Tuesday that it has formally notified Egypt and Israel that it is reviewing whether to automate aspects of the multinational peacekeeping operations in the Sinai to allow for a reduction in US troops. US officials said using drones could eventually allow the US to withdraw hundreds of its roughly 700 peacekeeping troops. The [AP](#) (4/12, Burns) reports State Department spokesman Mark Toner called the US review "part of an ongoing effort...to look at how to modernize" the mission by using technology or improving efficiency. "Whether and how significant a force reduction that will entail I can't speak to at this point in time," Toner said, but "in no way does it speak to a lessening in our commitment to the objective of the...mission."

AZERI ENVOY URGES US TO DO MORE TO RESOLVE NAGORNO-KARABAKH CONFLICT. The [Washington Times](#) (4/12, Taylor, 285K) reports Azerbaijan's Ambassador in Washington, Elin Suleymanov, said in an interview Tuesday that "the US must do more to deal with rising instability in his region," such as the violence that rocked the Nagorno-Karabakh region earlier this month. Suleymanov said the recent flare-up "showed how dangerous things can be if they get out of control," and while the Administration "has recently shown signs of engaging more deeply with Azerbaijan," he "stressed that far more US attention will be needed to prevent a wider regional security meltdown."

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