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U.S. regulator sees approval of Boeing 737 MAX to fly as soon as late June:

MONTREAL/FORT WORTH, Texas (Reuters) - The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) expects to approve Boeing Co's 737 MAX jet to return to service as soon as late June, representatives of the U.S. air regulator informed members of the United Nations' aviation agency in a private briefing on Thursday, sources told Reuters.

The target, if achieved, means U.S. airlines would likely not have to greatly extend costly cancellations of 737 MAX jets they have already put in place for the peak summer flying season, but the FAA representatives warned that there was no firm timetable to get the planes back in the air.

American Airlines Group Inc, Southwest Airlines Co and United Airlines suspended 737 MAX flights into July and August after the FAA grounded Boeing's best-selling jet in March following two crashes in the space of five months that together killed 346 people.

RELATED COVERAGE

United Airlines extends cancellations of Boeing 737 MAX flights through August 3

FAA chief calls eight-hour meeting on Boeing 737 MAX 'exceedingly positive' FAA and Boeing officials privately briefed members of the International Civil Aviation Organization's (ICAO) governing council in Montreal on the 737 MAX on Thursday, the same day that the FAA's acting administrator Dan Elwell met with international air regulators for eight hours in Fort Worth, Texas.

Laying out a potential schedule for getting the 737 MAX back in the air in the United States goes further than the FAA's public statements so far.

Elwell declined to answer questions about the private ICAO briefing. "The last thing I want is to put a date out there and then to have anybody, either the FAA, or you or the public drive to the date instead of the end result or the process," he told Reuters at a briefing with reporters after the Fort Worth meeting, which he called "constructive."

The path to getting the 737 MAX back in the air outside the United States remains even more uncertain. Canada and Europe said on Wednesday they would bring back the grounded aircraft on their own terms, not the FAA's.

Chinese carriers, several of which this week made formal requests to Boeing for compensation, stand to lose 4 billion yuan (\$579.41 million) based on the grounding lasting until the end of June, the China Air Transport Association said on Friday.

China's aviation regulator, which oversees the largest fleet of 737 MAX jets globally and was the first regulator to ground the aircraft after a crash in Ethiopia in March, did not have immediate comment about the Fort Worth meeting.

Shares of Boeing, the world's largest plane maker, pared earlier losses on Thursday to close down 0.6% at \$350.55. The stock has fallen about 17 percent since the second crash, of an Ethiopian Airlines jet in March, wiping about \$40 billion off its market value.

The FAA has said it will not reverse its decision to ground the plane until it sees the findings of a multi-agency review of Boeing's plan to fix software on the 737 MAX which the plane maker has described as a common link in the two crashes.

Boeing said last week it had completed an update to the software, known as MCAS, which would stop erroneous data from triggering an anti-stall system that automatically turned down the noses of the two planes that crashed, despite pilot efforts to prevent it from doing so.

"Once we have addressed the information requests from the FAA, we will be ready to schedule a certification test flight and submit final certification documentation," Boeing communications director Chaz Bickers said on Thursday.



FILE PHOTO: An aerial photo shows several Boeing 737 MAX airplanes grounded at Boeing Field in Seattle, Washington, U.S. March 21, 2019. REUTERS/Lindsey Wasson/File Photo



Handout photo of American Airlines Boeing 737 MAX jets sit parked at a facility in Tulsa, Oklahoma



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U.S. health agency proposes reversing Obamacare transgender protections

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) on Friday proposed a rule that would roll back protections for transgender patients under Obamacare, the second rule this month the agency has put forward to allow health care providers to deny services to them.

The landmark Affordable Care Act passed during the Obama administration, otherwise known as Obamacare, extended civil rights protections in healthcare to gender identity and the termination of a pregnancy. The agency's Office of Civil Rights said it posted a proposed rule to roll back those provisions of the law.

"When Congress prohibited sex discrimination, it did so according to the plain meaning of the term, and we are making our regulations conform," Roger Severino, head of

the Office of Civil Rights, said on a call with reporters.

HHS said it has not enforced the protections since December 2016 after a federal court found they conflicted with a separate existing law.

Typically after HHS proposes a rule, there is a 60-day comment period before the measure is finalized. Earlier this month, the Office of Civil Rights released a final "conscience rule" allowing doctors, nurses and other health care workers to opt out of participating in or referring procedures with which they disagree, such as abortions, sterilizations and the treatment of gay and transgender patients.

The Trump administration, including HHS, has sought to restrict access to abortion.

LGBTQ advocacy groups and Democratic-controlled states have decried the Trump administration's efforts to erode protections for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer citizens.

"This move by the Trump administration is nothing less than an act of violence against those whose health care needs have historically been ignored, neglected, and dismissed," Louise Melling, deputy legal director of the American Civil Liberties Union, said in a statement

Two dozen U.S. states and municipalities sued the Trump administration earlier this week to stop the enforcement of the rule, which is almost certain to be challenged in court.

Severino, of the civil rights office, said the agency will still enforce civil rights protections on the basis of race, color, national origin, disability, age, and sex

French police hunt suitcase bomber after blast in Lyon

LYON (Reuters) - French police were hunting a suspected suitcase bomber on Friday after an explosion in the central city of Lyon that injured 13 people, officials said.

The suspect was captured on security video leaving a case in front of a bakery shortly before an explosion occurred at around 5:30 pm, police sources and local mayor Denis Broliquier said. Interior ministry officials initially said eight people had been injured, but police sources later put the number hurt at 13, with none of the injuries thought to be life-threatening.

President Emmanuel Macron, who was beginning a broadcast address as news of the explosion broke, described the incident as an "attack" with no fatalities. "My thoughts are with the injured," he said.

The Paris anti-terrorism prosecutor opened an investigation, with police treating the blast as an attempted homicide, law-enforcement officials said.

The partially masked suspect was recorded wheeling a bicycle as he arrived on the scene before leaving a case in front of the Brioche Doree bakery, where the blast later rained metal bolts on passersby, the police sources told Reuters.



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Editor's Choice



An LGBT activist walks past anti-gay rights protesters holding placards, after a ruling by Kenya's high court to uphold a law banning gay sex, outside the Milimani high Court in Nairobi



Graduation and commissioning ceremony for the U.S. Naval Academy's Class of 2019 at the U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland



Formula One F1 - Monaco Grand Prix - Circuit de Monaco, Monte Carlo, Monaco - May 24, 2019 Mercedes' Lewis Hamilton on a motorbike in the fan zone REUTERS/Gonzalo Fuentes TPX IMAGES OF THE DAY



Police remove a climate change demonstrator during a march supported by Extinction Rebellion in London, Britain May 24, 2019. REUTERS/Toby Melville TPX IMAGES OF THE DAY



REFILE - CORRECTING TYPO 72nd Cannes Film Festival - Screening of the "The Traitor"(Il traditore) in competition - Red Carpet Arrivals - Cannes, France, May 23, 2019. Kimberley Garner poses.



Palestinian musicians perform to celebrate the breaking of the fast during Ramadan, the Muslim holy month, in the walled Old City of East Jerusalem



Old Guard soldiers take part in "Flags-In", an annual event where a small American flag is placed in front of more than 240,000 headstones of U.S. service members buried at Arlington National Cemetery in Arlington, Virginia, U.S., May 23, 2019.



72nd Cannes Film Festival - Screening of the film "Mektoub My Love: Intermezzo" in competition - Red Carpet Arrivals - Cannes, France, May 23, 2019. Director Abdellatif Kechiche reacts. REUTERS/Regis Duvignau TPX IMAGES OF THE DAY

A Cure For The "Bubble Boy" Disease Has Been Found



Gael Jesus Pino Alva, a 2-year-old treated with gene therapy, with his mother, Giannina Alva. Photo: Peter Barta/St. Jude

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

Scientists have announced that they have "cured," at least for the near-term, the rare genetic disorder that causes a male baby to be born with little or no immune system, or what's commonly known as the "bubble boy disease."

Why it matters: It's estimated that only 40-100 babies are born yearly with this disorder, but almost all of them died within 2 years unless they were diagnosed and placed into sterile environments, like those dramatized in movies and real documentaries. The study, published on Wednesday in the New England Journal of Medicine, says the therapy already has helped a couple of the toddlers enough to play like healthy children and even enter day care.

Background: X-SCID (X-linked severe combined immunodeficiency) is a life-threatening genetic disorder male babies can get if there's a mutation in a gene on the X chromosome called IL-2RG.

•Babies born with SCID have no defense against germs — even the common cold can be deadly.

•Currently, the most effective treatment is to find a bone marrow match, preferably from a sibling, and transplant stem cells. This works particularly well if done in the first 3 months of a child's life,

but it is very difficult to find a match.



David Vetter, a young boy from Texas, lived out in the real world - in a plastic bubble. Nicknamed "Bubble Boy," David was born in 1971 with severe combined immunodeficiency (SCID), and was forced to live in a specially constructed sterile plastic bubble from birth until he died at age 12.

Because gene therapy is relatively new, scientists consider diseases with mutations in single genes, like SCID, to be prime candidates. However, it's still experimental, so this trial was only done on children without a bone marrow match.

•Prior therapies had mixed results (they only produced one type of immune cell) or were halted after causing leukemia, likely resulting from the different vector that transports the new gene to the cell.

•But before this study, the National Institutes of Health tested a treatment using a new lentivirus vector on 5 older SCID patients with promising early results.

What they did: St. Jude Children's Research Hospital, which led the study and co-developed the new lentivirus vector with NIH, used a novel approach to the

therapy combining the new vector and a low dose of chemotherapy.

•The new lentivirus vector was engineered from a de-activated HIV virus and includes insulators to block activation of genes adjacent to the insertion to prevent leukemia.



•They selected 8 children, ages 2 months to 14 months without donor matches, and collected their bone marrow, inserted the gene in the lab, and froze it while they did quality testing.

•Before having it reinfused, the infants received 2 days of low-dose busulfan chemo to make space for the new bone marrow cells to grow.

What they found: James Downing, president and CEO of St. Jude, said in a press conference that the trial had "outstanding results" with children "responding to vaccines and able to live normal lives."

•Study co-author Ewelina Mamcarz said in a press conference that they were thrilled to see the development of all 3 main types of immune cells: T-cells, B-cells and natural killer cells.

•4 infants were able to discontinue intravenous immunoglobulin treatment that give additional antibodies to boost immunity. And 3 of the 4 developed normal antibody responses to normal vaccinations — an indication of robust B-cell function, she said.

•While acknowledging that it is rare in the scientific community to claim a "cure," Mamcarz says, "They are cured because for the first time we were able to restore all three cells that constitute the immune system."



Gael Jesus Pino Alva, 2, was the first patient treated with the new gene therapy

developed at St. Jude Children's Research Hospital and UCSF Benioff Children's Hospital in San Francisco. (Photo/St. Jude Children's Research Hospital)

What they're saying: Rebecca Hatcher Buckley, immunology professor at Duke University School of Medicine who was not part of this study, says the vector in particular is "very promising," particularly as the treatment so far has not produced leukemia.

"Compared with previously tested gene-therapy strategies for X-SCID, which used other vectors and chemotherapy regimens, the current approach appears safer and more effective," NIH said in a press release.

What's next: The trial is ongoing and St. Jude has signed an exclusive license with Mustang Bio to determine the best strategy to commercialize the immunotherapy for other genetic disorders, possibly including sickle cell disease. (Courtesy axios.com)

Related History
"Bubble Boy" Lived His Whole Life In Closed Environment

It is one of Houston's signature stories: David Vetter was born in 1971 at Texas Children's Hospital with severe combined immunodeficiency.

The cute little boy who lived nearly his whole life inside a series of sterile plastic bubbles, waiting for a cure for his fatal immune disease that, tragically, never came.

David Vetter - he was identified only as David at the time - was "the boy in the bubble," the Texas Medical Center's most famous patient from the early 1970s to the mid-1980s. As a captivated public watched, he grew up isolated from germs and human touch before dying, at age 12, after the failure of an experimental bone marrow transplant.



David was born in 1971 with severe combined immunodeficiency (SCID), and was forced to live in a specially constructed sterile plastic bubble from birth until he died at age 12. (Photos/Baylor College of Medicine Photo Archives)



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Immigrants accounted for almost half of all population growth in the United States between 2017 and 2018, according to newly released Census Bureau data.

Why it matters: It's a reminder of how rapidly the demographics of the country are changing — and how the bitter political fights over immigration aren't changing the broader trends.

The high levels of immigration could also help mitigate the negative impact of falling birth rates — which could leave the U.S. with a large dependent population of children and retired people and a much smaller workforce, slowing economic growth.



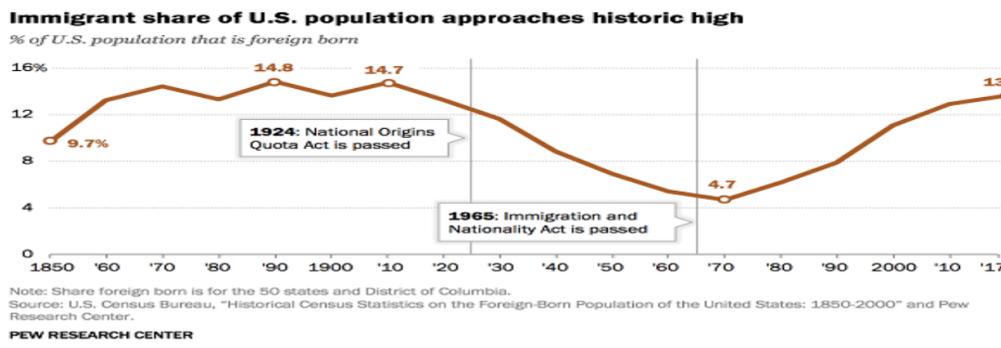
The big picture: Nine percent of the nation's counties grew due to immigration rather than more births than deaths — including counties that contain most of San Francisco, Houston and Boston, according to a Wall Street Journal analysis.

More than half of the population growth in the District of Columbia, Florida, Kansas, Michigan, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Virginia and seven other states was due to immigration.

In other cases, immigration has helped stymie falling populations. In New York state, for example, the overall population fell by 48,500 people between 2017 and 2018 — largely due to people moving to other states. International immigration was a greater source of population growth there than natural increase (caused by more births than deaths.)

Between the lines: If it weren't for immigration, 44% of Americans would be living in shrinking counties,

USA: A Rapidly Growing Nation Of Immigrants



Data: U.S. Census Bureau; Chart: Axios Visuals

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

the New York Times notes.

Two other notable trends:

1. Big cities are shrinking. There's a lot of talk about the concentration of wealth and opportunity in the nation's biggest cities. Yet, New York City, Los Angeles and Chicago all saw their populations decline in the past year as people move out to surrounding suburbs.

Meanwhile, small metro areas and suburbs outside of urban cores are booming, according to a Brookings Institution analysis given to Axios.

Phoenix, Dallas, Houston and Atlanta, for example, had the highest numeric population growth from 2010 to 2018 for metro areas.

Of the 10 counties that saw the highest percent increase in people over the past year, four were in Texas.

2. A small rural revival. For the second year in a row, non-metro areas — which include rural areas as well as towns with between 10-50,000 people — grew at a low rate.

This comes after 6 years of population loss in non-metro areas.

This is likely due to the recovery of the U.S. economy after the recession, Brookings demographer William Frey told Axios. But higher immigration levels in these areas are also a factor.



The fastest growing county was in North Dakota, where fracking has boosted the economy. (Courtesy axios.com)

Related Texas leads the way in population growth

The share of U.S. population growth that's driven by immigration has steadily risen over the past 10 years, partly because the birth rate is falling and the population is aging. One of

the places you can see these demographic trends playing out is Texas, which has four of the country's 10 fastest-growing counties, according to the U.S. Census Bureau.



The Dallas metropolitan area is the fastest-growing in the country. It's where you'll find Chizuru Miller, who moved to the Dallas suburb of Richardson eight years ago. She's from Tokyo. "To be honest, going to Texas was kind of a shock," she said. She had trouble finding the comforts of home, from Asian supermarkets to Japanese restaurants. But things have

changed. "Many Asians are now here, so that makes it more comfortable right now," she said.

The numbers back up what Miller's seeing. "We've seen a real shift away from immigration from Latin American countries and a real significant increase in the percentage and the number of immigrants coming from Asian countries," said Lloyd Potter, Texas state demographer.



Census estimates show immigrants made up 104,341 of the 379,128 people Texas added between 2017 and 2018. Potter said the state's strong economy drives people here, but it's also about cost of living. "If you were in California, you could come to Texas, take a job, take a cut in pay, get a bigger house, drive a new car and you would still be saving more money than you were when you were living in California," he said.

The Census Bureau puts population growth into three categories: when the number of births exceeds the number of deaths; when people move from somewhere else in the U.S.; and when people move here from other countries.

"Different parts of Texas actually show each part of this story," said Jed Kolko, chief economist at Indeed.com. "Houston and Dallas are great examples of strong growth thanks to international migration. Austin and San Antonio show off what growth from domestic migration looks like. And El Paso and McAllen show us what growth from natural increase looks like," he said. (Courtesy https://www.marketplace.org)

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