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'You can't break down': Bahamas keeps up search of Dorian-devastated island



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U.S. credits Mexico, Central America for help reducing border detentions

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - A U.S. immigration official on Monday credited Mexico and Central American countries with helping to reduce border detentions 56% this year, then lashed out at a federal judge for ruling against the Trump administration's strict anti-asylum policy.

With President Donald Trump's anti-immigration policy shaping up as an issue in his 2020 re-election campaign, Mark Morgan, the acting commissioner of U.S. Customs and Border Protection, announced that 64,000 people were detained or turned back at the southwest border in August. That is down 22% from July and 56% from a high mark in May.

Even so, the total was the highest for the month of August in more than a decade, as Central American migrants have headed north in record numbers, many of them seeking asylum from impoverished countries with some of the highest murder rates in the world.

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U.S. still aiming for deal with Mexico on asylum seekers: border chief

Trump border official says frustrated by judge ruling blocking asylum ban

A decade ago, migrants were mostly Mexicans, but in recent years they have been overtaken by Central Americans, mostly from the so-called Northern Triangle countries of Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador.

The Trump administration has been pressuring all of those countries to do more to keep people from reaching the U.S. border, threatening Mexico with tariffs unless it complied.

The United States has persuaded Guatemala to become a so-called safe third country that would accept asylum-seekers, reducing the strain on the United States. Washington is working with Honduras on a similar agreement, but has failed to persuade Mexico to do the same.

Even so, Mexico has agreed to keep Central American asylum-seekers just south of the U.S. border pending their U.S. court appointments and has deployed National Guard officers to halt migrants.

"The Northern Triangle countries, specifically, along with the government of Mexico, have really joined the United States as true partners for the first time," Morgan said.

In June, the United States and Mexico agreed to a 90-day window for Mexico to reduce migrant flows, a period ended last week.

Mexican Foreign Minister Marcelo Ebrard is due to meet with U.S. officials on Tuesday to discuss Mexico's efforts, saying last week that Mexico does not expect the United States to threaten tariffs at this time. While praising Mexico and its southern neighbors, Morgan sharply criticized a U.S. judge who earlier on Monday ruled that an injunction against a restrictive Trump rule on asylum-seekers should apply nationwide.

The rule, unveiled on July 15, requires most immigrants who want asylum in the United States to first seek asylum in a third country they had traveled through on their way.

San Francisco-based U.S. District Judge Jon Tigar had previously issued a nationwide injunction blocking the rule, but the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals narrowed it to only border states within its jurisdiction - California and Arizona - and sent the question back to Tigar.



FILE PHOTO - Soldiers assigned to the National Guard keep watch near a section of the border fence between Mexico and U.S. as seen from Anapra neighborhood in Ciudad Juarez, Mexico September 5, 2019. REUTERS/Jose Luis Gonzalez

On Monday, Tigar ruled it should apply across the entire border, pending a trial on the underlying legality of the Trump administration rule.

Morgan criticized the "unprecedented judicial activism," which he said meant every time the administration came up with a policy to "address this crisis, we end up getting enjoined. It's very, very frustrating, but we're just going to keep going."

Opponents of Trump's immigration policy praised the judge's ruling, saying that beforehand asylum-seekers could be arbitrarily barred based on where they happened to cross the border.

"Sadly, while this ruling removes a major hurdle, far too many obstacles remain, as this administration's war on asylum-seekers appears to know no bounds," Melissa Crow, an attorney with the Southern Poverty Law Center, said in a statement.



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‘You can’t break down’: Bahamas keeps up search of Dorian-devastated island

MARSH HARBOUR, Bahamas (Reuters) - Rescue workers wearing white hazard suits carried out a grim search for bodies and survivors in the hurricane-ravaged Bahamas on Monday, as relief agencies worked to deliver food and supplies over flooded roads and piles of debris.

Members of the Bahamian Defense Force remove bodies from the destroyed Abaco shantytown called Pigeon Peas, after Hurricane Dorian in Marsh Harbour, Bahamas September 8, 2019. REUTERS/Zach Fagenson

The Royal Bahamas Police Force said at least 45 people died after Hurricane Dorian hit the Bahamas on Sept. 1, tossing cars and planes around like toys. The death toll is likely climb.

Dorian was one of the most powerful Caribbean storms on record, a Category 5 hurricane with winds of 200 miles per hour (320 kph). It raged over the Bahamas for nearly two days, becoming the worst disaster in the nation's history.

U.S. working to take in Bahamas storm victims - acting border chief

With dogs and spray paint, crews in grim search for Dorian's dead in Bahamas
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Large swaths of Greater Abaco Island were destroyed. Reuters journalists saw search crews using geotagging technology to mark the locations of bodies in the hard-hit Mudd section of Marsh Harbour on that island.

One Bahamian rescue worker said it is becoming hard to keep composed when surrounded by death.

“If you’re not in touch with yourself then you lose it. You have to be mentally stable because when you’re seeing these things, and when people who lost loves ones are crying on your shoulder you can’t break down on them,” said one hazmat-suited Bahamian police officer who could not give his name. “These families need this, they need

someone to talk to.”

Bahamian officials said 4,800 people had been evacuated from the archipelago's several islands, most from Abaco. Free flights will continue to evacuate people who choose to leave the Bahamas, but there are no mandatory evacuations, officials said.

“The plan is not to move everyone out,” said Carl Smith, a spokesman National Emergency Management Agency, during a news conference on Monday.

Thousands of people poured into the capital, Nassau, where a week after the storm shelters were straining to house evacuees from worse-hit areas. Hundreds more have fled to the United States in search of safety and resources. Shelters are housing about 1,100 people, the agency said; more are staying with friends and relatives. The agency was asking residents whose homes were intact to open them up to people displaced by the storm.

Some 90% of the homes, buildings and infrastructure in Marsh Harbour were damaged, the World Food Programme said. Thousands of people were living in a government building, a medical center and an Anglican church that survived the storms, it said, but had little or no access to water, power and sanitary facilities.

Some 70,000 people were in need of food and shelter, the WFP estimated. Private forecasters estimated that some \$3 billion in insured property was destroyed or damaged in the Caribbean. U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet opened a Human Rights Council session in Geneva on Monday with a minute of silence for hurricane victims.

“Small island nations are among those suffering the most catastrophic effects of climate change, although they contribute very little to fuelling the problem,” Bachelet said. “Just this past week, yet another devastating hurricane hit the Bahamas, taking a terrible toll in human life and destroying precious development gains.”



A child's bicycle is seen in a destroyed neighborhood in the wake of Hurricane Dorian in Marsh Harbour



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Editor's Choice



Cast member Scarlett Johansson arrives at the world premiere of "Jojo Rabbit" at the Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF) in Toronto, Ontario, Canada September 8, 2019. REUTERS/Mario Anzuoni TPX IMAGES OF THE DAY



Pope Francis meets Mauritius' acting president Barlen Vyapoory in Port Louis, Mauritius, September 9, 2019. Vatican Media/Handout via REUTERS ATTENTION EDITORS - THIS IMAGE WAS PROVIDED BY A THIRD PARTY.



Pope Francis leaves after a visit in Pere Laval's Shrine in Port Louis, Mauritius, September 9, 2019. REUTERS/Yara Nardi



Britain's Prime Minister Boris Johnson reacts as Ireland's Prime Minister (Taoiseach) Leo Varadkar speaks in Dublin, Ireland, September 9, 2019. REUTERS/Phil Noble TPX IMAGES OF THE DAY



Fans of Spanish singer Camilo Sesto queue to attend his wake in Madrid, Spain, September 9, 2019. REUTERS/Susana Vera TPX IMAGES OF THE DAY



U.S. Open winner Bianca Andreescu poses with her trophy at top of the Rock in New York



Cast member Keke Palmer arrives for the gala presentation of Hustlers at the Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF) in Toronto, Ontario, Canada September 7, 2019. REUTERS/Mario Anzuoni TPX IMAGES OF THE DAY



UFC 242 - Khabib Nurmagomedov v Dustin Poirier - Men's UFC lightweight title

A team of Michigan State University researchers have discovered a bacterium that has the ability to withstand incredible amounts of toxicity to create 24-karat gold. This process, known as microbial alchemy, will help scientists turn a substance of no value into a solid, precious metal.

The team was led by Kazem Kashefi, assistant professor of microbiology and molecular genetics. Working along with Adam Brown, associate professor of electronic art and intermedia, the team discovered that the metal-tolerant bacteria *Cupriavidus metallidurans* can grow on massive concentrations of gold chloride – or liquid gold, a toxic chemical compound found in nature.

According to the research team, the bacteria is at least 25 times stronger than previously reported. They also combined their research with an art installation called “The Great Work of the Metal Lover”, which uses a combination of biotechnology, art and alchemy to turn liquid gold into 24-karat gold. The sculpture contains a portable laboratory, a glass bioreactor and the bacteria, which produce gold in front of an audience.



The testing apparatus Michigan State University researchers used to discover a bacterium that has the ability to withstand incredible amounts of toxicity to create 24-karat gold.

Brown and Kashefi fed the bacteria unprecedented amounts of gold chloride and within a week the bacteria transformed the toxins into a gold nugget. “This is neo-alchemy. Every part, every detail of the project is a cross between modern microbiology and alchemy,” Brown said. “Science tries to explain the phenomenological world. As an artist,

Scientists Use Super-Strong Bacteria To Produce 24K Gold



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

I’m trying to create a phenomenon. Art has the ability to push scientific inquiry.” It would be extremely expensive to duplicate the process on a larger scale, so instead Brown said that the work should be used to “raise questions about greed, economy and environmental impact, focusing on the ethics related to science and the engineering of nature.”

“Art has the ability to probe and question the impact of science in the world, and ‘The Great Work of the Metal Lover’ speaks directly to the scientific preoccupation while trying to shape and bend biology to our will within the postbiological age,” Brown said. (Courtesy <https://inhabitat.com>)

Related

Could This Newly Discovered Gold-Loving Fungus Reveal Massive New Gold Deposits In Australia? (Kitco News) - Australian scientists discovered a new type of fungus that decorates itself with gold nanoparticles it absorbs from deposits below the surface. The discovery, published in the *Nature Communications* journal last week,

could be a game changer for miners trying to pinpoint new massive gold deposits hiding underground, according to author and geomicrobiologist of the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO), Tsing Bohu.

“We show fungi, a major driver of mineral bioweathering, can initiate gold oxidation under Earth surface conditions, which is of significance for dissolved gold species formation and distribution,” the report stated.



Strands of gold running through mushroom (fungus) found in the gold-rich soil of Western Australia. The strain of the *Fusarium oxysporum*

fungus, which looks like a fluffy pink organism that surrounds itself with gold nanoparticles, was found in Boddington, Western Australia, located about 80 miles south-east of Perth.

“Fungi can oxidise tiny particles of gold and precipitate it on their strands – this cycling process may contribute to how gold and other elements are distributed around the Earth’s surface,” Bohu said. The researchers made the discovery when experimenting with microbes found in the gold-rich soil of Western Australia.

What makes this fungus unique is its ability to dissolve gold by producing a chemical known as superoxide. After dissolving the metal, the fungus can then turn the absorbed metal back into solid form, the report highlighted.

“We observed the precipitation of gold on the surface of the fungus,” Bohu stated. “Gold is so chemically inactive that this interaction is both unusual and surprising – it had to be seen to be believed.”

The research team will continue to look

into how the fungus is able to interact with gold and whether or not its presence can be indicative of bigger gold deposits below the surface.

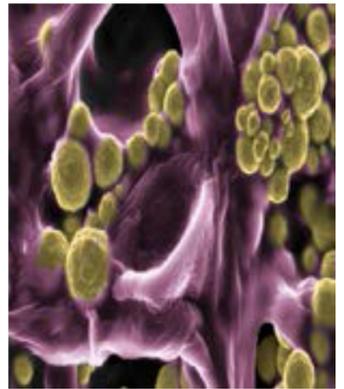


Image Courtesy of CSIRO: Colored image of the gold-coated *Fusarium oxysporum* fungi.

“We want to understand if the fungus we studied ... can be used in combination with these exploration tools to help industry to target prospective areas,” CSIRO chief research scientist Ravi Anand said.

Gold prospectors, however, should not get ahead of themselves by traveling to Western Australia in search of new gold deposits based on the location of the fungus, as it can only be spotted under a microscope.

Either way, the news could be big for Australia — the world’s second-largest gold producer, especially because the nation’s gold output is projected to decline in the next five years, according to the S&P Global Market Intelligence report published in April.

It is estimated that the mining nation will fall into fourth place by 2024, surpassed by Canada and Russia.

“Australia’s production is expected to fall the most. The current second-largest gold producing nation behind China is expected to fall to fourth place globally in 2024,” S&P Global Market Intelligence analyst Christopher Galbraith said. (Courtesy <https://www.kitco.com/>)

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VA Mission Act Will Provide New Patient Care Options And More Community Assistance Choices

Vets Get Access To Urgent Care And Private Medical Care Under New Law



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

The Department of Veterans Affairs MISSION Act has officially launched, working to expand patient access to care and boost community care options.

“The changes not only improve our ability to provide the health care Veterans need, but also when and where they need it,” VA Secretary Robert Wilkie said in a statement on the day of the program’s launch. “It will also put Veterans at the center of their care and offer options, including expanded telehealth and urgent care, so they can find the balance in the system that is right for them.” The program, which revamps the previous Veterans Choice program, was made official nearly one year ago when President Trump signed the \$5.2 billion MISSION Act into law.

“In every generation there have been heroes like them, patriots who answer the call to serve, who do whatever it takes, wherever and whenever we need them to defend America,” the President said upon signing the bill. “They put everything on the line for us. And when they come home, we must do everything that we can possibly do for them.

And that’s what we’re doing.”



The Department of Veterans Affairs will pay for treatment from non-VA doctors under certain conditions.

Foremost, the MISSION Act overhauls the Veterans Choice program, which had long received scrutiny from industry leaders. Choice came with long wait times and was too complicated to be functional, many lawmakers agreed.

Under the MISSION Act, veterans will face more simplified parameters to qualify for third-party care. Additionally, the MISSION Act gets rid of some administrative properties tied to the referral process, ideally reducing the amount of time patients must wait between VA referral and connecting with the third-party clinician.

The law expands VA’s community care program and streamlines it into one program.

The MISSION Act also extends caregiver access to veterans who served prior to 9/11; previous to the law, the caregiver programs only applied to post-9/11 veterans.

Ultimately, the MISSION Act was designed to make it easier for veterans to access healthcare and to put those veterans at the center of their care.

“We owe our veterans the best possible care and support that they have earned,” said Senator Johnny Isakson, one of the bipartisan bill’s co-sponsors. “This is a truly meaningful victory for our nation’s veterans, who will benefit from more choice and fewer barriers to care. The signing of this legislation marks the completion of the final piece in a great mosaic of veterans reforms that we set out to accomplish over the last two years.”



As of last Thursday, U.S. veterans have been granted expanded access to medical care outside Department of Veterans Affairs as part of a law signed last year by President Donald Trump.

This law has not come without its controversies. Senate probes and investigations from the Government Accountability Office (GAO) have looked into whether the program will result in VA privatization and whether the agency is genuinely prepared for the program’s rollout.

“Since the Mission Act was signed into law, my concern is that VA’s primary focus is supplanting in-house care, as opposed to supplementing that care when it makes the most sense for veterans,” said Senator Jon Tester during a hearing on the MISSION Act. “In its rush to open the door to the private sector, my concern is that VA is outsourcing its responsibility to ensure veterans receive timely and high-quality care.” Tester acknowledged VA’s limited knowledge about the timeliness of veteran community care access as well as the quality of care delivered, despite VA promises to

allocate funds to community providers who deliver top-notch care.

“So on one hand, VA doesn’t have a clear understanding of how much this Program will cost. And on the other, VA openly states that it would make funding decisions based on whether its facilities are meeting the standards it fails to enforce on the private sector,” Tester said. “What I see is behavior that smacks of a deliberate effort – not to implement the best policy but to carry out a political agenda.”



The John Cochran VA Medical Center in St. Louis, Mo. (Shown above) New rule changes Thursday have expanded veterans’ ability to seek care from private physicians. (Photo UPI)

For its part, VA has worked to address concerns about VA privatization, stating that this program is about expanding veteran choice for care access.

“It is important to note that the proposed Veterans Community Care Program does not supplant VA’s mission to provide care in VA facilities to Veterans who have earned it,” Richard A. Stone, MD, VA’s executive in charge, explained during the hearing. “VA’s proposed access standards will complement existing VA care by providing Veterans with greater choice to receive care in the community based on their individual needs and preferences.”

GAO has likewise noted some issues with the MISSION Act, launching an investigation into the VA’s preparedness to roll out the program. Specifically, GAO found that the agency lacked sufficient systems to carry out the Veterans Community Care Program (VCCP) and did not have enough information about referral times. Additionally, GAO stated that VA had now carried out recommendations for improving the VCCP. Other critics have pointed to issues with the VA’s new EHR rollout as a detriment to VCCP, but the agency has noted that the

community care program is not contingent on the revamped EHR software.



The Department of Veterans Affairs MISSION Act has officially launched delivering expanded patient access to health care while boosting community care options.

“While electronic health records modernization is an important improvement, it’s not central to the success of the MISSION Act,” VA Secretary Robert Wilkie, said in a recent response to media critics. “No one from the VA has ever said implementation of the new private care option Veterans will have under the MISSION Act is ‘years’ away because of our effort to modernize health records.” Instead, VA promised fewer bureaucratic hurdles for its veteran beneficiaries upon the MISSION Act’s launch, Wilkie said in an emailed statement to veterans earlier this week.

“What can Veterans expect on June 6?” he posited. “Less red tape, more satisfaction and predictability for patients, more efficiency for our clinicians, and better value for taxpayers.”

Additionally, veterans can expect expanded access to community care options, access to walk-in or urgent care clinics, and what Wilkie said will be a stronger patient-provider relationship.



The official Urgent Care Provider badge.

It is difficult to say how the program will impact veterans on only the first day of implementation. If VA can, in fact, overcome the hurdles laid out by its critics, the program has the promise to expand veteran access to care and choice in care. But the challenges are clear, and limited systems for addressing wait times and third-party clinician referrals may prove daunting for the agency. (Courtesy patientengagementhit.com)



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