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WEEKLY DIGEST
MAY 17, 2019

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JOAQUIN ARAMBULA ACQUITTED OF CHILD ABUSE AGAINST DAUGHTER

May 16, 2019 | David Taub

Assemblyman Joaquin Arambula was acquitted of child abuse Thursday in connection with a December incident in which prosecutors say he struck his 7-year-old daughter in the face. Arambula faced one misdemeanor count of willful child cruelty.

Prosecutors said the wedding ring on Arambula's left hand left a small bruise near the girl's right temple near her eye. Had he been convicted, Arambula would have faced up to six months in jail on the charge. He was elected to the District 31 seat in 2016. Arambula was stoic as the verdict was read. His wife, Elizabeth, broke into tears. The six-man, six-woman jury deliberated for about four hours before returning the verdict. The trial lasted nine days.

Defense Attorneys: Reputation Damaged

Blocks away at the office of Arambula's defense attorney, Michael Aed said even a not guilty verdict damages his client. "His reputation is in the toilet. It doesn't matter what the verdict was in this case. He has to live with this for the rest of his life regardless of what the outcome was," Aed said. Aed said Arambula's constituents will look at him differently from now on.

"For lack of better terms, he's going to be wearing a scarlet letter for the rest of his political career, and his career as a physician, potentially. Wherever he goes, people are going to look at him and make assumptions," Aed said. Arambula's other attorney, Margarita Martinez-Baly, said the prosecution of the case was politically motivated. She compared it to the recent case of Fresno Unified trustee Terry

Slatik, who was not prosecuted in a physical altercation with a student captured on security camera. "They (the district attorney's office) say they can't prove that case. And here, we have no video and it was always shaky from the beginning. But, I'm assuming they believed they could prove it," Martinez-Baly said.

Smittcamp: Defense 'Circus' Created Reasonable Doubt

"My reaction to the verdict is one of sadness for the child because she said on more than one occasion that her father bruised her temple," said Fresno County District Attorney Lisa Smittcamp. "While I respect the jury's verdict, it's a sad day for all children who are forced to live in environments where they can be subject to physical injury. "The circus created by the defense caused the jury to have enough reasonable doubt (for acquittal), but that doesn't change the fact the child reiterated again and again that her father caused the injury."

Smittcamp praised prosecutor Steve Wright for "being a warrior for justice in taking this case to trial. This 7-year-old's voice had to be heard. She had a right to be heard." Outside the courthouse, Wright said, "I hope people realize that no matter who you are or what you do for a living, if you hurt a child we are going to do what we can to hold you accountable for it."

Arambula on the Defense

Arambula took the stand Tuesday as the defense team's last witness. The physician testified he had never struck his 7-year-old child before he spanked...

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"I hope people realize that no matter who you are or what you do for a living, if you hurt a child we are going to do what we can to hold you accountable for it." — Prosecutor Steve Wright

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SPECIAL ED PROBLEMS ARE REAL. THE FRESNO UNIFIED SCRIPT ISN'T.

May 15, 2019 | Bill McEwen

Fresno Unified leaders carefully drew up Tuesday night's roll-out of the special education budget for the next school year. Assistant Superintendent Brian Beck presented a summary of the Council of the Great City Schools special ed recommendations. Check. Beck meticulously explained the proposed new funding to the 40 teachers, advocates and parents of special needs students gathered at Parent University for a special meeting of the Community Advisory Committee. Check. And Beck explained how to fill out a [community survey](#) on the budget. He additionally said that people can write down their thoughts on provided slips of paper. Or talk to him and the special ed managers in small groups. Check.

But the audience wanted something more — something not in the district's script.

Audience Flips the Script

They wanted to speak publicly. They wanted to be heard. With the event [live-streamed on Facebook](#) and the crowd waiting for a response, Beck said, "OK, if that's the consensus of the

group, I'm fine with that." The 20 minutes Beck set for questions and comments turned into 48 minutes, and was followed by parents talking with special ed managers until everyone eventually filed out.

Parent Sarah Lapietra shared how rushing a special needs child into a general ed classroom before the child is ready stunts the child's progress and creates problems for others in the new classroom. Shaun Albert, who teaches medically fragile students at Addicott Elementary School, explained how the school suffers because it doesn't have a vice principal. When the principal is off-site, the school becomes rudderless. He said that Addicott has had a revolving door of principals over the last few years.

Can anyone argue that conditions like that are good for students? Parent Kate Woertman asked special ed leaders to visit her daughter's classroom at Gibson Elementary, where students "vision impaired, deaf and hard of hearing, severely autistic, Down syndrome, orthopedically impaired, cerebral...

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AFTER TWO YEARS AWAY, UBER RETURNING TO FRESNO AIRPORT

May 13, 2019 | David Taub

Soon, the estimated 1.7 million travelers a year through Fresno Yosemite International Airport can use Uber again. The ride-sharing company is scheduled to return after a two-year absence. The city council will vote Thursday (May 16) to grant three-year permits to both Uber and Lyft. In February, the council approved a \$3-per-trip fee for what are officially known as transportation network companies (TNC) to operate at the airport.

Based on Uber's prior activity levels at the airport, the city estimates the deal could ring in \$217,620 for three years. The city estimates Lyft will bring in \$542,700 through 2022. The airport estimates Lyft makes about 6,000 trips a month to FYI. Airport director Kevin Meikle says he didn't specifically lobby for Uber to come back. "Whatever their internal corporate strategy has been, they just made a decision they wanted to come back," Meikle said. "We are happy to see them come...

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REFUGEE MINISTRY, CLOVIS FUNERAL DIRECTOR RECEIVE SPIRIT OF ABRAHAM

May 13, 2019 | Jody Murray

The Rev. Zach Darrah stood in the meeting hall of the Islamic Cultural Center of Fresno and smiled the biggest smile. "I mean, we're a Christian organization," Darrah said of Fresno Interdenominational Christian Ministries, which he serves as executive director. "And they're a Muslim organization. And we don't have to hide that. Here we are sharing a beautiful night of friendship together." Darrah's organization, commonly known as FIRM, was one of two recipients of this year's [Spirit of Abraham Awards](#).

The other winner was Loretta Martin, longtime director of Clovis Funeral Chapel. The awards were presented at the Islamic Center's "Night of Spirituality" gathering Friday night. The Spirit of Abraham Awards have been presented every year since 2005. They are given to people and organizations who significantly enhance interfaith cooperation and the understanding of Islam and Muslims in the central San Joaquin Valley. Past...

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STATE

\$10 MILLION PRIZE READY FOR SOFTWARE THAT TEACHES ILLITERATE TO READ

May 15, 2019 | AP News

LOS ANGELES — The challenge was to develop software that could easily be downloaded onto tablets that poor children around the world could use to teach themselves to read, write and do simple arithmetic. The incentive was \$10 million for the winner. Nearly 200 teams from 40 countries around the world jumped at the chance to become the latest winner of an XPRIZE, a coveted international award funded by future-looking entrepreneurs, billionaires and philanthropists who have banded together with the goal of making the world a better place through technology.

After 15 months of building software, putting it on tablets and having thousands of children in 141 remote villages in Tanzania test it, judges narrowed the competition for the XPRIZE For Global Learning to five final teams from New York City; Pittsburgh; Berkeley; London; and Bangalore, India. The winner, to be announced Wednesday, will take home both the money and a mandate to develop plans for putting that cash to work getting

"Our specialty is making sure we frame the problem in a way that is audacious but at the same time achievable and really advances the field."

— XPRIZE Foundation CEO Anousheh Ansari

tablets into the hands of children in impoverished places all over the world. And by Thursday the winner must upload to the internet the code they created for the technology so anyone can have free access to it. All five finalists developed functional software that will go on the web, said Emily Musil Church, XPRIZE's executive director of prize operations. It was an accomplishment, she acknowledged, that stunned both her and other XPRIZE leaders who fretted for a time that no one would be able to pull it off.

Some Technology Rose Above the Others

"From the beginning we weren't sure any would work at all," she said, adding with a chuckle: "All our ex-

perts said, 'Are you sure about this?'" While it was a tough decision to pick a winner from that field, she said, some technology did rise above the others. Not that any XPRIZE competition is easy. "Our specialty is making sure we frame the problem in a way that is audacious but at the same time achievable and really advances the field," said XPRIZE Foundation CEO Anousheh Ansari, who funded the first prize, also for \$10 million, for private space flight. Elon Musk put up the money for this one.

The Ansari prize's winning team of Microsoft co-founder Paul Allen and aviation pioneer Burt Rutan needed nearly a decade to accomplish their space-travel goal, but they created a new industry by sending their privately piloted SpaceShipOne into space in 2004. Since then the XPRIZE Foundation has funded more than a dozen other prizes for those pursuing innovations such as making water for drought-stricken areas by heating air in shipping containers, creating sensors that allow people to track their health in real time, and developing advanced ways to study ocean contamination.

Teams' Work Met With Substantial Success

The five finalists for the latest prize have been involved in literacy programs and some said even if they don't win they hope to continue the work the competition inspired, adding they want to see the software translated into dozens of languages that can be used all over the world and adapted to smartphones as well as tablets. The languages available are English and Swahili, both widely spoken in Tanzania. The finalist...

XPRIZE officials said the teams' work met with substantial success, noting only 2% of participants could read at least one sentence in Swahili when the work began. Fifteen months later they reported that number was 30 percent.

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AMTRAK'S SAN JOAQUIN SERVICE THROUGH VALLEY EXPANDING

May 15, 2019 | Jody Murray

Amtrak is beefing up its train schedule through the San Joaquin Valley, adding weekend runs of its San Joaquins service between Bakersfield and Sacramento.

The new schedule, which takes effect May 20, will feature departures every two hours from Bakersfield, Oakland and Sacramento, with stops in Fresno. This schedule is designed to allow trains to pass at double-track sections, thereby improving on-time performance.

Trains will leave Bakersfield and Sacramento at 6:12 a.m. and 6:26 a.m., respectively, seven days a week. An evening train

out of Bakersfield will depart at 6:12 p.m. and arrive at 11:31 p.m., every day. [Go here](#) for more information about the San Joaquins schedule. The expanded schedule also has more runs between Oakland and Bakersfield, with service to Fresno.

"With increased population growth in both the Bay Area and throughout all of California, we recognize the need for better connectivity," David Lipari, marketing manager of the San Joaquin Joint Powers Authority, said in a statement.

POWAY SYNAGOGUE JUST GOT MONEY TO IMPROVE SECURITY

May 13, 2019 | Jody Murray

They're freaking huge. They're harmless. And, it appears, they're making a comeback. After all but vanishing five decades ago, the humongous basking shark — some measure up to 30 feet long — has been spotted along the Southern California coast. Unlike their fearsome cousins, basking sharks have tiny teeth and sustain themselves on krill and plankton.

That's not to say these big fish don't look fearsome. When they loosen up their jaws to scoop up copepods, their basket-like mouths look like a CGI special effect gone horribly wrong. Basking sharks were commonly seen along the West Coast in the early 1900s, Heidi Dewar, a research biologist with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, told the Los Angeles Times. Sometime in the 1960s they began to vanish, possibly because their fins and livers were...

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SAN FRANCISCO MAY BAN FACE RECOGNITION TECH

May 14, 2019 | AP News

SAN FRANCISCO — San Francisco supervisors will vote on surveillance oversight legislation Tuesday that includes a ban on the use of facial recognition technology by police and other city departments.

If approved by the full board, San Francisco would become the first U.S. city to outlaw the tech at a time when it is becoming a part of daily life, from international airports to home security cameras. Privacy advocates have squared off with public safety proponents at several heated hearings in San Francisco, a city teeming with tech innovation and the home of Twitter, Airbnb and Uber.

Those who support the ban say the technology is not only flawed, but a serious threat to civil rights, especially in a city that cherishes public protest and privacy. They worry people will one day not be able to go to a mall, the park or a school...

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U.S.

5 STATES ANNOUNCE NEW SUITS OVER PRESCRIPTION OPIOIDS

May 16, 2019 | AP News

CHARLESTON, W.Va. — Five state attorneys general announced lawsuits Thursday seeking to hold the drug industry responsible for an opioid addiction crisis that has become the biggest cause of accidental deaths across the country and in many states. The new filings in Iowa, Kansas, Maryland, West Virginia and Wisconsin mean 45 states have now taken legal action in recent years against Purdue Pharma, the maker of OxyContin. Some of the states are also suing Richard Sackler, a former president and member of the family that owns the Connecticut-based firm. Maryland is also suing other members of the Sackler family. Some

“There’s far too much senseless death in West Virginia and many ruined lives. We cannot and will not tolerate companies that allegedly use false and misleading information to deceive medical personnel and patents.”

— AG Patrick Morrisey

states have also sued other drugmakers or distributors as the fallout from the crisis moves increasingly to courthouses.

“There’s far too much senseless death in West Virginia and many ruined lives,” that state’s Attorney General Patrick Morrisey said Thursday. “We cannot and will not tolerate companies that allegedly use false and misleading information to deceive medical personnel and patents.” States’ suits are among the highest-profile claims in flood of litigation over the crisis. Opioids, including prescription painkillers and related drugs such as heroin and fentanyl, were involved in nearly 48,000 deaths in the U.S. in 2017 — more than AIDS killed at the peak of that epidemic and more than auto accidents kill annually. The death toll since 2000 is 391,000.

Majority of the Recent Deaths Are Linked to Heroin or Fentanyl

The states and about 2,000 local and tribal governments that have sued assert that Purdue and other

companies downplayed the addiction dangers of the drugs and used sales representatives to encourage doctors to prescribe even more of them. But the legal cases are complicated. Purdue points out that the majority of the recent deaths are linked to heroin or fentanyl — not prescription drugs. States say most users, though, start with prescription pills, whether they’re prescribed to them or diverted.

A judge in North Dakota last week dismissed all of that state’s claims against Purdue, perhaps the company’s biggest court win in a round of litigation. In a written ruling that the state says it will appeal, Judge James Hill questioned the idea of blaming a company that makes a legal product for the deaths. “Purdue cannot control how doctors prescribe its products and it certainly cannot control how individual patients use and respond to its products,” the judge wrote, “regardless of any warning or instruction Purdue may give.”

Related Story: Many Blame Drug Firms for Opioid Crisis

Mark Cheffo, a lawyer for Purdue, said he’s hoping other judges will reach similar conclusions as they delve into the cases. All the cases filed by state governments except one are working their way through state courts. Alabama’s case is among about 1,500 in federal court and being overseen by one federal judge based in Cleveland. He has rejected arguments to dismiss the suits and has scheduled an initial trial in October for the claims of two Ohio counties. The looming trial could put pressure on Purdue and other companies to settle the cases — something the...

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FORMER MILITARY TRAINER, RETIRED DOG REUNITED IN SAN ANTONIO

Stars and Stripes

May 15, 2019 | AP News

SAN ANTONIO — A former military dog trainer and his now-retired canine partner have been reunited in an emotional petting and face-licking encounter in Texas.

Aaron Stice was a corporal in the Marines when he last saw the Belgian Malinois named Kkeaton in October at Camp Pendleton in California.

Stice is now a civilian trainer at Joint Base San Antonio-Lackland and wanted to adopt the explosive-detecting dog that he'd worked with for several years. The nonprofit group

American Humane made Tuesday's reunion possible in San Antonio.

Kkeaton's name has special meaning. Stice served in Afghanistan with Cpl. Keaton Coffey of Oregon, who was killed on May 24, 2012. The dog was born days later in a breeding program at Joint Base San Antonio-Lackland and named for the late Marine.

[Click here to watch the video »](#)



AP File Photo

HEATING UP: INVESTORS' GREEN TARGETS GO BEYOND BIG OIL

May 15, 2019 | AP News

NEW YORK — It's not just big oil and power companies that investors are pushing to do better on the environment. In the next few weeks, Amazon shareholders will vote on a proposal made by one of their own to push the company to describe how it's curbing its use of fossil fuels.

In California, investors of Ross Stores are asking the retailer of off-price clothing to set goals for reducing greenhouse gas emissions. And in Kentucky, Yum Brands shareholders are pushing for an annual report on what the parent of KFC, Pizza Hut and Taco Bell is doing about deforestation caused by its suppliers. As the earth gets warmer, shareholders with the environment in mind are widening their focus and increasingly targeting consumer businesses, internet companies and others that don't first come to mind as big polluters. Every year shareholders try to place proposals on the agenda for...

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ALABAMA GOVERNOR INVOKES GOD IN BANNING NEARLY ALL ABORTIONS

May 16, 2019 | AP News

MONTGOMERY, Ala. — Alabama's Republican governor has signed the most stringent abortion legislation in the nation, making performing an abortion a felony in nearly all cases.

"To the bill's many supporters, this legislation stands as a powerful testament to Alabamians' deeply held belief that every life is precious and that every life is a sacred gift from God," Gov. Kay Ivey said [in a statement](#) after signing it into law on Wednesday. The law's sponsors want to give conservatives on the U.S. Supreme Court [a chance to gut abortion rights](#) nationwide.

Democrats and abortion rights advocates criticized the legislation as a slap in the face to women. "It just completely disregards women and the value of women and their voice. We have once again silenced women on a very personal issue," said Sen. Linda Coleman-Madison, a Birmingham Democrat...

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Mickey Welsh/The Montgomery Advertiser via AP



AP/Ariana Cubillos

WORLD

FACEBOOK LIMITS LIVESTREAMING AHEAD OF TECH SUMMIT IN PARIS

May 15, 2019 | AP News

PARIS — A dozen countries and global tech giants including Facebook, Google and Twitter pledged Wednesday to find ways to keep internet platforms from being used to spread hate, organize extremist groups and broadcast terror attacks.

World leaders led by French President Emmanuel Macron and tech executives gathered in Paris to compile a set of guidelines dubbed the “Christchurch Call to Action,” named after the New Zealand city where 51 people were killed in a March attack on mosques. Part of the attack had been broadcast live on Facebook, drawing

The White House also said it agreed with the overarching message of the “Christchurch Call” but did not want to endorse it.

public outrage and fueling the debate on how to better regulate social media. The agreement, which was drafted by the French and New Zealand governments, aims to prevent similar abuses of the internet while insisting that any actions must preserve “the principles of a free, open and secure internet, without compromising human rights and fundamental freedoms.”

The call was adopted by U.S. tech companies including Amazon, Facebook, Google, Microsoft, Twitter, YouTube, along with France’s Qwant and DailyMotion, and the Wikimedia Foundation. The countries backing it were France, New Zealand, Britain, Canada, Ireland, Jordan, Norway, Senegal, Indonesia and the European Union’s executive body. Several other countries not present at the meeting added their endorsement. The White House also said it agreed with the overarching message of the “Christchurch Call” but did not want to endorse it.

Facebook Faced the Harshest Criticism

The meeting in Paris comes at a pivotal moment for tech companies, which critics accuse of being too pow-

erful and resistant to regulation. Some have called for giants like Facebook to be broken up. Europe is leading a global push for more regulation of how the companies handle user data and copyrighted material. The tech companies, meanwhile, are offering their own ideas in a bid to shape the policy response. In Wednesday’s agreement, which is not legally binding, the tech companies committed to measures to prevent the spread of terrorist or violent extremist content. That may include cooperating on developing technology or expanding the use of shared digital signatures.

Related Story: New Zealand and France to Call for an End to Online Terror

They also promised to take measures to reduce the risk that such content is livestreamed, including flagging it up for real-time review. And they pledged to study how algorithms sometimes promote extremist content. That would help find ways to intervene more quickly and redirect users to “credible positive alternatives or counter-narratives.”

Facebook, which dominates social media and has faced the harshest criticism for overlooking the misuse of consumer data and not blocking live broadcasts of violent actions, said it is toughening its livestreaming policies. It’s tightening the rules for its livestreaming service with a “one strike” policy applied to a broader range of offenses. Activity on the social network that violates its policies, such as sharing an extremist group’s statement without providing context, will result in the user immediately being temporarily blocked. The most serious offenses will result in a permanent ban....

“There is a lot more work to do, but I am pleased Facebook has taken additional steps today ... and look forward to a long-term collaboration to make social media safer.” — New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern

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May 14, 2019 | AP News

BEIJING — U.S. officials listed \$300 billion more of Chinese goods for possible tariff hikes while Beijing vowed Tuesday to “fight to the finish” in an escalating trade battle that is fueling fears about damage to global economic growth.

The U.S. Trade Representative’s Office issued its target list after Beijing announced tariff hikes Monday on \$60 billion of American goods in their spiraling dispute over Chinese technology ambitions and other irritants. Chinese authorities were reacting to President Donald Trump’s surprise decision last week to impose punitive duties on \$200 billion of imports from China.

“China will fight to the finish,” said a foreign ministry spokesman, Geng Shuang. “We have the determination and capacity to safeguard our interests,” Geng said. “China’s countermeasures have shown our determination to safeguard the multilateral trade system.”

The latest U.S. list of 3,805 product categories is a step toward carrying out Trump’s May 5 threat to extend punitive 25% duties to all Chinese imports, the USTR said. It said a June 17 hearing would be held before Washington decides how to proceed. The list “covers essentially all products” not already affected by punitive tariffs, the USTR said. It...

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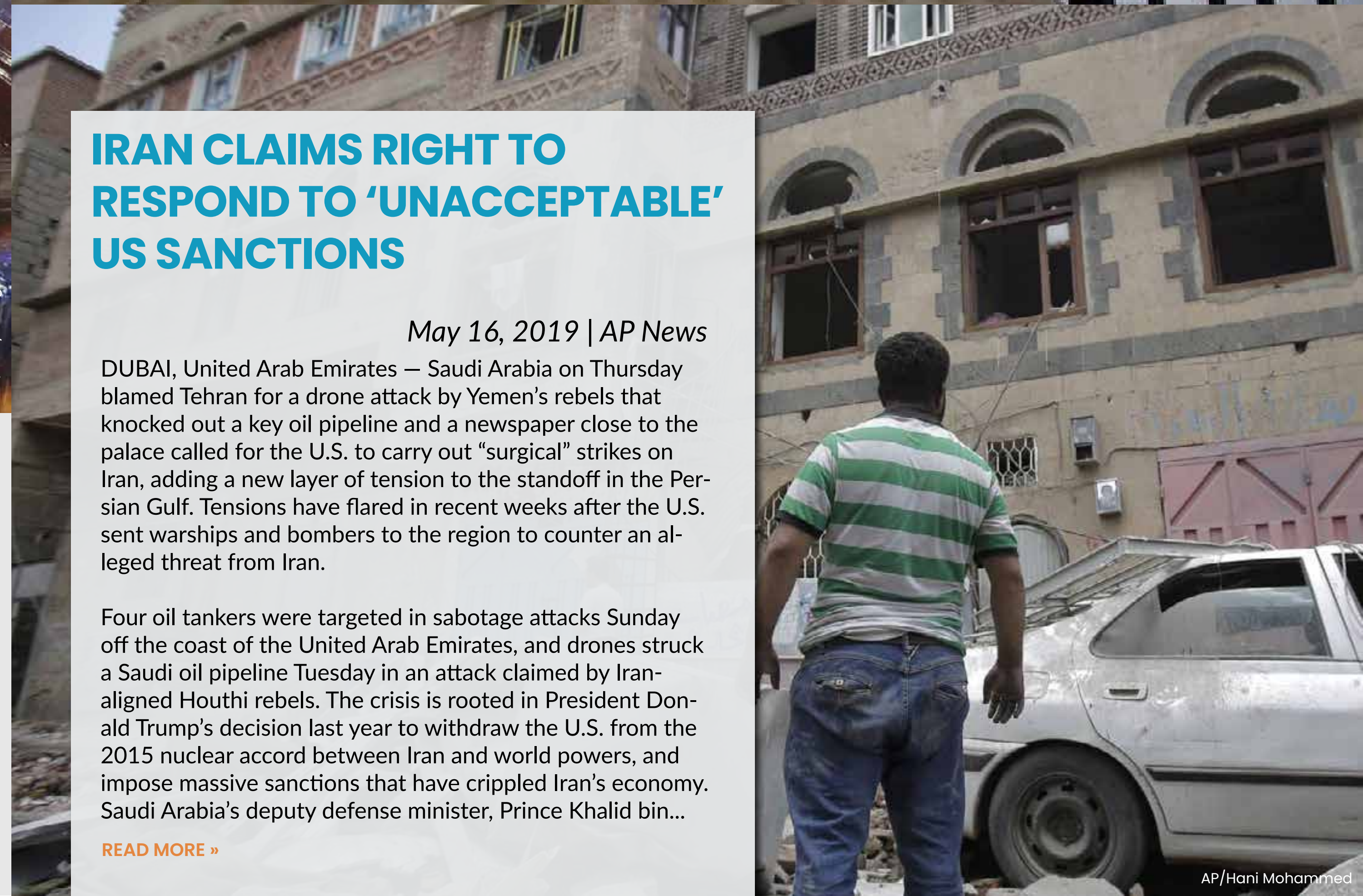
TRUMP OFFICIALS DISCUSSED DEPORTING MIGRANT FAMILIES

May 14, 2019 | AP News

WASHINGTON — Homeland Security officials considered arresting thousands of migrant families who had final deportation orders and removing them from the U.S. in a flashy show of force, but the idea was tabled as the Trump administration grappled with straining resources and a growing number of Central Americans crossing the border.

Two Homeland Security officials and two other people familiar with the proposal described it to The Associated Press. They were not authorized to speak publicly and requested anonymity. The idea was to arrest parents and children in 10 cities with large populations of immigrants living in the U.S. illegally, specifically New York, Los Angeles and Chicago, they said, without naming others. The proposal, first reported by The Washington Post, was meant to send a message and possibly deter others from coming across the border, they said. But then-Immigrations and Customs Enforcement head Ron Vitiello and then-Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen put the...

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IRAN CLAIMS RIGHT TO RESPOND TO ‘UNACCEPTABLE’ US SANCTIONS




May 16, 2019 | AP News

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates — Saudi Arabia on Thursday blamed Tehran for a drone attack by Yemen’s rebels that knocked out a key oil pipeline and a newspaper close to the palace called for the U.S. to carry out “surgical” strikes on Iran, adding a new layer of tension to the standoff in the Persian Gulf. Tensions have flared in recent weeks after the U.S. sent warships and bombers to the region to counter an alleged threat from Iran.

Four oil tankers were targeted in sabotage attacks Sunday off the coast of the United Arab Emirates, and drones struck a Saudi oil pipeline Tuesday in an attack claimed by Iran-aligned Houthi rebels. The crisis is rooted in President Donald Trump’s decision last year to withdraw the U.S. from the 2015 nuclear accord between Iran and world powers, and impose massive sanctions that have crippled Iran’s economy. Saudi Arabia’s deputy defense minister, Prince Khalid bin...

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