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BREAKING NEWS: Suspects behind attack that killed Americans in Syria detained as IS camp captured

SINCE DECEMBER

FOURTH MIGRANT DIES IN BORDER PATROL CUSTODY



U.S. border patrol agents stand guard at the Paso Del Norte bridge in El Paso, Texas, which is where a 40-year-old Mexican man was evaluated before being transferred to a local hospital where he died later that day. Photo by Natalie Krebs/UPI | License Photo

By Daryle Coote
UPI

A 40-year-old Mexican migrant has died in U.S. Customs and Border Protection custody,

the fourth such death since December.

U.S. Customs and Border Protection said that the man died Monday at the Las Palmas Medical Center in El Paso, Texas.

U.S. Border agents apprehend the man be-

fore dawn near the Bridge of Americas and was taken to the Border Patrol's processing facility near the Paso Del Norte Port of Entry

See **PATROL**, page 3

Mueller team seeks delay in releasing documents

By Daryle Coote
UPI

Prosecutors with special counsel Robert Mueller's team have asked a judge for an April 1 extension to respond to a request to unseal documents concerning the Paul Manafort criminal trial.

In the three-page filing Tuesday with the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia, Deputy Solicitor General Michael R. Dreeben and prosecutor Adam C. Jed asked judge Amy Berman Jackson for an 11-day extension, citing "the counsel responsible for preparing the response face the press of other work and require additional time to consult within the government."

The Washington Post had made the request for unredacted records from the United States v. Manafort trial, specifically hearing transcripts that convinced the court Manafort had breached his plea deal and the government's sentencing submission.

A response was due March 21, and the filing states the Washington Post is not opposed to the motion.

The request for the files was made prior to Manafort being sentenced to 7.5 years in prison for conspiracy and bank and tax fraud. More charges are expected to be forthcoming against President Donald Trump's former campaign manager.

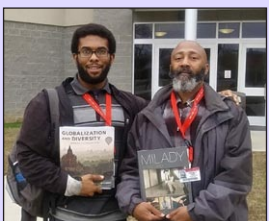
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Sandy Hook court victory opens crack in gun-maker immunity shield

By Timothy D. Lytton, Georgia State University
UPI

The Connecticut Supreme Court ruled on Thursday that families of the Sandy Hook Elementary mass shooting victims could proceed with a lawsuit against the companies that manufactured and sold the semiautomatic rifle used in the attack.

The ruling, which reversed a lower court’s decision, has the potential to unleash a flood of claims by gun violence victims against gun manufacturers -- if it’s upheld by the U.S. Supreme Court, that is.

My research on the history of lawsuits against the gun industry has documented the failure of gun violence victims to hold gun manufacturers liable for legal marketing practices that many people consider irresponsible.

The latest Sandy Hook decision could pave the way for gunmakers to finally be held responsible for them.

A 2006 law called the Protection of Lawful Commerce in Arms Act grants gun manufacturers immunity from lawsuits that arise out of the criminal misuse of a weapon.

The Sandy Hook families argued that their lawsuit fell under an exception to this federal immunity.

The exception allows gun violence victims to sue a manufacturer who “knowingly violated a state or federal statute applicable to the sale or marketing” of a firearm.

The families claimed that Remington Arms “marketed, advertised and promoted the Bushmaster XM15-E2S for civilians to use to carry out offensive, military-style combat missions against their perceived enemies.”

They said that this marketing constituted an unfair trade practice under Connecticut law, which they argued is a state statute “applicable” to the marketing of a firearm.

The Connecticut high court agreed and, importantly, interpreted the term “applicable” broadly.

That is, the court said that a relevant statute only had to be “capable of being applied” to gun sales, not that the law needed be specifically about firearms, as other courts had held.

What’s next

It is this interpretation that could potentially unleash a flood of lawsuits across the country.

Since many states have unfair trade practices laws like Connecticut’s, it seems likely that gun violence victims will bring similar claims elsewhere.

Victims are thus likely to allege that a gun manufacturer’s aggressive marketing of combat-style weapons violates a state statute -- like an unfair trade practice law -- that is applicable to the sale or marketing of a firearm.

The fate of the Sandy Hook lawsuit and any others that follow will depend on the outcome of an all-but-certain appeal to the U.S. Supreme Court.

If the court rejects the Connecticut Supreme Court’s broad interpretation of the word “applicable” in the federal statute, that will restore the immunity from suit that gun makers have enjoyed for more than a decade.

However, if the top U.S. court adopts Connecticut’s broad interpretation, then the gun industry can expect to be the target of a great deal more litigation in the years to come.

Timothy D. Lytton is a professor of law at Georgia State University.

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OPINION Hit pause button on college admissions outrage



ARMSTRONG WILLIAMS

that their family has been oppressed.

It is rigged to give preference to people who can donate \$20 million to a school,

have a building named after their family or have “helpful” calls made on behalf of their children when they apply.

Is any of that fair?

Parents love their children. They want to do right by them. Most parents would gladly give their lives for their children.

Believing that admission to a particular college is crucial for their child’s success -- or imagining that it is the fulfillment of a dream -- these parents looked at a system that is, by any fair account, rigged to favor a few, and they tried to make their children part of those few.

Now here’s where this gets hard: My bet is that 98 percent of the people involved in this scheme are upper-middle-class white people.

Their children, I bet, are mostly good people: involved in the community, good students.

And the fact is college admissions are rigged against white and Asian students, who often have to have better test scores and better qualifications to gain college admittance.

The reality in many of these universities is that

by the time you subtract preferences for minorities, athletes, children of donors and children of the well-connected, college admissions is a process in which the only people seemingly “guaranteed” spots are people who have the system rigged in their favor. It’s clear from reading some of the emails that many of these parents were trying to “rig” a guaranteed spot for their kid.

Think about this: Being on the board of trustees of a college, donating \$20 million and talking to the college admissions officer about your kid or a friend’s kid is legal.

Being a black student with lower test scores than other applicants and still getting special preference is legal.

Being a Hispanic student with lower test scores than the average applicant and writing an essay about the prejudice your family has faced, playing to the sympathies of the admissions committee, is legal. All of it plays to getting a special advantage in admissions. And all of it is legal.

What these parents did was clearly illegal. It is not justifiable.

It is wrong. But for anyone who has ever loved their child, it is understandable.

I’m not justifying their behavior, but I understand it. If you love your kid, wouldn’t you do anything for them?

And when you look at a system that is so clearly

rigged, why wouldn’t you try to rig it in your kid’s favor?

It’s easy to blame the parents. And they should be blamed. But let’s also not let the colleges completely off the hook.

Everyone knows that the system they’ve set up is rigged. So, let’s unrig it. Make all admissions blind. Instead of names on applications, substitute anonymous numbers. No information should be included about race or gender. No contact should be allowed between rich, well-connected donors and college admissions officers.

Applications should be evaluated in the way that some law school classes are evaluated -- blindly -- based on their quality. Let’s unrig the way that America admits young people to colleges.

What these parents did is wrong.

But the system itself is wrong. Let’s see if the liberal media, the celebrities and the college admissions officers are willing to ask hard questions about the very system they all support.

Armstrong Williams is manager and sole owner of Howard Stirk Holdings I & II Broadcast Television Stations and Executive Editor of American CurrentSee online magazine. Watch our Right Side Forum every Saturday on NewsChannel 8 TV 28, 10:30 a.m. to 11 a.m., with repeats at 6:30 p.m. EST.

U.S. defense strategy: ‘Contain and engage’ beats ‘deter and defeat’

By: Dr Harlan Ullman, Arnaud deBorchgrave
Distinguished Columnist
UPI

The National Defense Strategy published last year sets great power competition as the foundation for planning and thinking and directs the Department of Defense to “deter and if war comes defeat” a series of potential adversaries topped by China and Russia.

When asked about his most important priorities, acting Defense Secretary Patrick Shanahan said, “China, China,China.” And Russia is not far behind.

Iran, North Korea and violent extremism are also on the list. If rumblings from Pyongyang lead to ending the denuclearization negotiations, China may have a rival for the number one priority.

However, the NDS is lacking in one very crucial area.

What will it take to deter and defeat China or Russia if war were to come? As the Commission on the NDS pointedly and tartly observed, no operational concepts have been developed to answer this question.

Of course, U.S. combatant commanders have contingency and war plans. Yet, think about this question of deterring and defeating for a moment.

First, barring a catastrophic event, neither China nor Russia have any interest in starting a war.

War could easily be

global.

In China’s case, war would be economically destructive in the extreme cutting that country off from its markets and trading partners.

As Russian doctrine makes clear, war is likely to be nuclear.

Hence, who could “win” such a war in the thermo-nuclear age is probably meaningless.

Chinese and Russian leaders fully understand these conditions.

As a result, their strategies are directed at the so-called gray areas well short of actual conflict. China’s “belt and road” and militarization of offshore islets are exhibit A. Russian “active measures” and interference in Western politics as well as the pressure in Ukraine are exhibit B.

And how effective has deterrence been in constraining these actions? The answer is not much.

The ultimate test of any military force is the ability to fight even though war may never occur.

If there are other criteria why then is a military needed? However, an effective strategy need not and should not be based on the certainty of going to war.

And that strategy should also take into account means to block, counter or prevent potentially damaging actions well short of the actual use of force.

Further, if war were to occur, given the extraordinary lethality of modern precision and thermonucle-

ar weapons, the relatively immaculate and casualty free operations we experienced in the Afghan and Iraqi campaigns are unlikely to be repeated.

Extensive battle damage and losses must be assumed.

And how to make battle damage repairs and replace people and equipment are non-trivial issues. It took many months to repair Navy destroyers such as USS Cole, Fitzgerald and McCain. F-35’s cannot be mass produced and nuclear aircraft carriers take years to build.

Worse, in an information age, Russia claims it is perfecting an electromagnetic Blitzkrieg, which its Chief of Defense Gen. Valery Gerasimov claims is four times more potent than conventional forces in terms of rendering our forces “deaf, dumb and blind” in the first phase of any conflict.

Whether the general is uttering propaganda or not, a review done for the secretary of the Navy on cybersecurity suggests that we may have far more vulnerabilities than we realize. So what to do?

We know that containment worked during the Cold War.

For the 21st century, containment can work again bolstered by “engagement” to deal with so-called gray area actions. In Europe, this leads to a “porcupine defense” that would blunt and do grave damage to any Russian incursions west.

The defense would re-

quire large numbers of unmanned and swarming drones; copious anti-air, anti-surface and anti-vehicle missiles; electromagnetic systems to obliterate Russian command and control in its operational maneuver groups; and low cost sensors including low earth orbiting satellites that could be quickly deployed to ensure command, control, communications and reconnaissance.

A similar strategy applies to the Pacific with a mobile maritime line of defense to contain the Chinese military to the first island chain. Any Chinese forces venturing beyond that line would be destroyed as in the porcupine defense. In both cases, allies and partners are critical.

And this is a defense that need not be as costly as the current NDS and NATO plans project.

As important, this strategy would also focus on countering active measures and gray areas that currently China and Russia have virtually free rein.

The choice is clear: spend far more money on defense -- in the face of swelling debt and deficits -- or change the strategy. The risk is failing to address this question.

Dr. Harlan Ullman is senior adviser at Washington, D.C.’s Atlantic Council. His latest book is Anatomy of Failure: Why America Has Lost Every War It Starts. Follow him: @harlankullman



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Suspects behind attack that killed Americans in Syria detained as IS camp captured

By Darryle Coote
UPI

Suspected Islamic State militants involved in a suicide bomb attack that killed four Americans in mid-January have been captured, authorities said.

SDF press office chief Mustafa Bali said Tuesday the unknown number of suspects were being investigated.

“A group of suspects believed to be involved in January 16 Manbij bombing that killed several U.S. and SDF servicemen were captured following technical surveillance by our forces,” Bali said in a tweet.

“The outcome of the on-going investigation will be shared at a later time.”

Americans Army Chief Warrant Officer 2 Jonathan R. Farmer, Navy Chief Cryptologic Technician Shannon M. Kent, Department of Defense civilian Scott A. Wirtz and translator Ghadir Taher were killed Jan. 16 when a suicide bomber approached coalition forces and blew himself up.

The service members were at a busy restaurant in Manbij, Syria, near the Turkey border, conducting “a local engagement” when the attack occurred, U.S. Central Command had said in a press release.

Two SDF personnel and eight civilians were also killed in the blast.

Bali said that SDF forces had captured IS’s camp in Baghouz, the terrorist organization’s last enclave in Syria.

The announcement follows weeks of fighting in Baghouz that has seen the final IS encampment continuously shrink due to SDF advancements.

Hundreds of suspected IS militants have been apprehended and thousands have surrounded since the Kurdish-led SDF began its most recent mission in early March.

SDF launched a new campaign March 10 after



Syrian Democratic Forces fighters have taken control of IS’s last encampment in Syria after months of fighting. Photo by Youssef Rabih Youssef/EPA-EFE

having eased advancement to allow for civilians to evacuate the area.

Bali has yet to claim victory as small skirmishes continue.

“SDF is in control of Daesh encampment area in Baghouz.

Patrol

continued from page 1

where he was evaluated by medical personnel and diagnosed with flu-like symptoms, liver failure and renal failure, the department said in a media release published Tuesday.

He was transported to the medical center where he died later that day.

“CBP remains committed to ensuring the safe, humane and dignified treatment of those within the care of our custody,” said the department’s public affairs assistant commissioner Andrew Meehan. “Consistent with CBP policy, CBP’s Office of Professional Responsibility has initiated a review.”

The man was re-entering the country, the release notes, as he had been previously deported. It did not say when he was first expelled from the country.

The deceased’s identity has not been released, the department said, adding that it would announce more details shortly.

The man’s death is the fourth to occur in Customs and Border Protection after a 45-year-old unnamed Mexican man died after about two weeks at hospital.

Felipe Gomez Alonzo, 8, died Christmas Eve in U.S. custody and Jakelin Caal Maquin, 7, died in hospital 48 hours after she was taken into Border Control’s care in early December.



Documents


continued from page 1

The Washington Post had requested the court for the documents due to “the profound public interest in these proceedings.”

The filing comes as speculation mounts that Mueller’s investigation

into Russian meddling in the 2016 election is nearing completion.

Last week, Mueller’s office said it had finished working with former national security adviser Michael Flynn, who faces prison for lying to the FBI about contacts with a Russian ambassador a month after Trump was elected.



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Statue of Liberty climber sentenced to probation

By Danielle Haynes
UPI

A Manhattan judge on Tuesday sentenced a New York woman to probation and community service for climbing the Statue of Liberty’s pedestal in July to protest President Donald Trump’s immigration policies.

The judge sentenced Therese Patricia Okoumou, 45, to five years of probation and 200 hours of community service for the protest on the Fourth of July.

She appeared in court with clear tape wrapped around her face, a metaphor, her friend told the

New York Daily News, for the suppression of free speech. Okoumou also wore a headband with the words “I care” written across it.

Manhattan Federal Court Magistrate Gabriel Gorenstein told Okoumou to take off the tape to proceed with the hearing.

He found her guilty in December of three misdemeanor counts, including trespassing, interference with government agency functions and disorderly conduct. She faced up to 1 1/2 years in jail.

During her Lady Liberty climb, she forced the evacuation of the tourist attraction on one of its busiest days of the year.

“She did not climb the Statue of Liberty to rescue a child who was in danger,” Gorenstein said Tuesday. “The law that prevents people from climbing the Statue of Liberty is not unjust.”

“The defendant apparently thinks because her cause is important, it doesn’t matter the danger she causes others.”

Speaking to reporters after the sentencing, Okoumou’s lawyer, Ron Kuby, said he wouldn’t rule out similar stunts in the future.

“I’m happy I’m not in prison or I’m in jail,” Okoumou said. I “refuse to go to prison because I’m not a criminal.”



Theresa Patricia Okoumou was sentenced to five years of probation and 200 hours of community service. File Photo by John Angelillo/UPI | License Photo

NAARC applauds reparations conversation by 2020 presidential contenders

ByTrice Edney Wire

The National African-American Reparations Commission (NAARC) applauds several presidential contenders for their recent expressed interest in reparations and calls on all the candidates to prioritize reparatory justice as an issue of importance to Black voters in the weeks and months ahead.

NAARC is also calling on all 2020 candidates, as well as other lawmakers, to support HR40, the reparations bill authored by former US Cong. John Conyers, which has languished in Congress since 1989. HR-40, which was reintroduced in the 115th Congress, was developed in consultation with NAARC.

It calls for establishing a federal commission to study reparations proposals for African-Americans that would repair the horrific

socio-economic damages caused by the enslavement and generations of racially exclusive/discriminatory policies and practices post-emancipation.

The current reparations conversation, namely being forged by candidates Sens. Kamala Harris, Elizabeth Warren and former Housing Secretary Julian Castro, is especially relevant in light of the fact that 2019 marks the 400th Anniversary of the arrival of Africans in chains in Virginia, which opened the era of slavery, one of the most sordid chapters in U.S. history.

“In general, the recent statements by presidential candidates are a positive development,” said Dr. Ron Daniels, Convener of NAARC and President of the Institute of the Black World 21st Century (IBW). “They reflect an increasing body of scholarship that definitively draws the

connection between the enslavement of Africans and the persistent wealth-gap and underdevelopment of Black America.”

Candidates are also responding to the growing, multifaceted reparations movement in this country and to the fact that in recent public opinion polls, reparations now enjoys the support of a majority of African-Americans as well as from a growing percentage of young White millennial voters.

“NAARC stands ready to educate and orient candidates and legislators on the definition, background, process, internationally accepted norms and historical precedents for reparations to repair damages inflicted on peoples and nations. Hopefully, this will enrich the public dialogue on this vital issue,” added Dr. Daniels.

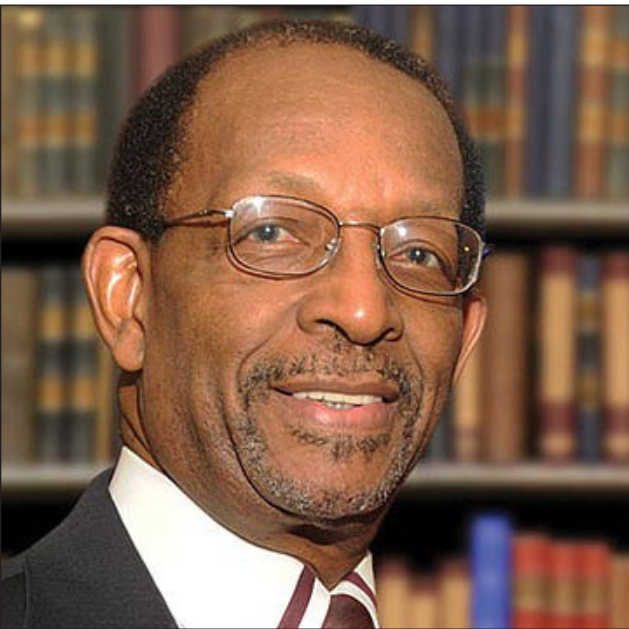
NAARC was established

in April 2015 at a National/International Reparations Summit convened by IBW in New York City. The nonpartisan Commission is comprised of distinguished Black leaders from across the U.S. in the fields of law, education, public health, economic development, religion, labor, civil and human rights.

For decades, the National Coalition of Blacks for Reparations in America (NCOBRA) has been a leading force advancing the struggle for reparations in the U.S. Kamm Howard, National Co-Chairperson of NCOBRA and a NAARC Commissioner, welcomes the surge in support for reparations by the presidential candidates but insists that the discussion and debate be centered around reparations as full repair.

“The international standard holds that reparations ‘must wipe out all consequences’ of the wrongful acts committed against enslaved Africans,” said Howard. “To get us to full repair, policies programs and practices must be developed to produce the following outcomes: cessation and guarantees of non-repetition, restitution, compensation, satisfaction, and rehabilitation. These are the intended outcomes of HR 40. The candidates, some of whom are Senators, should craft a Senate companion bill. This can be done now if they are serious about their support for reparations.”

To help frame the public discourse and as a guide for



Dr. Ron Daniels, IBW president, Trice Edney Wire

action by governmental and private entities, NAARC has devised a comprehensive and detailed 10-point reparations program that addresses the issues of repair and restitution. The creation of a National Reparations Trust Fund is among the proposals outlined in the NAACRC Reparations Program.

The Authority would receive funding grants, scholarships, land and other forms of restitution to benefit the collective advancement of Black America. It would be comprised of a cross-section of credible representatives of reparations, civil rights, and human rights, labor, faith, educational, civic and fraternal organizations and institutions.

The Authority would be empowered to establish subsidiary trust funds to administer projects and initiatives in the areas of culture,

education, health and other fields as deemed appropriate based on the demands of the Reparations Program (<https://bit.ly/2T0MhZt>).

To increase public awareness of the Program, NAARC has convened initial Hearings and Town Hall Meetings in Atlanta and New Orleans and plans to hold additional sessions in a number of cities across the country.

Pan-Africanist and international movements in support of slavery reparations have emerged across the globe, from the Caribbean and Latin America to Africa, Asia, and Australia. In that regard, it is significant to note that NAARC works closely with the CARICOM Reparations Commission (CRC) which is claiming reparations from the former European colonial powers for Native genocide and African enslavement.





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Southern Poverty Law Center Fires Co-founder Morris Dees

By Frederick H. Lowe
Trice Edney Wire

The Southern Poverty Law Center has announced that Morris Dees, the organization’s co-founder, has been fired, but officials of the Montgomery, Alabama-based organization did not explain why.

“As a civil rights organization, the SPLC is committed to ensuring that the conduct of our staff reflects the mission of the organization and the values we hope to instill in the world,” said Richard Cohen, SPLC’s president. “When one of our own fails to meet those standards, no matter his or her role in the organization, we take it seriously and must take appropriate action.”

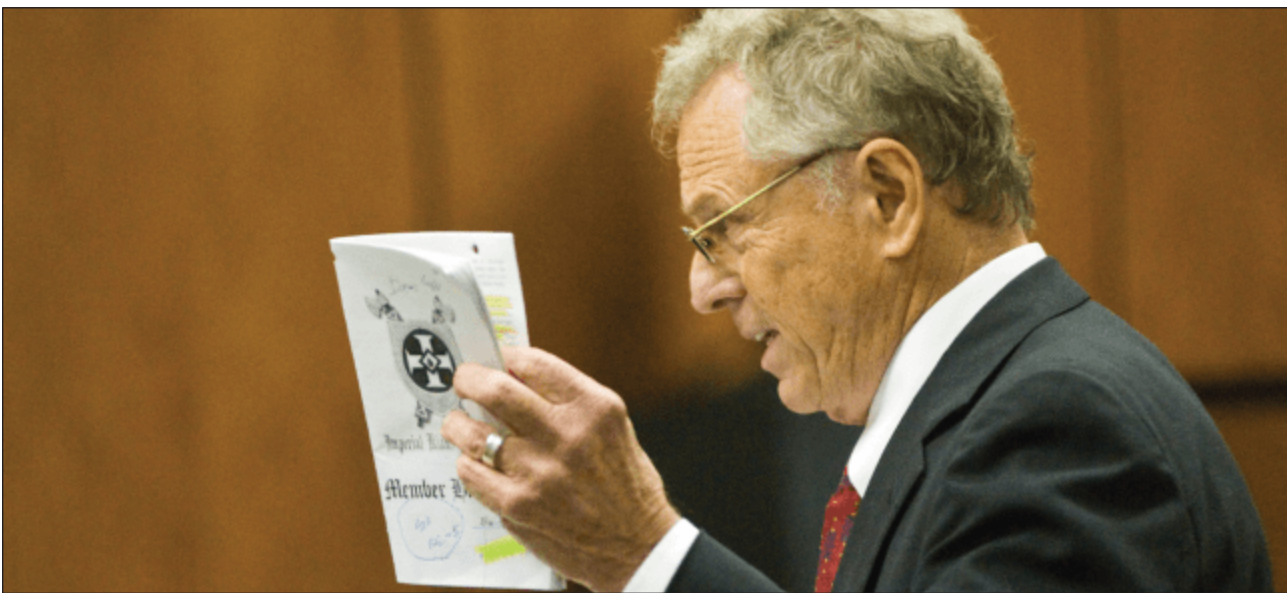
Dees’ biography has

been removed from the organization’s website.

Dees, who is 82, co-founded SPLC in 1971 and was the chief litigator. The organization tracks hate groups and regularly publishes “Intelligence Report.”

The issue, which was published in Spring of 2019 was titled “The Year in Hate: Rage Against Change: White Supremacy Flourishes amid Fears of Immigration and the Nation’s Shifting Demographics.”

The magazine published articles, photographs, and maps where most hate groups operate. The SPLC blew the whistle on the rise of white hate groups that were often ignored by law enforcement officials because some of their em-



ployees were members of the hate groups.

The groups listed were the Klu Klux Klan, Neo-Nazis, Skinheads, white nationalists. Under his leadership, the SPLC bankrupted the nation’s largest Klan organization.

The SPLC also said Chicago-based Nation of Islam was involved in hate speech. “The black nationalist movement is a reaction to centuries of institution-

alized white supremacy in America,” SPLC explained.

Dees could not be reached for comment, but a series of articles in Montgomery Advertiser newspaper reported Dees was more concerned with raising money than fighting hate. In 2017, SPLC had \$450 million in assets according to federal tax records. SPLC’s black employees also charged that Dees was a racist.

Cops in two cities not charged in shooting deaths of unarmed black men



By Northstarnewstoday.com
Trice Edney Wire

California Attorney General Xavier Becerra said yesterday that he will not charge two Sacramento, California, police officers who shot to death an unarmed black man in the backyard of his grandmother’s home. An independent investigation into the shooting death of Stephon Clark found that no criminal charges against the officers involved in the shooting can be sustained, Becerra said in a statement.

Sacramento police officers Jared Robinet and Terrence Mercadal, who is black, shot to death the 22-year-old Clark in March of 2018. The cops said they believed Clark was armed

with a gun. They were wrong. He held only a cell phone in his hand.

An independent autopsy found that Clark was shot eight times — six times in the back, once in the side and once in one arm.

Becerra announced his decision two days after Sacramento District Attorney Anne Marie Schubert said she would not charge the two cops. During the same time period, the U.S. Justice Department said on Friday that it would not pursue civil rights charges against former Tulsa, Oklahoma, police officer Betty Joe Shelby, who shot to death Terrence Crutcher, 40, on September 16, 2016. Crutcher’s car was disabled. Crutcher had his hands raised in the air to surrender when Shelby murdered him.

Insufficient training for pilots suspected in deadly Ethiopian crash

By Trice Edney Wire

Fifty three minutes. That was the length of time approved by the U.S. Federal Aviation Agency (FAA) for pilot training on the upgraded Boeing 737 Max 8 jet that crashed Sunday in Ethiopia killing all aboard, according to a spokesman for the Allied Pilots Association. Nor was the 53 minutes for face to face training. It was “computer assisted” over a laptop with slides and imagery. Some of the pilots felt short-changed. Reports in The New York Times suggest that Boeing was able to convince the FAA that the 737 pilots would not have

to undergo costly retraining because the upgraded plane was enough like the older model. This worried the pilots group. The tragedy of Lion Air, the Ethiopia predecessor, was a focus of intense debate in aviation circles because of the determination by Boeing and the FAA that pilots did not need to be informed about a change introduced to the 737’s flight control system for the MAX. Two U.S. pilots’ unions said the potential risks of a safety feature on Boeing Co.’s 737 Max aircraft that had been linked to a deadly crash in Indonesia weren’t sufficiently spelled out in their manuals or training.

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Two ECC Students Progress from HS Equivalency to the President’s List

Two students who began in Edgecombe Community College’s High School Equivalency program made the President’s List last fall. Barbering student Antonio Mayo and Michael Parker, who is a Business Administration major, earned a 4.0 grade point average for the Fall 2018 semester, placing them on the College’s top academic honor roll.

College and Career Readiness (formerly Basic Skills) is the instructional program at ECC that serves the College’s non-traditional students who have left the public school classroom.

“We find that at some point, life happens in our students’ lives, and seeing the completion of their high school credential becomes somewhat incomprehensible,” says Jerry Harper, director of College and

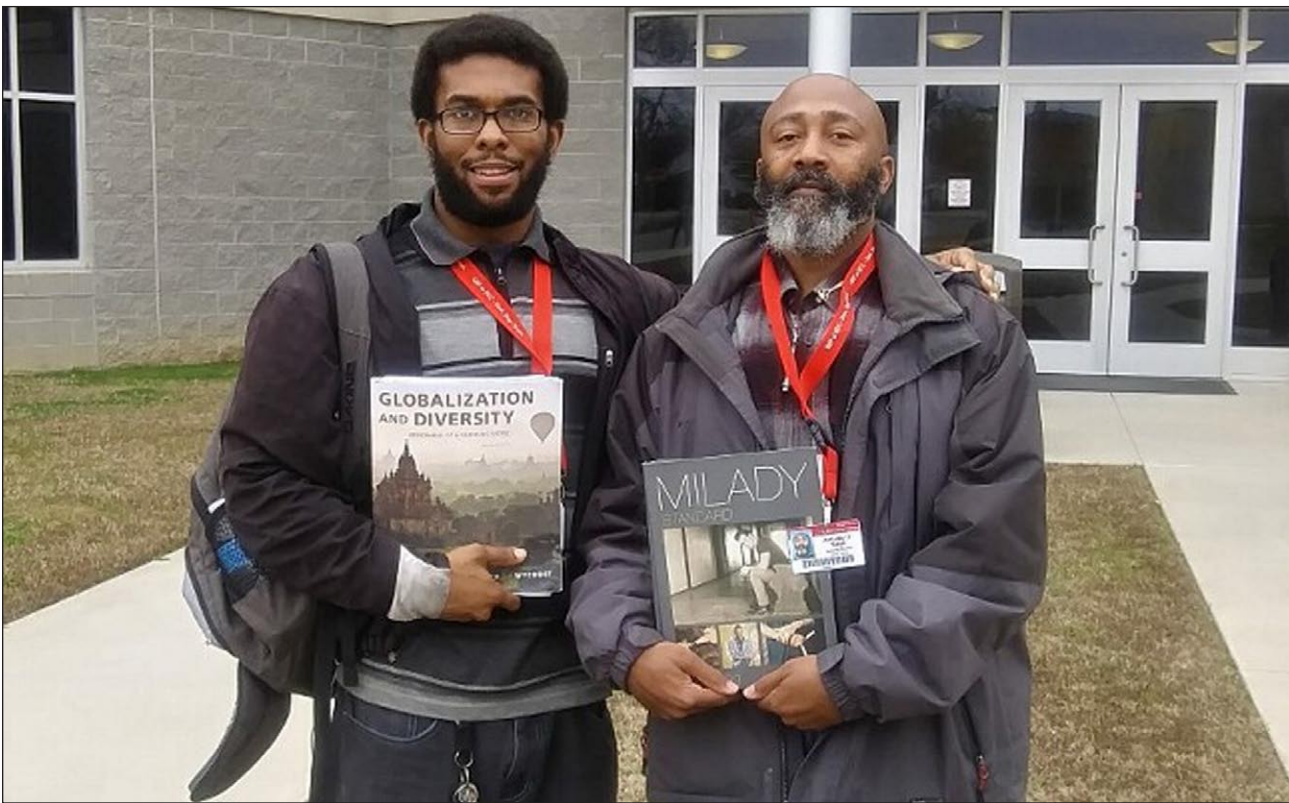
Career Readiness.

“So, when our students are able to reach such an outstanding milestone in their academic journey, we get excited!” he says.

Both Mayo and Parker are on schedule to graduate from ECC in May.

While they were enrolled as students in the High School Equivalency program (formerly GED), both young men opted for co-enrollment in one of the College and Career Readiness career pathways.

They also achieved credentials and credits by participating in CCR initiatives including the ASE Leadership Academy, Microsoft Digital Literacy certification, the completion of a service learning placement, as well as curriculum credits in developmental math and student success strategies.



From left, Michael Parker and Antonio Mayo began their college journey in the High School Equivalency program at Edgecombe Community College. Now enrolled in degree programs, they received top academic honors last fall and are on target to graduate in May.

Vidant Health CEO advocates for collaboration, partnership

Greenville, N.C. – March 19, 2019 – Dr. Mike Waldrum, CEO of Vidant Health and chair of the North Carolina Healthcare Association (NCHA) Board of Trustees, spoke about Stand Up For ENC at this afternoon’s Power Luncheon hosted by the Greenville-Pitt County

Chamber of Commerce.

In his presentation, Dr. Waldrum shared concerns about the North Carolina State Treasurer’s proposal of massive cuts to health systems and hospitals across North Carolina—to the tune of more than \$400 million annually.

Vidant alone stands to

lose \$40 million annually with an overall economic impact of more than \$70 million for eastern North Carolina.

The State Treasurer’s proposal for the State Health Plan will be felt more severely in rural communities where there are fewer industries providing

commercial insurance for their employees.

“We are the recognized leader for business success, strategic economic growth and community development,” said Kate Teel, president, Greenville-Pitt County Chamber of Commerce. “The economic prosperity of the community we serve depends on the success of organizations like Vidant, that provide critical services to the people who live here.”

The Treasurer’s proposal would leave hospitals and providers to rely more heavily on government-funded health insurance programs like Medicare and Medicaid, which pay far less than the actual cost of care.

“The bedrock of our mission is rural health,” Waldrum said. “It goes beyond the care we provide through our hospitals, med-

ical practices, home health services and wellness offerings.” He specifically cited Vidant’s Community Benefit Grants Program, which supports 159 programs throughout eastern North Carolina. “For the current cycle, Vidant community grants will help more than 507,000 people develop healthier lifestyles and help prevent chronic illnesses like diabetes, heart disease and cancer.”

The State Health Plan provides health insurance for educators, other state employees and retirees. Over the past 30 years, the plan has amassed a large deficit, one the Treasurer proposes to solve by shifting the burden to hospitals. Vidant agrees unfunded liabilities need to be addressed, but does not support the Treasurer’s plan as the right solution for North Carolina.

“It is a complex problem that does not lend itself to a simplistic solution,” Waldrum said. “The Treasurer’s plan was developed in isolation and without consulting the hospitals, doctors and other providers who care for patients.

What we need is partnership and collaboration to develop thoughtful solutions that are right for everyone depending on quality and accessible health care in North Carolina.”

For more information about Stand Up For ENC—and to learn about House Bill 184, introduced by elected representatives in support of studying this issue—visit standupforenc.org.

About Vidant Health

Vidant Health is a mission-driven, 1,504-bed health system that annually serves more than 1.4 million people in 29 eastern North Carolina counties.

The not-for-profit system is made up of more than 12,500 team members, eight hospitals, home health, hospice, wellness centers, and Vidant Medical Group, a multi-specialty physician and provider group with more than 500 providers in more than 90 locations in eastern North Carolina.

Vidant is affiliated with The Brody School of Medicine at East Carolina University.

As a major resource for health services and education, Vidant has a mission to improve the health and well-being of eastern North Carolina.

For more information, visit www.vidanthealth.com.

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The Mothers of the Movement celebrated

NEW YORK — Fifty years ago, Dr. Barbara Ann Teer founded the National Black Theatre (NBT). NBT, New York City's oldest continually run Black theater, is celebrating its golden anniversary with "NBT Beyond Walls," with activities across the city, country and world.

On Saturday in honor of Women's History Month, National Black Theatre partnered with the Weeksville Heritage Center to present "The Mothers of The Movement [M.O.M.S.]: The Black Woman — She Does Ex-

ist," part of the Onstage @ Weeksville theater series. Directed by NBT Artistic Director Jonathan McCrory, the event revisited the foremothers who organized, marched, recruited, campaigned, made meals, coordinated direct action efforts and laid the groundwork for the Civil Rights and the Black Arts movements.

Black women artists reimagined several seminal texts from the Civil Rights and Black Arts Movements. Readings included:

"The Black Woman: She Does Exist" by Dr. Barbara



Ann Teer, performed by Lizan Mitchell.

The piece was reimagined by Chisa Hutchinson, whose "Gaze This" was performed by Victoria Wallace.

"Address at the Hattiesburg Freedom Day Rally" by Ella Baker, performed by Marjorie Johnson.

The piece was reimagined by Mfoniso Udofia, whose "Birthday Homily" was performed by ChelseaDee Harrison.

"The SNCC Position Paper" by the Women of SNCC, performed by Patrice Johnson.

The piece was reimagined by Staceyann Chinn, whose "Me Too, Too" was performed by Brittany Belizaire.

In further celebration of a Brooklyn-based mother of the movement, an article written by Dr. Joan Maynard, artist, preservationist, and first executive director of The Weeksville Society, "I'm A Preservationist," by Maynard, National Trust for Historic Preservation, was featured, performed by Elizabeth Van Dyke.

The next stop for NBT is the Schomburg Center in Harlem on Tuesday, April 16 for "In Perpetual Flight: The Migration of the Black Body."

For up-to-date information about NBT's 50th anniversary, visit www.nationalblacktheatre.org or follow NBT on Facebook (@NationalBlackTheatre) and Twitter/Instagram (@NatBlackTheatre).

ABOUT NATIONAL BLACK THEATRE:

Founded by visionary Dr. Barbara Ann Teer in 1968, National Black Theatre (NBT) is a nationally recognized cultural and educational institution.



Dr. Teer pioneered "the healing art of Black theater as an instrument for wholeness in urban communities where entrepreneurial artists of African descent live and work."

In 1983, Dr. Teer expanded the vision of NBT by purchasing a 64,000-square-foot building on 125th Street and Fifth Avenue (renamed "National Black Theatre Way" by local law in 1994).

This was the first revenue-generating Black arts complex in the country, an innovative arrangement through which for-profit businesses who shared NBT's spiritual and aesthetic values rented retail space to subsidize the arts. Out of her vision, NBT houses the largest col-

lection of Nigerian New Sacred Art in the Western hemisphere and is considered the authentic representation of a model whose time has come.

NBT is supported by grants from the Ford Foundation, New York Community Trust, Time Warner Corporation.

Howard Gilman Foundation, Jerome Foundation, Andrew Mellon Foundation, City Council of New York, City of New York Department of Cultural Affairs, Columbia Service Society and private donations.

Visit www.nationalblacktheatre.org or follow NBT on Facebook (@NationalBlackTheatre) and Twitter/Instagram (@NatBlackTheatre).

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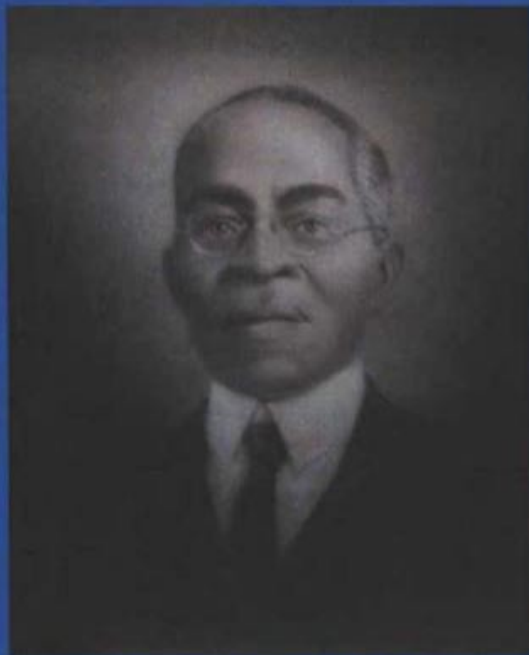
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Vontaze Burfict joins former rival Antonio Brown with Oakland Raiders

By Conner Grott
UPI

Former Cincinnati Bengals linebacker Vontaze Burfict signed with the Oakland Raiders, the team announced Tuesday.

Sources told the NFL Network that Burfict inked a one-year contract worth about \$5 million, including incentives.

Burfict visited the Raiders earlier on Tuesday, one day after the Bengals cut the Pro Bowl linebacker. He spent seven seasons with Cincinnati, highlighted by a 2013 season in which he led the NFL with 177 tackles and made the Pro Bowl.

Burfict reunites with former Bengals defensive coordinator Paul Guenther, who jumped to the Raiders last year in the same position.

Burfict also joins former division rival and ex-Pittsburgh Steelers wide-out Antonio Brown. The Steelers traded Brown to the Raiders this offseason

for a third- and fifth-round draft pick.

Brown and Burfict have an extensive history, including multiple illegal hits from the veteran linebacker. Burfict has developed a reputation as one of the NFL's dirtiest players, accumulating over \$400,000 in fines, according to ESPN. His most recent fine came after a Week 6 matchup against the Steelers last season after the NFL determined his hit on Brown should have been flagged for unnecessary roughness.

It was the second time Burfict targeted Brown. In 2016, the Pro Bowl receiver missed a playoff game against the Denver Broncos after Burfict concussed him a week before.

Despite the lengthy history between the players, Burfict and Brown said there isn't any hard feelings.

"We're on the same team. It's one goal. It's all positive, man," Burfict told the Las Vegas Review-Jour-



nal. "He's a great player. ... I'm going to approach him just like I do all my other teammates. ... There's nothing negative here. We're on the same team. We're trying to win a champion-

ship here."

"Just talked @ King55Tez black and silver baby #RaiderNation #BullySeason," Brown wrote on Twitter.

Burfict entered the league as an undrafted free agent with the Bengals in 2012. He has appeared in 75 games (73 starts), recording 604 tackles, five interceptions, 28 passes defended, 8.5 sacks, four forced fumbles and five fumble recoveries.

Last season, Burfict was limited to seven games due to suspension and injuries. He compiled 33 tackles and three passes defended.

Former Cincinnati Bengals linebacker Vontaze Burfict (55) signed a one-year deal worth about \$5 million with the Oakland Raiders on Tuesday. File Photo by John Sommers II/UPI | License Photo

Dick Vitale wants March Madness change; says Zion Williamson sitting 'absurd'

By Alex Butler
UPI

Dick Vitale told UPI that March Madness needs a format change. He also said it's "absurd" to think Duke star Zion Williamson should sit out the tournament.

The iconic ESPN commentator says his idea for a change to the annual tournament field would allow for more of what the fans like to see: Cinderella teams knocking off perennial powers.

This year, the NCAA Division I Men's Basketball Committee turned to the NCAA Evaluation Tool to help determine its 68-team field. The tournament includes 32 teams getting in with automatic bids after winning conference tournament championships. The other 36 bids are considered "at-large," meaning those teams must be invited to the tournament by the committee.

Often, teams from smaller mid-major schools are left out of that pool, leading teams from major conferences to secure the extra bids. But Vitale said he wants the committee to reward excellence over mediocrity. He said the committee should give 28 of the at-large bids to schools from power conferences (ACC, Big 12, Big Ten, Pac-12, SEC). The other eight bids should go to mid-major schools who have outstanding seasons but don't win their tournaments.

"I love seeing the little guys," Vitale said.

Vitale said Gonzaga coach Mark Few is a fan of his plan, as is fellow announcer Brent Musburger. If it were enforced, fans could get the chance to see more teams like Loyola, which made a magical run to the 2018 Final Four.

The Ramblers were a No. 11 seed last March and advanced out of the South region, before falling to Michigan in a national semifinal.

"Teams that lose 14 to 15 games, I know they are in power conferences and play power teams," Vitale said.

"But the bottom line is if you went .500 in your conference and you lose 14 to 15 games do you really belong in the tournament over the Belmonts, who went 28-5, Lipscomb (25-7), Hofstra (28-7), Cal-Irvine?"

"You take those eight teams and put them in the tournament," Vitale said. "Fans love to see the Davids and Goliaths. It brings excitement, plus you are rewarding greatness."

Vitale -- a spokesman for Bounty, the Quicker Picker Upper -- said he is "fed up" with the selection process and seeing teams get left out of the field every year.

Zion Williamson's decision

When Duke star Zion Williamson went down because of a regular-season knee injury, many analysts questioned if he should sit out for the rest of his collegiate career. Williamson, 18, is considered a lock to be one of the first players selected in the 2019 NBA Draft, and an injury could

be the only thing that derails his future at the next level.

Williamson rested until he was medically cleared to return to the court.

He did so in grand fashion, going off for 29 points and 14 rebounds, while shooting 13-of-13 from the floor, in the Blue Devils' ACC tournament win Thursday against Syracuse.

"I really think all the naysayers that said the kid shouldn't play ... it's absurd. The bottom line is why shouldn't he do something he loved? Do you think he is going to lock himself in the closet? Injuries are unfortunately part of the game.

We wish the kid nothing but the best.

You don't want him to play unless the medical staff and coaches give him the clearance to play, and obviously they've given it to him."



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La Voz Latina

Concertina wire stolen from U.S.-Mexico border at Tijuana

By
Patrick Timmons
UPI

Thieves have stolen the concertina wire laid last year to reinforce the border fence between San Ysidro, Calif., and Tijuana, Mexico, authorities said.

U.S. Customs and Border Protection said the agency started using the wire to stop "increased border incursions" through gaps made by contractors who were replacing 14

miles of existing fence with steel bollards.

"Some concertina wire was stolen, but was later recovered by Mexican law enforcement partners and returned to the Border Patrol," said Ralph DeSio, public information officer for U.S. Customs and Border Protection in San Diego.

Thieves sold the wire to residents, who then used it to protect their homes, according to Marco Antonio Sotomayor, chief of public security in Tijuana.

Officials in the border city said police arrested 15 people for stealing the wire.

When sold to a recycling facility, the steel wire fetches between 4 and 7 pesos per kilogram -- about 15 to 35 cents.

Authorities in the United States and Mexico said they are working together to combat the wire theft. But while Mexican authorities said residents bought the stolen wire to improve security for their homes, the U.S. border agency



Concertina wire to stop migrants from breaching the border fence lies on the ground ready for installation at Playas de Tijuana, just across from San Ysidro, Calif., on November 28. File photo by Ariana Drehsler/UPI | License Photo

said it could not confirm that concertina wire had been used for homes.

"San Diego Sector cannot confirm reports that the stolen material is being used to provide security around homes in Tijuana," DeSio told UPI via email.

In 2018, Tijuana was

the world's most violent city, according to a report released last week by the Citizens' Council for Public Safety and Penal Justice, a Mexican non-profit.

Authorities blame Tijuana's elevated homicide rate on a war between rival drug gangs battling over

control of the city's illicit market in methamphetamines.

There were 2,640 homicides in Tijuana in 2018, according to official statistics.

That's 138 homicides per 100,000 inhabitants, or about four times Mexico's national homicide rate.

Ariana Grande, Childish Gambino to headline Lollapalooza 2019

By Nicholas Sakelaridis
UPI

Ariana Grande, Child-

ish Gambino, Twenty One Pilots and more have been announced as the headliners for Lollapalooza 2019.

The Strokes, J Balvin, The Chainsmokers, Tame Impala, Kacey Musgraves, Lil Wayne, Janelle Monae, Flume, Meek Mill, Hozier, 21 Savage, Death Cab for Cutie, H.E.R., Tenacious D, Gary Clark Jr. and many others are also set to perform.

Lollapalooza 2019 will be held at Grant Park in Chicago from Aug. 1-4. Four-day general admission tickets are on sale now.

VIP packages are also available with single-day tickets set to go on sale at a later date.

Bruno Mars, The Weeknd, Jack White and Arctic Monkeys headlined the annual music festival in 2018.

Grande and Gambino -- the rap persona of actor Donald Glover -- will also be headlining the 2019 Coachella Valley Music and Arts Festival in April.

Gambino will continue his festival run with a performance at the 2019 Bonnaroo Music and Arts Festival in June.

Barcelona's Lionel Messi gets hat-trick vs. Real Betis



By Alex Butler
UPI

Lionel Messi had the opposing fans clapping for him after netting a hat-trick in FC Barcelona's win against Real Betis.

The star striker drew first blood for the La Liga power before scoring twice in the second half of the 4-1 win Sunday at Benito Villamarín Stadium in Seville, Spain.

Messi's first score came in the 18th minute. The Argentinian lined up a free kick from about 25 yards out. Messi smacked the ball with his left boot, sending it toward the far post. The

ball curved back in at the last minute, beating keeper Pau Lopez.

Messi gave Barcelona a 2-0 lead just before half-time. He outran the defense to find a perfectly placed pass from Luis Suarez. Messi tapped the ball in as three trailing defenders fell to the ground.

Suarez opened scoring in the second half, netting a pass from Gerard Pique in the 63rd minute. Real Betis closed the gap to two goals when Loren Moron scored in the 82nd minute. Moron hit a one-touch strike past Marc-Andre ter Stegen for his squad's only goal of the match.

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