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Brexit showdown: UK lawmakers trigger vote to block PM leaving EU with no deal



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Southern DAILY

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Southern Daily News is published by Southern News Group Daily

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Wednesday, September 4, 2019 | www.today-america.com | Southern News Group

Trump warns China against dragging its feet in trade talks

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - U.S. President Donald Trump on Tuesday warned he would be "tougher" on Beijing in a second term if trade talks dragged on, compounding market fears that ongoing trade disputes between the United States and China could trigger a U.S. recession.

U.S. President Donald Trump speaks during a Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) briefing on hurricane Dorian at FEMA Headquarters in Washington, U.S., September 1, 2019. REUTERS/Joshua Roberts

The world's two largest economies imposed fresh tariffs on each other on Sunday, ratcheting up a tit-for-tat tariff war that has unsettled financial markets and raised the specter of a global recession. U.S. and Chinese negotiators are due to meet in person in Washington this month, but no date has yet been set.

U.S. stocks fell on Tuesday as data showed factory activity contracted for the first time since 2016 in August, while the benchmark 10-year U.S. Treasury yield US10YT=RR fell to its lowest since July 2016.

Trump, ignoring recent negative U.S. economic data, said in a posting on Twitter that the United States was "doing very well in our negotiations with China," and played up the damage U.S. tariffs were doing to the Chinese economy.

He warned that Beijing faced even tougher terms if the two sides did not resolve their trade dispute and he won re-election in November 2020, writing, "Deal would get MUCH TOUGHER! In the meantime, China's Supply Chain will crumble and businesses, jobs and money will be gone!"



U.S. President Donald Trump speaks during a Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) briefing on hurricane Dorian at FEMA Headquarters in Washington, U.S., September 1, 2019. REUTERS/Joshua

Walmart to stop selling ammunition for handguns, assault-style weapons

(Reuters) - Walmart Inc said on Tuesday it would discontinue sales of ammunition for handguns and some assault-style rifles in stores across the United States, in response to the recent mass shootings in Texas and Ohio.

The largest U.S. arms retailer, which has been under pressure to change its policies on gun sales, also said it would discontinue handgun sales in Alaska, the only state where it still sells these guns.

Walmart has already ended sales of assault rifle and raised the minimum age for gun purchases to 21. The latest move will leave it focused on weapons for hunting, including deer rifles, shotguns and related ammunition.

The company will stop selling all handgun ammunition and some short-barrel rifle ammunition, such as the .223 caliber and 5.56 caliber after clearing current stock. While short-barrel ammunition is commonly used in some hunting rifles for small animals such as prairie dogs, they can also be used in military-style weapons with high-capacity magazines. The

retailer said it took the action following the death of 22 people in a mass shooting in a Walmart store in Texas as well as deadly shootings in Ohio and Saturday's incident in Midland and Odessa, Texas.

Just last month, the company said it would not change its policy on selling firearms even as it took down signs and playable demos of violent video games.

"As a company, we experienced two horrific events in one week, and we will never be the same," Chief Executive Officer Doug McMillon said in a letter to Walmart's associates. The company added that its latest actions would reduce its market share of ammunition from around 20% to a range of about 6% to 9%, and would trend to-



FILE PHOTO: Walmart's logo is seen outside one of the stores in Chicago, Illinois, U.S., November 20, 2018. REUTERS/Kamil Krzaczynski

ward the lower end of that range over time.

McMillon said he would send letters to the White House and the Congressional leadership, urging the government to strengthen background checks and to remove weapons from those who

could pose an imminent danger. "These horrific events occur and then the spotlight fades ... Given our decades of experience selling firearms, we are also offering to serve as a resource in the national debate on responsible gun sales," he said.

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Brexit showdown: UK lawmakers trigger vote to block PM leaving EU with no deal

LONDON (Reuters) - British lawmakers on Tuesday triggered a vote that could allow them to stop Boris Johnson pursuing a "no-deal" Brexit, a challenge that the government warned would prompt the prime minister to seek an election on Oct. 14.

More than three years after the United Kingdom voted in a referendum to leave the European Union, the outcome of the Brexit crisis remains uncertain, with possible outcomes ranging from a turbulent no-deal exit to abandoning the whole endeavor.

Despite a warning that Johnson would seek an election if they tied his hands over Brexit, a bloc of opposition lawmakers and rebels in Johnson's party defied him with what they cast as an effort to stop an economically ruinous no-deal departure.

That set up an historic showdown between prime minister and parliament in a country once touted as a confident pillar of Western economic and political stability. Sterling flirted briefly with some of its lowest levels since 1985.

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UK's Rees-Mogg says bid to block no-deal Brexit is constitutionally irregular

UK public must decide next steps if parliament votes against Johnson: PM's spokesman

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"This is parliament's last chance to block a no-deal exit on the 31st of October," Oliver Letwin, who led the attempt to thwart Johnson's Brexit gamble, told parliament.

Opposition Labour Party leader Jeremy Corbyn said lawmakers were seeking to prevent Johnson "playing Russian roulette with this country's future."

On parliament's first day back from its summer break, they put forward a motion to grab control of parliament on Wednesday - a step that, after a debate granted by the speaker, was to go to a House of Commons vote at around 2000-2100 GMT on Tuesday.

If lawmakers are granted control of the parliamentary business, they will seek on Wednesday to pass a law that

would force Johnson to ask the EU to delay Brexit for three months until Jan. 31, 2020 unless he has a deal approved by parliament, or parliament agrees to a no-deal Brexit.

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson speaks in Parliament in London, Britain September 3, 2019, in this screen grab taken from video. Parliament TV via REUTERS
"BREXIT SURRENDER"

Johnson cast the challenge as an attempt to force Britain to surrender to the EU just as he hopes to secure concessions on the terms of the divorce - a step he said he would never accept.

"It means running up the white flag," Johnson said. "It is a bill that, if passed, would force me to go to Brussels and beg an extension. It would force me to accept the terms offered. It would destroy any chance of negotiation for a new deal."

Just as Johnson began speaking, he lost his working majority in parliament when one of his own Conservative lawmakers, Phillip Lee, crossed the floor of the House of Commons to join the pro-EU Liberal Democrats.

Labour's Corbyn told parliament that Johnson's was a government with "no mandate, no morals and, as of today, no majority".

In the eye of the Brexit maelstrom, it was unclear if opposition parties would support any move to call an election - which requires the support of two-thirds of the 650-seat House of Commons.

The Labour Party's chief enforcer said the party would not allow Johnson to manipulate an election to force through a no-deal Brexit, a source said.

The pound, which has gyrated to the twists and turns of Brexit since the 2016 Brexit referendum and is highly sensitive to the prospect of a "no-deal" exit, briefly dipped as low as \$1.1959 GBP=D3. Barring a minutes-long "flash crash" in October 2016, sterling has not regularly traded at such low levels since 1985.

Fears of an abrupt "no-deal" Brexit were rising elsewhere. The European Commission said such a scenario was a "very distinct possibility" and French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian said it was the most likely scenario.

The U.N. trade agency UNCTAD said it would cost Britain at least \$16 billion in lost exports to the EU, plus a further substantial sum in indirect costs.

U.S. Vice President Mike Pence used a visit to Ireland on Tuesday to urge the European Union to negotiate with Britain "in good faith". The 2016 Brexit referendum showed a United Kingdom divided about much more than the European Union, and has fueled soul-searching about everything from secession and immigration to capitalism, empire and modern Britishness.

It has also triggered civil war inside both of Britain's main political parties as dozens of lawmakers put what they see as the United Kingdom's fate above that of party loyalty.

As Johnson played Brexit chess with lawmakers, opponents cast his tactics as undemocratic, including an order to suspend parliament for more than a month beginning next week. That has been followed by his threat to kick rebels out of the ruling party - some of them ex-ministers who left the cabinet just weeks ago.

"I think we will have the numbers," said one of the rebels, former finance minister Philip Hammond. "Prime Minister Johnson has always intended that there will be an election."

The government has effectively turned the challenge into a confidence vote by making clear that if the government were defeated, it would hold a vote on Wednesday to approve an early election, most likely to be held on Oct. 14.

The U.S. investment bank JPMorgan said an election would make a no-deal Brexit more likely.



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Editor's Choice



A lawmaker looks on before a session of Ukrainian parliament in Kiev



Rescue personnel return to shore with the victims of a pre-dawn fire that sank a commercial diving boat off the coast of Santa Barbara, California



The tournament's official logo for the 2022 Qatar World Cup is seen on the Doha Tower, in Doha



Worker welds a bicycle steel rim at a factory manufacturing sports equipment in Hangzhou, Zhejiang



Singer Kylie Minogue poses with a fan as she arrives to the GQ Men Of The Year Awards 2019 in London, Britain September 3, 2019. REUTERS/Henry Nicholls



FILE PHOTO: Bottles of prescription painkiller OxyContin made by Purdue Pharma LP on a counter at a local pharmacy in Provo



Women practice a traditional Chinese fan dance in a park in Chai Wan, Hong Kong, China, September 3, 2019. REUTERS/Anushree Fadnavis



Singer Kylie Minogue poses as she arrives to the GQ Men Of The Year Awards 2019 in London, Britain September 3, 2019. REUTERS/Henry Nicholls

AUSTIN — Gov. Greg Abbott signed a new law Monday that clears up which CBD products are legal in Texas and will also allow local farmers to grow hemp as a crop. The law, which received bipartisan support in the state Legislature, goes into effect immediately.

It will allow Texas to set up a federally approved program for farmers to grow hemp as an industrial crop, including procedures for sampling, inspection and testing. It also expands the kind of hemp products that can be legally purchased in Texas to include any hemp or hemp-derived products containing less than 0.3 percent of THC, or tetrahydrocannabinol, the psychoactive compound found in cannabis plants.



This includes cannabidiol, or CBD, products. While Texans have found oils, tinctures and other CBD goods on store shelves for years, those that contained even trace amounts of THC were technically illegal here. Now, as long as these products are derived from hemp, contain less than 0.3 percent THC and meet other labeling and quality standards, they are legal.

Marijuana will remain illegal in Texas. Abbott, a Republican, did not sign the hemp bill publicly nor did his office return a request for comment on the new law. Other GOP leaders applauded the bill's passage into law as long overdue.

"I am excited that we have taken one more step towards giving producers in Texas the opportunity to grow hemp," Agriculture Commissioner Sid Miller said in a statement. "Texas will be a leader in hemp production, and we will be submitting our plan and writing rules to follow the 2018 Farm Bill and the law recently enacted in Texas."



Gov. Greg Abbott Signs Law Legalizing Hemp Production, CBD Products Sales In Texas



In 2015, Gov. Greg Abbott signed the first bill allowing any growing or sale of marijuana in Texas. The Texas Compassionate Use Act legalized the selling of a specific kind of cannabis oil derived from marijuana plants for a very small group of customers: epilepsy patients whose symptoms have not responded to federally approved medication. Gov. Abbott displays SB339 as Rep. John Zerwas, Rep. Stephanie Klick and Sen. Kevin Eltife look on. (Above) The bill would allow limited use of medical marijuana oil that will control seizures in epileptic children.

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

"This will be another tool for farmers that are looking to diversify their farming operations."

The federal government removed hemp from its list of controlled substances, a move the Lone Star State replicated in April. But unlike the 42 other states who had already opted into industrial hemp production, Texas had not, a decision farmers said was holding them back from tapping into a lucrative and popular crop.

In fact, until Abbott signed the hemp bill into law Monday, state law still defined marijuana and hemp as the same, rendering both broadly illegal in Texas. Hemp and marijuana both come from the cannabis plant family. Unlike its high-inducing cousin, hemp contains low levels of THC. Heather Fazio, director of Texans for Responsible Marijuana Policy, called the bill's signing into law "a big step for Texans and one we can all be proud of."

"The Texas Legislature got at least one thing right this session when they legalized hemp. Finally, Texas farmers are no longer cut out of this lucrative agricultural market.

Plus, Texans are now free to use CBD without fear of arrest," Fazio said in a statement.



Cannabis laws were a major issue during the 2019 legislative session that wrapped up May 27. While a bill to decriminalize possession of small amounts of marijuana failed, lawmakers approved an effort to slightly expand who can access medical cannabis under the state's Compassionate Use Act. That bill is still waiting for Abbott's signature or veto.

The governor has until Sunday, June 16, to make a decision. (Courtesy <https://www.dallasnews.com>)

Related

What new marijuana laws might pass in Texas this year?



What bills are on the table?

Texans for Responsible Marijuana Policy, a coalition that includes NORML and a couple of dozen other groups, is prioritizing two bills this year: one that would decriminalize possession of small amounts of marijuana and another to legalize marijuana for medical use.

Rep. Joe Moody, D-El Paso, is sponsoring the decriminalization bill for the third time. In 2016, more than 66,000 Texans were arrested for marijuana possession, according to the Texas Department of Public Safety.

Moody hopes to cut that number down by replacing the criminal penalty for possession of an ounce or less of marijuana with a fine.

"It's fiscally responsible," Moody said of his bill, adding that "we're being smarter on crime, not saddling young people with criminal histories that are going to take them out of the workforce."

Sen. José Menéndez is again sponsoring legislation to expand the state's so-called Compassionate Use Law.

Currently, only Texans diagnosed with "intractable epilepsy" are allowed to use cannabis that contains low levels of the psychoactive ingredient tetrahydrocannabinol, or THC. Menéndez's bill would dramatically expand this law by legalizing medical marijuana for Texans with certain other debilitating conditions, including cancer, glaucoma, HIV, Alzheimer's, PTSD, autism or chronic pain, nausea and muscle spasms.



"Patients should not be arrested for using a medicine that is legal in every state that borders Texas, including conservative states like Oklahoma and Arkansas," Menéndez, D-San Antonio, said in a recent statement. "The Legislature must act and provide medical freedom to those who need it the most." According to the National Council of State Legislatures, 33 states have implemented comprehensive medical marijuana programs and 10 states have legalized small amounts of marijuana for recreational use. (Courtesy <https://www.dallasnews.com>)

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Investigators Still Don't Know Who Is Responsible Revealed: Crippling Ransomware Attack That Hit Twenty-Three Texas Towns Has Cost \$12 MILLION



Overview

Twenty-three Texas towns were struck by a 'coordinated' ransomware attack

Attacks began two weeks ago in the morning but the municipalities hit have not been named

Majority of those targeted were smaller local governments in Texas

Texas State Department of Information Resources is leading the response

Ransomware cripples computer infrastructure with demand for payment for repairs

It's believed to have cost local governments in Texas close to \$12 million

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

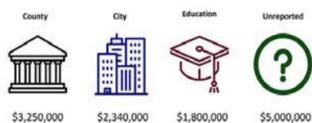
The wave of ransomware attacks targeting 23 local government entities that hit Texas on Friday is believed to have cost the state at least \$12 million, so far.

Last Friday, the Texas Department of Information Resources (DIR) said that it was leading the response to a 'coordinated ransomware attack' that was crippling critical government infrastructure across the state.

Ransomware disables computer networks and holds them hostage in demand

for payment in exchange for a repair of the compromised systems.

Estimated Ransomware Costs - Texas 2019



Twenty-three Texas towns were struck by a 'coordinated' ransomware at-

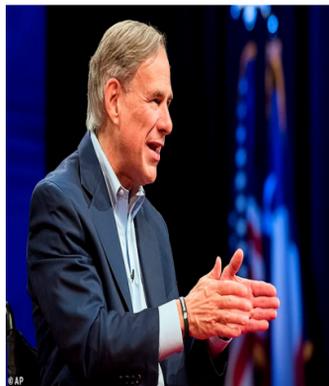
ack. Above, the estimated ransomware costs in 2019 are thought to have exceeded \$12 million

'DIR, the Texas Military Department, and the Texas A&M University System's Cyberresponse and Security Operations Center teams are deploying resources to the most critically impacted jurisdictions,' the department said in a statement at the time.

According to a weekend update, the attacks started on Friday morning although the locations haven't been named.

However, it is understood the 'majority of these entities were smaller local governments,' it said in a statement.

'The State of Texas systems and networks have not been impacted. It appears all entities that were actually or potentially impacted have been identified and notified,' the DIR said.



Texas Governor Greg Abbott deployed cybersecurity experts to the affected areas in order to assess damage and help bring local government entities back online.

'While the state has determined that one 'threat actor' was responsible for all 23 attacks, they have not yet determined who was responsible. Investigations into the origin of this attack are ongoing; however, response and recovery are the priority at this time,' the department said.

'I would suspect that there are systems that are still being recovered,' said Edward Block.

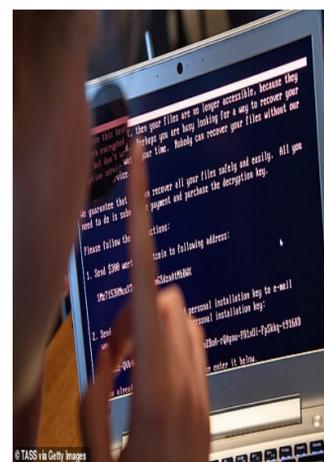
Block served as the Texas state Chief In-

formation Security Officer until October 2016.

'Going public kind of paints a target on the backs of those agencies,' he said, 'which gets the attention of other criminals who may be looking to capitalize on the attacks and launch even more.'

The department has urged local jurisdictions who have been impacted to contact their local TDEM Disaster District Coordinator.

'DIR is fully committed to respond swiftly to this event and provide the necessary resources to bring these entities back online,' the agency said.



The majority of those targeted were smaller local governments. The Texas State Department of Information Resources is leading the response to the attacks.

It is unclear which cities had been impacted by the attacks and what entity is suspected of perpetrating them.

Texas Governor Greg Abbott ordered a 'Level 2 Escalated Response' on Friday following the incident.

The response is one step below the highest level of alert, level 1 or 'emergency' and means the scope of the emergency has expanded beyond that which can be handled by local responders.

In addition to the state and local agencies assisting with the response, 'Governor Abbott also deployed cybersecurity experts to the affected areas in order to

assess damage and help bring local government entities back online,' Nan Tolson from the Governor's Office said in a statement.

A number of federal and state agencies are now assisting the state of Texas including FEMA, the Department of Homeland Security, Texas A&M's Information Technology and Electronic Crime Unit and the Texas Military Department.

Friday's attack came within hours of a massive failure of U.S. Customs and Border Protection computers that caused huge travel delays across the country - although the federal agency has insisted that particular outage was not 'malicious' in nature.

WHAT IS RANSOMWARE?

Cybercriminals attack computer systems by using computer-generated 'blockers' to stop their victim from accessing their device.

This 'attack' may include a message telling users of a computer system that the 'stoppage' is due to 'illegal content' such as porn having been identified on their device.

Anyone who has accessed porn online is therefore probably less likely to take the matter up with law enforcement.

Hackers then ask for money to be paid (a 'ransom'), often in the form of Bitcoins or other untraceable cryptocurrencies, for the block to be removed.

In May 2017, a massive ransomware virus attack called WannaCry spread to the computer systems of hundreds of private companies and public organizations across the globe. Over a year after the initial ransomware attack, WannaCry is still making headlines and causing residual damage. The National Health Service (NHS) has revealed WannaCry costs totaled more than \$100 million. (Courtesy <https://www.dailymail.co.uk>)

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