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Houston's craft breweries have quadrupled in five years



Inside C2

Southern DAILY

Make Today Different

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U.S. accuses China of 'super aggressive' spy campaign on LinkedIn

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - The United States' top spy catcher said Chinese espionage agencies are using fake LinkedIn accounts to try to recruit Americans with access to government and commercial secrets, and the company should shut them down.

William Evanina, the U.S. counter-intelligence chief, told Reuters in an interview that intelligence and law enforcement officials have told LinkedIn, owned by Microsoft Corp., about China's "super aggressive" efforts on the site.

He said the Chinese campaign includes contacting thousands of LinkedIn members at a time, but he declined to say how many fake accounts U.S. intelligence had discovered, how many Americans may have been contacted and how much success China has had in the recruitment drive.

German and British authorities have previously warned their citizens that Beijing is using LinkedIn to try to recruit them as spies. But this is the first time a U.S. official has publicly discussed the challenge in the United States and indicated it is a bigger problem than previously known.

Evanina said LinkedIn should look at copying the response of Twitter, Google and Facebook, which have all purged fake accounts allegedly linked to Iranian and Russian intelligence agencies.

"I recently saw that Twitter is cancelling, I don't know, millions of fake accounts, and our request would be maybe LinkedIn could go ahead and be part of that," said Evanina, who heads the U.S. National Counter-Intelligence and Security Center.

It is highly unusual for a senior U.S. intelligence official to single out an American-owned company by name and publicly recommend it take action. LinkedIn says it has 575 million users in more than 200 countries and territories, including more than 150 million U.S. members.

Evanina did not, however, say whether he was frustrated by LinkedIn's response or whether he believes it has done enough. LinkedIn's head of trust and safety, Paul Rockwell, confirmed the company had been talking to U.S. law enforcement agencies about Chinese espionage efforts. Earlier this month, LinkedIn said it had taken down "less than 40" fake accounts whose users were attempting to contact LinkedIn members associated with unidentified political organizations. Rockwell did not say whether those were Chinese accounts.

"We are doing everything we can to identify and stop this



Small toy figures are seen between displayed U.S. flag and LinkedIn logo in this illustration picture

activity," Rockwell told Reuters. "We've never waited for requests to act and actively identify bad actors and remove bad accounts using information we uncover and intelligence from a variety of sources including government agencies."

Rockwell declined to provide numbers of fake accounts associated with Chinese intelligence

agencies. He said the company takes "very prompt action to restrict accounts and mitigate and stop any essential damage that can happen" but gave no details. LinkedIn "is a victim here," Evanina said. "I think the cautionary tale ... is, 'You are going to be like Facebook. Do you want to be where Facebook was this past spring

with congressional testimony, right?'" he said, referring to lawmakers' questioning of Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg on Russia's use of Facebook to meddle in the 2016 U.S. elections.

U.S. to move ahead with Mexico trade pact, keep talking to Canada

WASHINGTON/TORONTO (Reuters) - U.S. President Donald Trump notified Congress on Friday of his intent to sign a trade agreement with Mexico after talks with Canada broke up on Friday with no immediate deal to revamp the tri-nation North American Free Trade Agreement.

U.S. Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer said U.S. officials would resume talks with their Canadian counterparts next Wednesday with the aim of getting a deal all three nations could sign.

All three countries have stressed the importance of NAFTA, which governs billions of dollars in regional trade and a bilateral deal announced by the United States and Mexico on Monday paved the way for Canada to rejoin the talks this week.

But by Friday the mood had soured, partly on Trump's

off-the-record remarks made to Bloomberg News that any trade deal with Canada would be "totally on our terms". He later confirmed the comments, which the Toronto Star first reported.

"At least Canada knows where I stand," he later said on Twitter.

Ottawa has stood firm against signing "just any deal."

Canada's lead negotiator and Foreign Minister Chrystia Freeland is scheduled to hold a press conference at 4:30 P.M. Eastern Time on Friday (2030 GMT).

The Canadian dollar CAD= weakened to C\$1.3081 to the U.S. dollar after the Wall Street Journal first reported that the talks had ended on Friday with no agreement. Canadian stocks .GSPTSE remained 0.5

percent lower.

Global equities were also down following the hawkish turn in Trump's comments on trade.

Lighthizer has refused to budge despite repeated efforts by Freeland to offer some dairy concessions to maintain the Chapter 19 independent trade dispute resolution mechanism in NAFTA, The Globe and Mail reported on Friday.

However, a spokeswoman for USTR said Canada had made no concessions on agriculture, which includes dairy, but added that negotiations continued.

The United States wants to eliminate Chapter 19, the mechanism that has hindered it from pursuing anti-dumping and anti-subsidy cases. Lighthizer said on Monday Mexico had agreed to cut the mechanism. For Ottawa, Chapter 19 is a red line.

But Freeland said earlier on Friday her team is "not there yet" in resolving still big differences.

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Houston's craft breweries have quadrupled in five years

By Nancy Sarnoff

There were a dozen craft breweries across the Houston metro before 2013, and that seemed like a lot at the time. Now, there are 52.

The new breweries have added 344,487 square feet of industrial space -- roughly the size of a 14-story office building -- to the local market, according to a new report from commercial real estate firm NAI Partners.

Why such frothy growth? A new law passed in 2013 that allowed producers with a brewpub license to sell their beer to go, directly to consumers.

This helped not only open up a new direct revenue stream for brewpubs -- one that also enabled them to keep 100% of their revenue without having to cut in a middleman -- but was also a huge win for the consumer, enabling beer lovers to access their favorite beer as freshly as possible instead of having to worry about whether a six-pack at the local store had been sitting on the shelf past its ideal consumption window.



Chevron's 30-acre Bellaire property finds buyer

By Nancy Sarnoff

Chevron Corp.'s former Bellaire office complex -- a rare 30-acre parcel of urban real estate along the West Loop -- has found a buyer.

Brokerage firm HFF has been marketing the site for about a year and its online property listing now shows that it is under contract.

HFF declined to say who the buyer is, but earlier this month real estate investor SLS Properties, submitted applications to the city for permits that would allow the property at 4800 Fournace Place to be further developed.

If approved, one of the permits would allow a parking garage to be built on the site. A second would permit the 10-story building formerly occupied by Chevron, to be leased to multiple tenants.

A public hearing on the matter is scheduled for next month at a meeting of the city's Planning and Zoning Commission, according to a city memo.

Houston-based SLS Properties owns several office buildings in the Houston-area. Last year it purchased two just across the West Loop from the Chevron property.

The company could not be reached Friday morning. Chevron also could not be reached immediately.

In early 2016, San Ramon, Calif.-based Chevron announced plans to sell its Bellaire property and move 900 employees from the site to its downtown facilities, shaving expenses during the energy downturn.



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Editor's Choice



A sudden downpour of rain happens as an honor guard carries the casket of the late U.S. Senator John McCain up the steps of the U.S. Capitol where he will lie in state in the Rotunda for a memorial service, Washington, DC, U.S., August 31, 2018. REUTERS/Mike Theiler TPX IMAGES OF THE DAY



President Donald Trump delivers remarks and signs an executive order in Charlotte, NC



Diving - 2018 Asian Games - Women's 1m Springboard Final - GBK Aquatics Center, Jakarta, Indonesia - August 31, 2018 Chen Yiwen of China in action REUTERS/Cathal Mcnaughton TPX IMAGES OF THE DAY



Paramilitary police officers remove shoulder marks for their retiring comrades at a farewell ceremony in Lanzhou



The 75th Venice International Film Festival - Venice, Italy, August 31, 2018 - Director and actor Bradley Cooper with actor and singer Lady Gaga arrive. REUTERS/Tony Gentile TPX IMAGES OF THE DAY



McMaster of the British Virgin Islands wins the Men's 400m Hurdles ahead of Norway's Karsten Warholm REUTERS/Arnd Wiegmann TPX IMAGES OF THE DAY



A street vendor sells sandwiches as people walk by in Buenos Aires' financial district



Over one hundred Cadillacs can be seen lined up near the funeral service for Aretha Franklin at the Greater Grace Temple in Detroit, Michigan

After strong interest for several years, international buyers appear to be souring on the U.S. housing market.

The dollar volume of U.S. home sales to international buyers between April 2017 and March 2018 dropped 21 percent compared with the year-ago period, according to the National Association of Realtors.

Of the \$121 billion in sales to international buyers, those currently living in the U.S. purchased \$67.9 billion in properties, while nonresident foreigners purchased \$53 billion, both marking a drop from the previous year.



“The decline is partly coming off high levels of the prior year, but also surely from the strong rhetoric coming out of Washington against foreigners,” said Lawrence Yun, chief economist for the Realtors.

“There has been a large drop-off in foreign students attending U.S. universities already. Chinese [buyers], in particular, purchase homes for their kids while attending college.”

China still leads the pack for international buyers, as it has for six straight years, accounting for 15 percent of international sales. Chinese buyers also purchased the most expensive homes, with a median price of \$439,100.

Canada came in second, with a 10 percent share of international sales, but the Canadians’ dollar volume dropped by 45 percent compared to the previous year.

“The market here is softer, and I imagine that’s why there are perhaps less Canadian buyers,” said Elli Davis, a real estate agent

International Buyers Are Dropping Out Of The U.S. Housing Market

Compiled And Edited By John T. Robbins, Southern Daily Editor



European model forecast highs for the next five days. (weathermodels.com modified by CWG)

based in Toronto. “That does surprise me, though, as I still know lots of people buying mostly in Florida!”



A real estate agent readies a house for viewing in Venice, Calif.

Buyers from China, Canada, India, Mexico and the United Kingdom accounted for nearly half of the dollar volume of sales to international buyers. Canadian buyers had been the market leaders by far during the U.S. recession. They dropped back significantly as U.S. home prices recovered, Chinese buying increased and U.S. investor purchases climbed.

“Inventory shortages continue to drive up prices and sustained job creation and

historically low interest rates mean that foreign buyers are now competing with domestic residents for the same, limited supply of homes,” Yun said.

High prices could certainly be a deterrent for buyers in Southern California. Chinese buyers have been very strong in the single-family market there, as they plan for their children to attend area universities. Irvine, especially, saw huge demand from Chinese buyers, particularly in newly built communities, with larger, multigenerational homes that they favor.

For international investors who are looking for condominiums in large cities as an investment, the supply theory doesn’t really hold.

“I don’t think it’s the supply issue because these buyers are buying in the higher end and there is more supply there, particularly in the gateway cities like Miami and New York,” said Sam Khater, chief economist at Freddie Mac. “It could be just that their appetite for U.S. real estate is waning.”

NAR Reports A Decrease In International Home Sales



The housing market’s low supply and high prices have been affecting residents across the nation for a while, but now experts are starting to see these trends harm international home purchases in the U.S. According to a news report, international sales from April 2017 to March 2018 dropped 21 percent. In that 12 month time frame, international sales totaled \$121 billion. “After a surge in 2017, we saw a decrease in foreign activity in the housing market in the latest year, bringing us closer to the levels seen in 2016,” said the National Association of Realtors economist Lawrence Yun.

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Since China's imports to the United States are about three times the amount of US exports to China, Trump has a much bigger basket of stuff he can tax with tariffs, his own favorite weapon. Trump knows this and has threatened tariffs on almost all of the \$524 billion in annual Chinese imports to America. The United States only sends about \$188 billion worth of stuff to China each year. So in terms of tariffs, China is more vulnerable simply because it's such a huge exporter.

But China has other levers to pull, and one of them is an abrupt selloff of the roughly \$1.5 trillion in U.S. government securities the country holds. "Aggressive dumping of U.S. Treasuries back into the market would pose double trouble for Washington," a commentator wrote recently in the South China Morning Post. "It should give more leverage to Beijing's tacit devaluation tactics and cause wider scattergun carnage to the US economy at the same time."

A Chinese selloff of U.S. debt is an intriguing scenario most trade experts think is unlikely. It would, in fact, cause problems with the U.S. economy — but it might hurt China even more. Trump's trade war, however, may just be getting started, and a destabilizing move by China could become more likely if Trump continues to slap tariffs on Chinese imports, which is beginning to hurt China's economy.

China holds around \$1.2 trillion worth of Treasury securities, along with another \$200 billion or so in debt from U.S. government agencies such as Fannie Mae. There's another \$100 billion worth of Treasuries China reportedly holds through custodians in other countries. So it holds around \$1.5 trillion in U.S. government debt, in total. China is the world's biggest foreign holder of U.S. Treasuries, which worries some analysts. But its holdings only total about 6% of all Treasury debt. All foreign entities combined hold only about 30% of U.S. debt. Americans, in various forms, own the other 70%.

Would China Sell Off U.S. Securities That It Holds?

Could This Be China's Most Dangerous Trade-War Weapon?

Compiled And Edited By John T. Robbins, Southern Daily Editor



Still, an unexpected selloff of China's Treasury holdings would undoubtedly rattle financial markets. "If China sells U.S. Treasuries as part of its response to the escalating trade war with the U.S., it would be highly disruptive, pushing up interest rates and undermining global financial markets," Mark Zandi of

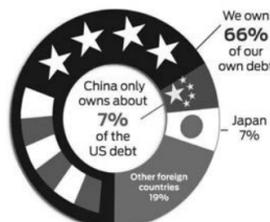
Moody's Analytics tells Yahoo Finance. "Investors would view the move as a significant escalation in the trade war, signaling that it will continue on for much longer and do much more economic damage." If it were to happen, economists think rates would rise by around 30 basis

points, or three-tenths of a percentage point, which would be an abrupt change if it occurred in a short period of time. Rates would rise because a new supply of debt on the market would lower the value of bonds, forcing borrowers like the U.S. government to pay more. Rates on mortgages, car loans and most other consumer and commercial debt would rise in tandem. Investors might dump stocks for bonds, where they'd suddenly get a higher return.



This would happen as the Treasury is already flooding the market with new debt to finance the Trump tax cuts, which is why some analysts think the United States is unusually vulnerable to a Treasury rout. "On the surface, it looks like the U.S. is extraordinarily vulnerable," Brad Setser of the Council on Foreign Relations, a former top official at the Treasury Dept. and International Monetary Fund, wrote recently. But other crucial developments would follow, mitigating the damage to the United States and compounding it for China. The Federal Reserve, eager to prevent a crisis, would probably change monetary policy and began weakening instead of tightening, as it is doing now

by gradually raising interest rates. This would reassure markets, and if it didn't, the Fed could crank it up a notch or two by buying Treasuries and taking other extraordinary measures. "The Fed is the one actor in the world that can buy more than China can ever sell," Setser wrote. China itself would be negatively affected by rising interest rates, just as other nations would be. It would have to find new liquid investments to replace its massive Treasury holdings, which could further destabilize a turbulent market. And the value of China's currency, the yuan, would most likely rise as the value of the dollar fell. That would impair and possibly crush China's export economy, while it would make American exports more competitive, a relative boost to U.S. producers.



China might also become something of a pariah state, seen as undermining the global financial system, rather than participating in it. That could drive away foreign investors who have become an integral part of the Chinese economy. That's why many analysts who have studied the scenario think a Treasury selloff could backfire and hurt China more than anybody else.

"It seems unlikely the Chinese would go down this path," Zandi says. "Yuan devaluation is a much more effective response to higher tariffs." China has, in fact, been doing that, with the yuan losing about 7% of its value against the dollar since mid-June. That offsets some of the impact of the new Trump tariffs on Chinese imports to the United States. China devalues the yuan by buying dollars and, typically, US Treasuries. And it can't buy if it's selling. (Courtesy yahoo.com)

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