

U.S. drone strike kills 30 pine nut farm workers in Afghanistan

JALALABAD, Afghanistan (Reuters) - A U.S. drone strike intended to hit an Islamic State (IS) hideout in Afghanistan killed at least 30 civilians resting after a day's labor in the fields, officials said on Thursday.

The attack on Wednesday night also injured 40 people after accidentally targeting farmers and laborers who had just finished collecting pine nuts at mountainous Wazir Tangi in eastern Nangarhar province, three Afghan officials told Reuters. Factbox: Civilian deaths from air strikes in Afghanistan

Reuters Graphic

"The workers had lit a bonfire and were sitting together when a drone targeted them," tribal elder Malik Rahat Gul told Reuters by telephone from Wazir Tangi.

Afghanistan's Defence Ministry and a senior U.S. official in Kabul confirmed the drone strike, but did not share details of civilian casualties.

"U.S. forces conducted a drone strike against Daesh (IS) terrorists in Nangarhar," said Colonel Sonny Leggett, a spokesman for U.S. forces in Afghanistan. "We are aware of allegations of the death of non-combatants and are working with local officials to determine the facts." About 14,000 U.S. troops are in Afghanistan, training and advising Afghan security forces and conducting counter-insurgency operations against IS and the Taliban movement.

Haidar Khan, who owns the pine nut fields, said about 150 workers were there for harvesting, with some still missing as well as the confirmed dead and injured.

A survivor of the drone strike said about 200 laborers were sleeping in five tents pitched near

the farm when the attack happened.

Men carry a coffin of one of the victims after a drone strike, in Khogyani district of Nangarhar province, Afghanistan September 19, 2019. REUTERS/Parwiz

"Some of us managed to escape, some were injured but many were killed," said Juma Gul, a resident of northeastern Kunar province who had traveled along with laborers to harvest and shell pine nuts this week.

Angered by the attack, some residents of Nangarhar province demanded an apology and monetary compensation from the U.S. government.

"Such mistakes cannot be justified. American forces must realize (they) will never win the war by killing innocent civilians," said Javed Mansur, a resident of Jalalabad city.

Scores of local men joined a protest against the attack on Thursday morning as they helped carry the victims' bodies to Jalalabad city and then to the burial site.

Attallah Khogyani, a spokesman for the provincial governor said the aerial attack was meant to target IS militants who often use farmlands for training and recruitment purposes, but had hit innocent civilians.

Jihadist IS fighters first appeared in Afghanistan in 2014 and have since made inroads in the east and north where they are battling the government, U.S. forces and the Taliban.

The exact number of IS fighters is difficult to calculate because they frequently switch allegiances, but the U.S. military estimates there are about 2,000.



Men carry a coffin of one of the victims after a drone strike, in Khogyani district of Nangarhar province, Afghanistan September 19, 2019. REUTERS/Parwiz

There was no word from IS on the attack. There has been no let-up in assaults by Taliban and IS as Afghanistan prepares for a presidential election this month.

In a separate incident, at least 20 people died in a suicide truck bomb attack on Thursday carried out by the Taliban in the southern province of Zabul.

Hundreds of civilians have been killed in fighting across Afghanistan after the collapse of U.S.-Taliban

peace talks this month. The Taliban has warned U.S. President Donald Trump will regret his decision to abruptly call off talks that could have led to a political settlement to end the 18-year-old war.

The United Nations says nearly 4,000 civilians were killed or wounded in the first half of the year. That included a big increase in casualties inflicted by government and U.S.-led foreign forces.

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Editor's Choice



Canada's Prime Minister Justin Trudeau apologizes for wearing brownface makeup in 2001, to reporters on the Liberal party leader's election campaign jet in Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada in a still image from video September 18, 2019. CBC via REUTERS.

Facebook Chief Executive Mark Zuckerberg meets with lawmakers to discuss "future internet regulation"



Damaged vehicles are seen at the site of a car bomb attack in Qalat, capital of Zabul province



First Lady Melania Trump greets fourth-graders during a ribbon cutting and ceremonial ride to the top, to celebrate the re-opening of the Washington Monument, after a 37-month closure to modernize the elevator control system and construct a new security screening facility, in Washington, U.S., September 19, 2019. REUTERS/AI Drago TPX IMAGES OF THE DAY



Palestinian man takes out a quail from a net after catching it on a beach in the southern Gaza Strip



Britain's Prime Minister Boris Johnson flies a Black Hornet nano drone during a meeting with military personnel on Salisbury plain training area near Salisbury



Sixteen year-old Swedish climate activist Greta Thunberg testifies at a House Foreign Affairs subcommittee and House Select Climate Crisis Committee in Washington



Owner of Lucullus Bakery, Stone Yu, shows Leader of Canada's Conservatives Andrew Scheer, how to make Chinese pastries as he campaigns for the upcoming election in Toronto, Ontario, Canada, September 18, 2019. REUTERS/Carlos Osorio

Long-term care is already prohibitively expensive for many seniors, and the problem is expected to explode in scope in the next couple of decades, the New York Times reports.

The big picture: The problem is especially acute for the group of seniors that have incomes too high to qualify for Medicaid or subsidized housing, but too low to afford pricey long-term care.

•In a decade, 80% of seniors that fall into the middle-income category will have less than \$60,000 a year in income and assets, according to a recent study. But assisted living plus out-of-pocket medical expenses is projected to cost \$62,000.

•Depending on how long-term care is defined, between half and two-thirds of older Americans are expected to need it.

The bottom line: Medicare and Social Security funding is already in trouble, making it hard to imagine where the money for any additional long-term care benefits would come from. Smaller solutions are easier to picture.

•Regardless of whether the U.S. budget has room for it or not, the problem of how to pay for seniors' care is barreling towards us, and it's only going to get worse.

Seniors Are The Health Care Industry's "Gold Rush"



Health care companies are rushing to buy or invest in areas that focus on the elderly population, as baby boomers are reaching an age when they require more health care services.

The big picture: More of the nation's health care spending is going toward government programs, especially Medicare and Medicaid, so the industry is naturally running to where the dollars will be. But that doesn't guarantee seniors will get better care.

Driving the news: Companies are investing in seniors in a few ways, many of which involve home health, assisted living, nursing homes, hospice and drugs:

Many Face A Long-Term Care Cost Crisis
America's Seniors Facing Troubling "Sunset" Years



(Photo/The Denver Post via Getty Images)
Compiled And Edited By John T. Robbins, Southern Daily Editor

Some of the biggest industry mergers prioritize the prescription drug market of people 65 years and older — a demographic where more than nine out of 10 have taken at least one prescription drug in the past month.

•Other deals — like Humana's acquisitions of Kindred Healthcare and Curo Health Services, or ProMedica's buyout of bankrupt senior living care provider HCR ManorCare— are aimed at tracking older people once they leave the hospital so they avoid setbacks and stay in the comfort of their homes.

•More hospitals are selling Medicare Advantage plans, figuring they may as well get taxpayer premium dollars if they have to coordinate care for their elderly populations.

•Health care startups are no longer catering only to working-age people in urban settings, CNBC recently reported.



Government sources report that Medicare and Social Security funds are already in trouble.

By the numbers: Aging accounts for 40% of the increase in federal health care spending over the next three decades, per the Congressional Budget Office. Most spending on seniors occurs in Medicare, but a growing number of retirees have no major assets or income and face poverty, resulting in more Medicaid spending. The number of family members and friends who can act as caregivers for their relatives also is expected to drop sharply by 2030, according to AARP. Yet it can be "draining on the financial resources of a family" to rely on outside care, said Stephen Buck, a co-founder of a handful of health care startups.

The bottom line: Many of these strategies ultimately are looking for quick returns, especially from Medicare. And companies could abandon their ideas if financial problems pop up, said Joanne Lynn, director of elder care programs at Altarum.

"Those making money on medical procedures, drugs and durable medical equipment will do well for a while, and more mergers and acquisitions will consolidate power and investment returns,"

Lynn said. "But the average American faces an increasingly difficult last few years of life."

Study: Most seniors won't be able to afford long-term care by 2029



Veterans at the Greenridge Place Memory Care Community on November 10, 2017. (Photo/The Denver Post via Getty Images)

A recent Health Affairs analysis found that most middle-income seniors aged 75 to 84 will not be able to afford long-term care including senior housing or assisted living in the next decade.

The big picture: The authors project that there will be 14.4 million middle-income seniors in America by 2029. Roughly 60% of those seniors "will have mobility limitations" and 20% "will have high health care and functional needs." However, 54% of those seniors will not have the financial resources to pay for senior

housing — and the often necessary care provided there.

Details: The authors identify middle-income seniors as those in the 41st to the 80th percentile of the individual financial resource distribution of 2014 seniors. The authors also state that this diverse group of seniors will become more educated in the next decade, which should result in lower poverty levels.

Soaring Federal Spending On Seniors



(Photo/Getty Images)

More than half of federal spending will soon be dedicated to seniors, according to the latest estimates from Congress' official budget scorekeeper.

Why it matters: That spending will be driven largely by the steadily rising cost of health care. And futzing around the edges of the system won't change that trend.

Between the lines: Medicare and Social Security alone cost the federal government roughly \$1.3 trillion last year, according to the Congressional Budget Office's latest estimates.

•CBO expects those two programs to reach \$2.7 trillion by 2029.

•Throw in a handful of other programs that Congress funds each year, and federal spending on people over 65 is expected to account for more 10% of the total U.S. economy in a decade.

•Once you subtract the money the government spends on interest payments on the debt, programs for seniors would take up 50% of all remaining spending.

Aging baby boomers and rising health care costs are the main drivers of that spending. Per-person health care costs "are projected to grow faster than the economy over the long term," CBO said. (Courtesy axios.com)

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The Downtown Redevelopment Authority / TIRZ No.3 (the "DRA") will receive proposals from developers, landlords, brokers and other interested parties for a vibrant innovation space to become the center of gravity for technology and entrepreneurship in the northern node of the Houston Innovation Corridor, located in TIRZ No.3 in Downtown Houston, Texas. Proposals will be received until 5:00 PM, local time on Thursday, September 19, 2019 by Robert Pieroni, Director of Economic Development, 2 Houston Center, 909 Fannin, Suite 1650, Houston, Texas 77010. Bids received after this time will not be accepted. Respective of this advertisement, telephone, mail, email queries or requests for information will be addressed by the Authority.

Beginning Monday, August 26, 2019, this project's Request for Proposals (RFP) may be reviewed and downloaded as an electronic file from the Authority's website: <http://www.downtowntirz.com>. A pre-submittal conference is scheduled for 2:00 PM, Thursday, September 12, 2019, to be held at the Authority's offices. Following this conference, queries or requests for information will be addressed by the Authority, pursuant to the instructions provided in the RFP. Based on the Proposals submitted, an evaluation DRA selection committee. The findings and recommendations of the selection committee will be presented to the full DRA Board of Directors for final approval. The project will not move forward without full board approval.



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Tesla CEO Elon Musk is banking on a risky new strategy for the electric automaker: a robotaxi service that he argues will transform Tesla into a \$500 billion company. Like other AV companies, Musk is fixated on a potential \$3 trillion market opportunity for autonomous mobility as a service. But while most say fully self-driving cars are still a decade away, Musk is telling investors they'll be here by next year and that Tesla will have first mover advantage with a million robotaxis on the road. Investors are eager to fund his plans — witness last week's fresh \$2.7 billion equity and bond deal.

Musk's track record is spotty, though — even he admits to blowing his self-imposed timetables — but in the end, he insists, "I get it done."

Still, his latest idea — for Tesla owners to rent out their cars via a vast Tesla robotaxi network — seems "half baked," as Cowen analyst Jeffrey Osborne put it to CNBC. Musk touted the Tesla car-sharing network at an investor event on April 22.

Then, according to CNBC and Bloomberg, he doubled down a week later on a private investor call, saying AVs are now the fundamental driver of value for Tesla and making his case for that \$500 billion market cap.

How it will work, according to Musk:

- Tesla owners can offer their cars for rent on Tesla's car-sharing network.
- They could pocket up to \$30,000 a year (Tesla would keep 25% to 30%) and their cars will rise in value — up to \$250,000 within 3 years, Musk claims — as more self-driving capabilities are added via software updates.
- Tesla would supplement the fleet with company-owned cars as needed.

The economics of the plan seem dubious and there are a host of serious legal, logistical and technology questions that remain unanswered.



•Tesla says it made a technological leap by replacing a Nvidia processor with a new

Tesla's Long-Shot Robotaxi Plan



(Illustration/Aida Amer/Axios)

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

proprietary AV computer chip, which will enable self-driving capabilities starting in 2020.

•"I feel very confident predicting autonomous robotaxis from Tesla next year. Not everywhere. But we will have regulatory approval somewhere," Musk says.

•But there are no federal regulations on AVs and no prescribed validation methods, so states are still trying to figure out how to govern self-driving cars.

What they're saying:

•The new focus on autonomy could push out the path to profitability even further, Barclays analyst Brian Johnson wrote in a research note Tuesday.

•Patient investors will be rewarded, ARK Invest analyst Tasha Keeney tells Axios. "It's not too wild to say the company be worth \$500 billion in the next 5 years."

•"Let's count how many truly autonomous (no human safety driver) Tesla taxis (public chooses destination & pays) on regular streets (unrestricted human driven cars on the same streets) on December 31, 2020. It will not be a million. My prediction: zero.

Count & retweet this then," tweeted robotics pioneer Rodney Brooks.

Tesla's strategy is far-fetched, but plausible, if, as Osborne says, they are better than GM at manufacturing, better than Nvidia at hardware, better than Google at software, and better than Uber at running a taxi service. That's a lot of ifs.

Related

Tesla owners already share their cars on Turo



Photo: Manuel Romano/NurPhoto via Getty Images

If it seems unlikely that wealthy Tesla owners would want to share their high-tech cars with the masses, think again. Teslas are al-

ready among the most popular cars rented on Turo, the original peer-to-peer car-sharing site.

There's an established market for occasional use of a Tesla, and owners can make good money renting out their car when they're not using it. Instead of a side hustle, Turo pitches car-sharing as a way to "car up" to a premium vehicle you might not otherwise afford.

By the numbers, per Turo:

•Tesla's Model S is the 6th most popular car rented on Turo, and Models X and 3 are 10th and 11th.

•Turo lists 6,000 Teslas for rent.

•Model S owners earn \$1,200 per month by renting their cars an average of 11 days.

•The average monthly finance cost to purchase a Tesla is \$1,020, which means "you can essentially get a free Tesla if you're willing to share it on Turo 10 days a month," Turo CMO Andrew Mok tells Axios.

If self-driving Teslas are going to appreciate the way Musk promises, savvy entrepreneurs ought to build up their own mini-fleets to rent via both sites. (Courtesy axios.com)

com)

Related

Cars of the future need to be able to heal themselves



(Illustration: Aida Amer/Axios)

High-tech cars of the future may be subject to attacks, viruses, and even minor programming bugs — which is why they need to be able to fix themselves.

We're not driving cars anymore — we're driving computers:

•When a software glitch occurs on our smartphone or laptop, it's an annoyance.

•But when there's a programming defect in an autonomous vehicle, it could have dire consequences. This, in turn, could set back the entire industry plus undermine the chance to build public trust in self-driving cars.

Some Tesla owners last week reported in an online forum that they could no longer access the car's Autopilot system and related assisted-driving features, with some speculating it was tied to a recent firmware update.

Cars are complicated, with 100 or more computer-controlled subsystems that are needed for functions like steering, braking, and adjusting the seats. And all that hardware is embedded with massive amounts of software.

•By 2020, 98% of new cars will be connected to the internet, making it easier to add new features or capabilities via over-the-air software updates.

•Samsung's Harman subsidiary handles OTA updates for 24 automakers, but most carmakers still require customers to make a trip to the dealership for driving updates.

•Tesla is the exception. The company says it has pushed out hundreds of OTA updates to its vehicles since 2012. (Courtesy axios.com)



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