



WEEKLY DIGEST
JANUARY 24, 2020



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LEMOORE NAVY FIGHTER SQUADRONS RETURN AFTER HISTORIC DEPLOYMENT

January 20, 2020 | Randy Reed

Two U.S. Navy fighter squadrons based in Lemoore returned home to loved ones Saturday following nearly 10 months away in the Mediterranean and Middle East. The squadrons were assigned to the aircraft carrier USS Abraham Lincoln, **which just completed a 294-day deployment** — the longest since the end of the Cold War. Originally sched-

The Lemoore squadrons departed with the Lincoln on April 1 for what was scheduled to be a seven-month deployment. The carrier group arrived later in the month in the Mediterranean Sea, meeting up with another carrier group led by the U.S.S. John C. Stennis in a show of force intended as a check on Russian military expansion.

uled to last seven months, the deployment was extended four times. “It feels wonderful to be back,” said Strike Fighter Squadron 25 Commander David Dartez. “We had extensions and I told everybody the deployment wasn’t necessarily extremely dif-

ficult, but it was very stressful. So the extensions really, really tried the families,” he said. “So, yeah, it’s pretty emotional. Just great to be home.”

Family and Friends Rush to Greet Pilots

Family and friends cheered and waved ‘welcome home’ signs as Dartez and his fellow squadron pilots made fly-by passes over the base before landing their F/A-18E Super Hornets. As they walked from their jets toward the hangar, the crowd rushed out to greet them on the tarmac. A similar scene unfolded earlier in the day on the base as the 11 pilots of Strike Fighter Squadron 86 (the “Sidewinders”) returned home from the deployment as well. Close to 400 squadron support personnel remained onboard the USS Lincoln as it reached its home port in San Diego. They will return to the base this week. Dartez said the squadrons were kept very active, monitoring rising ten-

sions in the Middle East. “We were on what’s called Gonzo Station, the Gulf of Oman Naval Zone of Operations. Just kind of watching Iran,” he said. “We flew a lot of flight hours. I think over 2,000 arrested landings (on the carrier), just our squadron alone. So we we flew a lot,” Dartez said.

Squadrons Flew Frequent Combat Missions in the Middle East

The Abraham Lincoln Carrier Strike Group departed the Middle East before the U.S. launched the recent **drone attack that killed Iranian General Qassem Soleimani**. But the carrier’s aircraft were regularly involved in combat operations in the region, flying almost daily missions in Afghanistan and Syria, U.S.S. Lincoln Captain Walter Slaughter **told the news site Military.com**. Slaughter said flight operations included 392 combat sorties with 42 precision-guided munitions dropped. The Lincoln also had some encounters with Iranian aircraft and fast boats, but Slaughter described them as routine and “in line with historic norms.”

Deployment Extended Multiple Times

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“We had extensions and I told everybody the deployment wasn’t necessarily extremely difficult, but it was very stressful. So the extensions really, really tried the families.” — **Strike Fighter Squadron 25 Commander David Dartez**

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WE'RE GOING TO GET A PUBLIC MEDICAL SCHOOL, COSTA VOWS

January 22, 2020 | David Taub

Congressman Jim Costa says there finally is enough political will and money to open a long-needed publicly owned medical school in the San Joaquin Valley. Last week, Costa (D-Fresno) introduced the “Expanding Medical Education Act of 2020” in Congress. The goal is to leverage federal, state and private dollars to combat the Valley’s doctor shortage. “Clearly the need is here,” Costa said. “There is a disproportionate need for medical professionals.”

There are only 39 doctors per 100,000 residents in the Valley, Costa said Wednesday. The statewide ratio is 50 doctors per 100,000 residents. Costa, Rep. TJ Cox (D-Fresno) and state Assemblyman Adam Gray (D-Merced) spoke about the local healthcare situation at a Wednesday news conference at the UCSF Fresno medical training facility downtown. The

construction of a publicly owned medical school in the Valley has been championed by politicians and healthcare advocates since the early 1960s.

Keeping Doctors Local

Additionally, the legislators hope that doctors trained in the Valley will stay in the Valley. “It means taking the next generation of young people who live here, who look like the people who grow up here, educating them, (and) preparing them for med school,” Gray said. The best way to make that happen, according to Gray, is to educate them here and keep them here. Cox said the political will for a medical school flowed from the 2018 election. “No longer is Jim (Costa) the only Democrat working here in the Central Valley,” Cox said, referring to the election of himself and Josh Harder (D-Turlock). Both...

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GAP RETURNS A FAVOR WITH \$1 DEAL FOR NEW FRESNO ANIMAL SHELTER

January 22, 2020 | Bill McEwen

Three cheers for The Gap, which is returning a favor to Fresno and supporting local pets. Multiple sources at City Hall confirm that the San Francisco-based clothing retailer has agreed to sell 4.77 acres of land to the city for \$1. The land, which is adjacent to Fresno Yosemite International Airport, will be the site of a yet-to-be-built, state-of-the-art animal shelter costing \$15 million to \$20 million.

A woof-woof-hooray! for Fresno City Councilmen Garry Bredfeld and Mike Karbassi and Mayor Lee Brand, who participated in negotiations with The Gap. Fresno developer Ed Kashian and his right-hand man, Sal Gonzales Jr., lent their expertise to the endeavor as well. Thanks to their efforts, and more to come from local animal lovers, Fresno has a good start on opening a shelter with a no-kill rate of 80% to 90%. Why would The Gap agree to this sweet deal for Fresno taxpayers? Well, it’s the right thing to do. And, there’s also the fact that Fresno has been very good to The Gap. You might recall that back in 1997 the city...

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WILL TV'S 'AMERICAN PICKERS' FIND RUSTED GOLD IN MADERA?

January 21, 2020 | GV Wire

Mike Wolfe and Frank Fritz, the duo behind the popular TV antiquing series ‘American Pickers,’ are hoping to uncover lost treasures in the Valley during a visit to California in March. “Mike and Frank have seen a lot of rusty gold over the years and are always looking to discover something they’ve never seen before,” said a release from the show’s production company. “American Pickers is looking for leads and would love to explore your hidden treasure.” The company, Cineflix, reached out to the Madera Chamber of Commerce late last week to help spread the word about the upcoming filming of new episodes in locations across the state.

Looking for Large Collections of Antiques

The series, which airs on the History channel, follows the show’s hosts as they seek out interesting and valuable items from the past. “The pair hopes to give historically significant objects a new lease on life, while learning a thing or two about America’s past along the way,” the release said. “They are...

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STATE

CELEBRITIES BACK CALIFORNIA BILL TO CUT SINGLE-USE PLASTICS

January 22, 2020 | AP News

SACRAMENTO — A push to pass first-in-the-nation California proposals to limit single-use plastic containers and other items drew support from actor Jeff Goldblum on Wednesday. Environmental groups hail the proposal as a landmark attempt to cut down on 75% of waste from plastic items like takeout boxes, food containers and utensils. The bills aim to achieve the target within a decade.

"I feel like we're on the brink of accomplishing something," Goldblum said, likening the proposal to President John F. Kennedy's 1961 moon shot speech. The two bills, one in the Assembly and another in the Senate, would require companies to reduce single-use packaging as much as possible by 2024 and ensure products made or imported into California after 2030 are recyclable or can be composted. Both stalled last year amid heavy opposition from business, agriculture and packaging industry groups. They

"I feel like we're on the brink of accomplishing something." — actor Jeff Goldblum

argued the restrictions on single-use plastics are vague and would burden manufacturers. They also say it gives the state recycling department, CalRecycle, overly broad authority to establish new requirements for businesses. Goldblum and advocates met with representatives from Democratic Gov. Gavin Newsom's office and lawmakers at the Capitol. They delivered signed letters in support from January Jones, Ted Danson and other actors and activists.

Forcing Companies Producing Plastic Worldwide to Adjust Their Practices

Advocates say the regulations would be a blueprint for enacting similar measures across the country. The proposals follow recent California efforts to restrict the use of single-use plastic straws in sit-down restaurants and to limit plastic bag waste at grocery stores. Given California's status as the fifth-largest economy in the

world, the new rules would "force companies producing plastic worldwide to adjust their practices," said Geoff Shester, a director with Oceana, an organization that advocates for clean ocean waters. Producers that violate the regulations would face civil fines of up to \$50,000 for each day of noncompliance.

Goldblum is a musician and actor who starred in "Jurassic Park" and over a dozen films. He said he tries to personally cut down on his use of plastics by carrying his own shampoo when traveling to avoid using hotel bottles. "I'm sure today I've seen a plastic bottle or two of water, but I try to clean up my act wherever I can," he said.

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CALIFORNIA COULD MAKE UTILITIES PAY FOR SOME BLACKOUT COSTS

January 23, 2020 | AP News

SACRAMENTO — Californians left in the dark by electric companies that shut off their power to prevent wildfires could get paid for things like lost wages or spoiled food under a bill being considered in the state Legislature.

In a state plagued by catastrophic blazes started by strong winds knocking down power lines, large investor-owned utilities in California have been aggressively shutting off power for millions of customers ahead of windstorms to stop wildfires before they start. Utility companies do this for public safety, but they also do it to protect their bottom line. Pacific Gas & Electric Co., the nation’s largest electric utility, filed

for bankruptcy last year after facing an estimated \$30 billion in damages from a 2018 northern California wildfire that was sparked by its equipment and destroyed 19,000 buildings. The largest blackouts hit last fall, when PG&E shut off power for more than 2 million customers in October. The blackouts caused major disruptions throughout the region, closing schools and businesses and making it more difficult for people who rely on medical devices powered by electricity.

State Sen. Scott Wiener, a Democrat from San Francisco, says the liability acts as a financial incentive for electric companies to err on the side of large blackouts covering more...

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CALIFORNIA ASKS FOR SURPLUS FEDERAL LAND TO HOUSE HOMELESS

January 23, 2020 | AP News

SACRAMENTO — California is asking the Trump administration to provide surplus federal land that could be used to build housing for the homeless, mirroring a new state program. Gov. Gavin Newsom sent the request in a letter Tuesday to U.S. Housing and Urban Development Secretary Ben Carson amid an ongoing debate over whether Democratic officials in California are doing enough to ease the state’s homelessness crisis.

The Democratic governor earlier this month directed his administration to identify unused state property by month’s end that local governments or nonprofits can use, so long as it doesn’t delay the development of affordable housing. That includes state property alongside highways or state roads, state fairgrounds, and vacant hospitals and health care facilities. Applicants will submit proposals for long-term leases on the land to build permanent housing. “You could match our commitment by similarly providing free surplus federal land...

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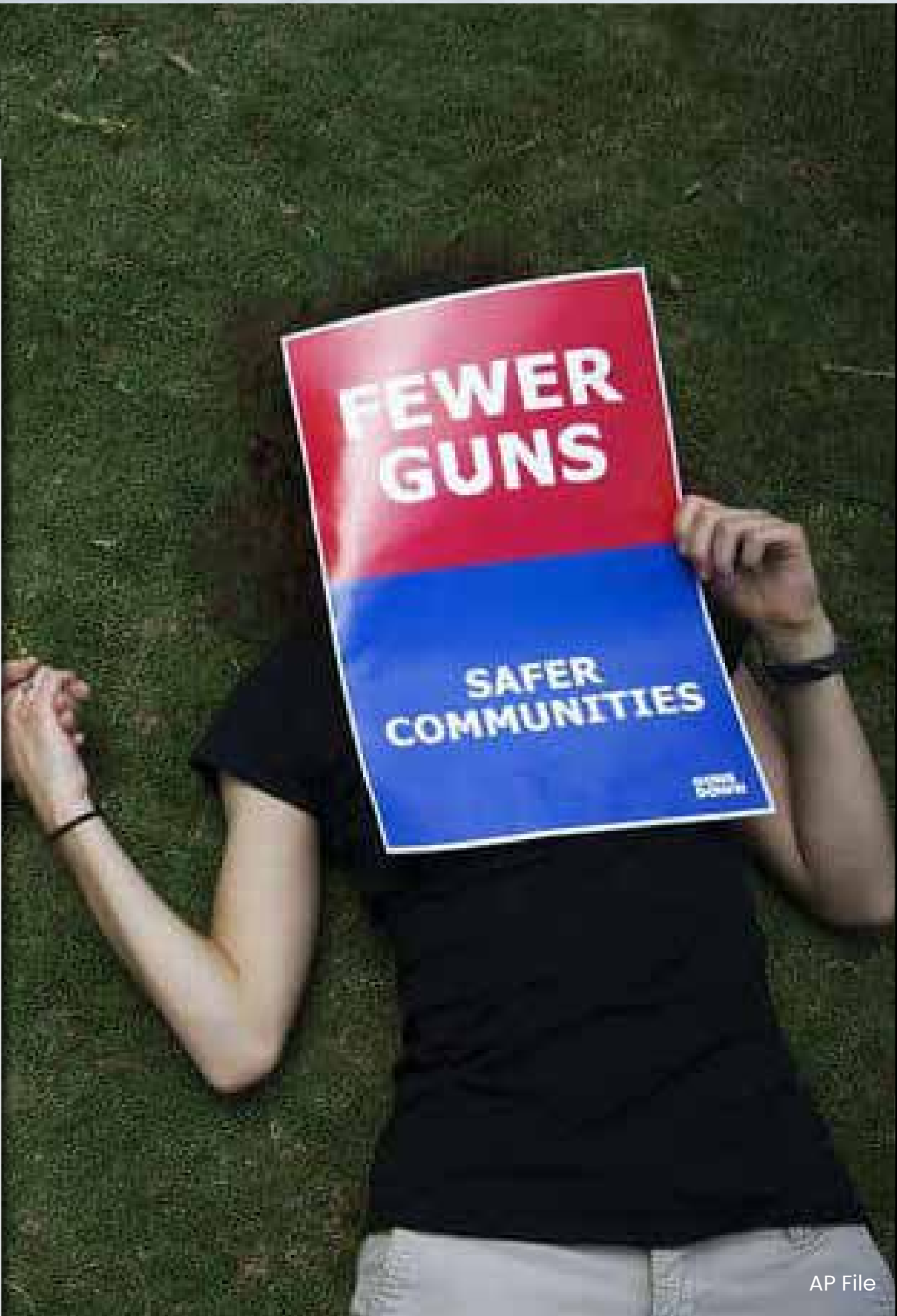
LA REPEALS REQUIREMENTS FOR CONTRACTORS TO REVEAL NRA TIES

January 22, 2020 | AP News

LOS ANGELES — The Los Angeles City Council is repealing a law requiring companies that want city contracts to disclose whether they have ties to the National Rifle Association, weeks after a federal judge blocked the city from enforcing the ordinance. Council members voted 12-0 without discussion Tuesday to roll back the law, which was passed last year. It required firms seeking deals with the city to disclose contracts or sponsorships between them or their subsidiaries and the NRA.

Councilman Mitch O’Farrell pushed for the rules following a spate of U.S. mass shootings, including a November 2018 attack that killed 12 people at a bar in Thousand Oaks, California. He said at the time that the NRA had been a “roadblock to gun safety reform” for decades. In a lawsuit seeking to block the ordinance, the NRA said the requirements violated the constitutional First Amendment right to free speech and association and the 14th Amendment right to equal protection...

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AP File



AP/Noah Berger

U.S. FIREFIGHTING PLANE CRASHES IN AUSTRALIA, KILLING 3 AMERICANS

January 23, 2020 | AP News

SYDNEY — Three American crew members were killed Thursday when a C-130 Hercules aerial water tanker crashed while battling wildfires in southeastern Australia, officials said. New South Wales Premier Gladys Berejiklian confirmed the crash deaths in the state's Snowy Monaro region, which came as Australia grapples with an unprecedented fire season that has left a large swath of destruction. Coulson Aviation in the U.S. state of Oregon said in a statement that one of its Lockheed large air tankers was lost after it left Richmond in New South Wales with retardant for a firebombing mission. It said the accident was "extensive" but had few other details.

Related Story: Meet the California Firefighters Helping Australia Battle Epic Bush Fires

"The only thing I have from the field reports are that the plane came down, it's crashed and there was a large fireball associated with that crash," said Rural Fire Service Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons.

"The only thing I have from the field reports are that the plane came down, it's crashed and there was a large fireball associated with that crash." — Rural Fire Service Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons

Foreign Minister Marise Payne said she had conveyed Australia's condolences to U.S. Ambassador Arthur Culvahouse Jr. "Our hearts go out to their loved ones. They were helping Australia, far from their own homes, an embodiment of the deep friendship between our two countries," she said in a statement.

The Tragedy Brings the Death Toll From the Blazes to at Least 31 Since September

"Thank you to these three, and to all the brave firefighters from Australia and around the world. Your service and contribution are extraordinary. We are ever grateful," she added. The tragedy brings the death toll

from the blazes to at least 31 since September. The fires have also destroyed more than 2,600 homes and razed more than 25.7 million acres, an area bigger than the U.S. state of Indiana. Coulson grounded other firefighting aircraft as a precaution pending investigation, reducing planes available to firefighters in New South Wales and neighboring Victoria state. The four-propeller Hercules drops more than 4,000 gallons of fire retardant in a single pass.

Australian Transport Safety Bureau, the national air crash investigator, and state police will investigate the crash site, which firefighters described as an active fire ground. "There is no indication at this stage of what's caused the accident," Fitzsimmons said.

"Thank you to these three, and to all the brave firefighters from Australia and around the world. Your service and contribution are extraordinary. We are ever grateful." — Foreign Minister Marise Payne

Canberra Airport Closed Temporarily

Berejiklian said there were more than 1,700 volunteers and personnel in the field, and five fires were being described at an "emergency warning" level — the most dangerous on a three-tier scale — across the state and on the fringes of the national capital Canberra. Also Thursday, Canberra Airport closed temporarily because of nearby wildfires, and residents south of the city were told to seek shelter.

The airport reopened after several hours with Qantas operating limited services, but Virgin and Singapore Airlines canceled flights for the rest of the day. The blaze started Wednesday but strong winds and high temperatures caused conditions in Canberra to deteriorate. A second fire near the airport that started on Thursday morning is at a "watch and act" level — the middle of the three tiers. Residents in some Canberra suburbs were advised to seek shelter and others to leave immediately. "The defense force is both assisting to a...

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January 23, 2020 | AP News

WASHINGTON — The Trump administration is lifting protections for some of the nation’s millions of miles of streams, arroyos and wetlands, nearing completion on one of its most far-reaching environmental rollbacks.

The changes announced Thursday will scale back which waterways qualify for protection against pollution and development under the half-century-old Clean Water Act. President Donald Trump has made a priority of the rollback of clean-water protections from his first weeks in office. Trump says he is targeting federal rules and regulations that impose

unnecessary burdens on businesses. Chiefs of the Environmental Protection Agency and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers announced the changes at a builders’ convention in Las Vegas. “EPA and the Army are providing much needed regulatory certainty and predictability for American farmers, landowners and businesses to support the economy and accelerate critical infrastructure projects,” EPA Administrator Andrew Wheeler said in a statement.

The changes had been sought by industry, developers and farmers, but opposed by environmental advocates and...

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NEW RULES COULD BUMP EMOTIONAL-SUPPORT ANIMALS FROM PLANES

January 23, 2020 | AP News

The days of passengers bringing their pets on airplanes as emotional-support animals could be ending. The U.S. Department of Transportation on Wednesday proposed that only specially trained dogs qualify as service animals, which must be allowed in the cabin at no charge. Airlines could ban emotional-support animals including untrained dogs, cats and more exotic companions such as pigs, pheasants, rabbits and snakes.

Airlines say the number of support animals has grown dramatically in recent years. They lobbied the Transportation Department to crack down on what they consider a scam — passengers who call their pets emotional-support animals to avoid pet fees that generally run more than \$100 each way. “This is a wonderful step in the right direction for people like myself who are dependent on and reliant on legitimate service animals,” said Albert Rizzi, founder of My Blind Spot...

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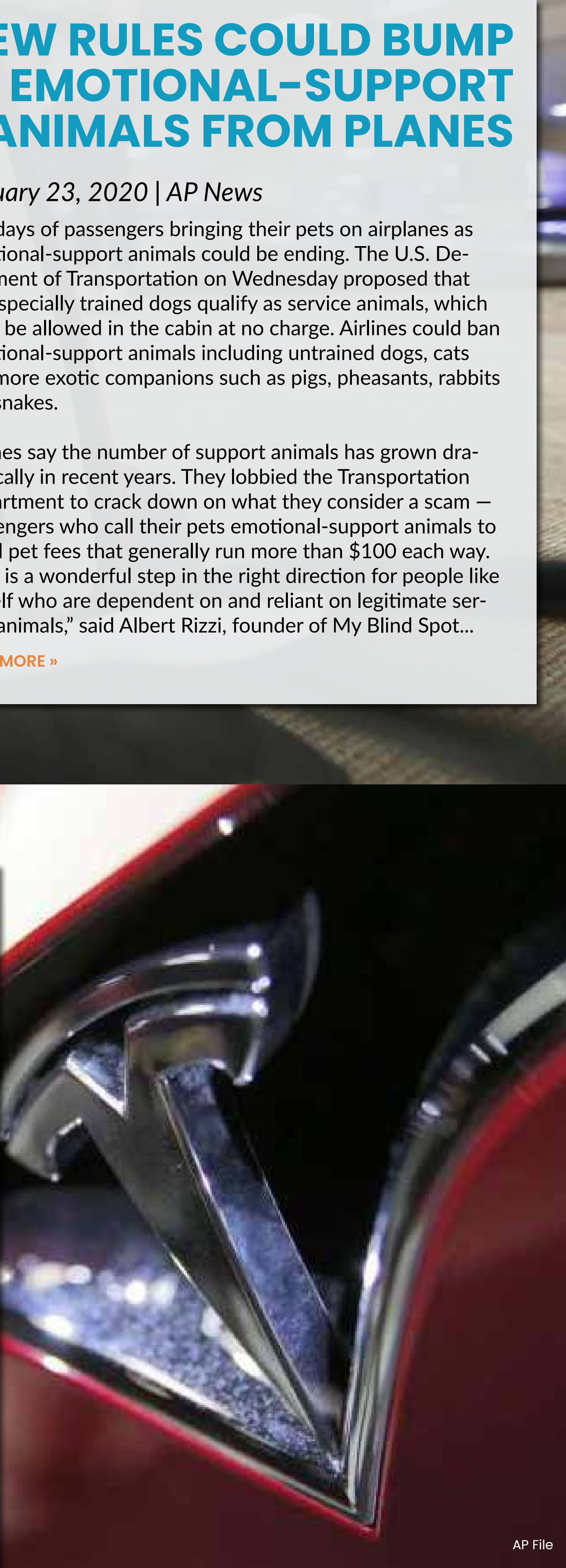
US AGENCY EXAMINING TESLA UNINTENDED ACCELERATION COMPLAINT

January 22, 2020 | AP News

DETROIT — The U.S. government’s auto safety agency is looking into allegations that all three of Tesla’s electric vehicle models can suddenly accelerate on their own. Brian Sparks of Berkeley, California, petitioned the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration asking for an investigation. An agency document shows 127 owner complaints to the government that include 110 crashes and 52 injuries.

The agency said it will look into allegations that cover about 500,000 Tesla vehicles including Model 3, Model S and Model X vehicles from the 2013 through 2019 model years. The agency’s investigations office will evaluate the petition and decide if it should open a formal probe. “I am concerned that these complaints reflect a systemic defect that has not been investigated by NHTSA,” Sparks wrote to James Owens, the acting NHTSA administrator. “I am also concerned that these potential defects represent risk to the safety of Tesla...

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Heidi Levine/Pool photo via AP

WORLD LEADERS RALLY IN JERUSALEM AGAINST ANTI-SEMITISM

January 23, 2020 | AP News

JERUSALEM — Dozens of world leaders gathered Thursday in Jerusalem for the largest-ever gathering focused on commemorating the Holocaust and combating rising modern-day anti-Semitism — a politically charged event that has been clouded by rival national interpretations of the genocide.

“When it comes to the tragedy of the Holocaust, 40% of tortured and killed Jews were Soviet Union Jews. So this is our common tragedy in the fullest sense of the word.” — Russian President Vladimir Putin

Russian President Vladimir Putin, French President Emmanuel Macron, Britain’s Prince Charles, Vice President Mike Pence and the presidents of Germany, Italy and Austria were among the more than 40 dignitaries attending the World Holocaust

Forum, which coincides with the 75th anniversary of the liberation of the Auschwitz death camp. The three-hour-long ceremony at Jerusalem’s Yad Vashem Holocaust memorial — called “Remembering the Holocaust: Fighting Antisemitism” — looks to project a united front in commemorating the genocide of European Jewry amid a global spike in anti-Jewish violence.

Related Story: Anti-Semitism Grows in Jewish Communities in NYC Suburbs

But the unresolved remnants of World War II’s politics have permeated the solemn assembly over the differing historical narratives of various players. Poland’s president, who’s been criticized for his own wartime revisionism, has boycotted the gathering since he wasn’t invited to speak. Putin was granted a central role even as he leads a campaign to play down the Soviet Union’s pre-war pact with the Nazis and shift responsibility for the war’s outbreak on Poland, which was invaded in 1939 to start the fighting. On the eve of the gathering, Israeli President Reuven Rivlin implored visiting dignitaries to “leave history for the historians.” “The role of political leaders is to shape the future,” he said.

Of the 6 Million Jews Killed by the Nazis, About 1 Million Were Soviet

But Putin quickly ventured into the sensitive terrain shortly after his arrival Thursday, claiming that 40% of Jewish Holocaust victims were Soviet. Of the 6 million Jews killed by the Nazis, historians say about 1 million were Soviet. Putin’s controversial figure appears to include an additional 1.5 million Jewish victims from eastern European areas occupied by the Soviets under their pact with the Nazis. “When it comes to the tragedy of the Holocaust, 40% of tortured and killed Jews were Soviet Union Jews. So this is our common tragedy in the fullest sense of the word,” he said during a meeting with Rivlin. Arkadi Zeltser, a Yad Vashem historian, said the accuracy of the statement depended on rival “definitions” of when the war began. Yad Vashem, along with all other reputable institutions, considers the war to have been sparked on Sept. 1, 1939 with the invasion of Poland. The Soviets generally consider their “Great Patriotic War” to have started two years later, when Germany invaded the Soviet Union.

It was the latest chapter in a bitter dispute over Soviet actions in World War II. Putin has been leading a campaign to downplay the Soviet Union’s pre-war pact with the Nazis and focus instead on its role in defeating them. Israel has appeared eager to oblige, giving Putin a fawning welcome and hosting him for the dedication of an imposing monument honoring the nearly 900-day Nazi siege of Leningrad. The city, now known as St. Petersburg, is Putin’s hometown. “We mustn’t for even one second blur the sacrifice and the contribution of the former Soviet Union” in defeating “the Nazi monster,” Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said at the...

“Anti-Semitism does not stop with the Jews. Anti-Semitism and racism are a malignant disease that destroyed and takes apart societies from within and no democracy is immune.” — Israeli President Reuven Rivlin

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CASES OF NEW VIRAL RESPIRATORY ILLNESS RISE SHARPLY IN CHINA

AP/Kin Cheung

January 22, 2020 | AP News

BEIJING — Chinese health authorities urged people in the city of Wuhan to avoid crowds and public gatherings, after warning that a new viral illness that has infected more than 400 people and killed at least 17 could spread further.

The appeal came as the World Health Organization convened a group of independent experts to advise whether the outbreak should be declared a global emergency. The number of new cases has risen sharply in China, the center of the outbreak. Seventeen people have died, all in Hubei province, since the outbreak emerged in its provincial capital of Wuhan late last month, officials announced Wednesday night. They

said the province has confirmed 444 cases there. “There has already been human-to-human transmission and infection of medical workers,” Li Bin, deputy director of the National Health Commission, said at a news conference with health experts. “Evidence has shown that the disease has been transmitted through the respiratory tract and there is the possibility of viral mutation.”

The illness comes from a newly identified type of coronavirus, a family of viruses that can cause the common cold as well as more serious illnesses such as the SARS outbreak that spread from China to more than a dozen countries in...

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AP File

PRINCE HARRY: ‘POWERFUL MEDIA’ IS WHY HE’S STEPPING AWAY

January 20, 2020 | AP News

LONDON — Prince Harry took aim at the journalists who have dissected his life since the day he was born as he expressed regret for the way he has had to step down from royal duties. In a personal speech that referenced his late mother, Princess Diana, who died in a car accident in 1997 while being pursued by paparazzi, Harry said Sunday he had “no other option” but to step away so that he and his wife, Meghan, could seek a more peaceful life.

“When I lost my mum 23 years ago, you took me under your wing,” Harry said at a dinner in London for Sentebale, his Africa-based charity supporting youngsters with HIV. “You looked out for me for so long, but the media is a powerful force. And my hope is one day our collective support for each other can be more powerful, because this is so much bigger than just us.” The comments were Harry’s first public remarks since Saturday night, when his grandmother, Queen Elizabeth II, announced the terms under which the prince...

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MUSLIM MILLENNIAL’S SITE DISPELS STEREOTYPES FOR MILLIONS

January 20, 2020 | AP News

NEW YORK — Today she travels the world, attends a red-carpet movie premiere and sits on panels with astronauts, former presidents and feminist icons. But in the years after 9/11, Amani Al-Khatahtbeh was just a New Jersey teenager, writing a blog from her bedroom. She used the blog to connect with other young Muslim girls and defy stereotypes. At the time, the only reflections of herself in the news seemed to be men in orange jumpsuits who looked like her father and women who seemed silent and oppressed, she said.

“Being bombarded with those headlines growing up and never feeling represented by them, I did what any millennial would do, which was to turn to social media,” Al-Khatahtbeh said. “I decided to put my own place out there and create that space for us to talk back.” About a decade later, her [MuslimGirl.com](#) site is an online magazine with a global audience writing about how it feels to be the only woman in...

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