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Inside C2

# Southern DAILY

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## U.S. Justice Department opens probe into Minneapolis policing practices following Chauvin conviction

WASHINGTON, April 21 (Xinhua) -- The U.S. Department of Justice on Wednesday opened a civil investigation into the Minneapolis Police Department's practices, one day after the conviction of former Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin for the death of George Floyd.

Attorney General Merrick Garland said during a news conference that the aim of the investigation, which is separate from the federal criminal investigation into Floyd's death that has already been underway, is to assess whether the Minneapolis Police Department engages in a pattern or practice of using excessive force, including during protests.

The just-announced investigation falls into the category known as "pattern-or-practice investigations," which the DOJ has said often examine "whether the police department has engaged in a pattern or practice of stops, searches, or arrests that violate the Fourth Amendment; use of excessive force; discriminatory policing; violation of the constitutional rights of criminal suspects; or violation of First Amendment rights."

"The investigation will also assess whether the MPD engages in discriminatory conduct, and whether its treatment of those with behavioral health disabilities is unlawful," Garland said, adding the probe will "include a comprehensive review of the Minneapolis Police Department's policies, training, supervision and use-of-force investigations."

Garland said that if the DOJ concludes "there's reasonable cause to believe there is a pattern or practice of unconstitutional or unlawful policing," they will issue a public report of their conclusions and the agency has the authority to bring a civil lawsuit asking a federal court to "provide injunctive relief that orders the MPD to change its policies and practices to avoid further violations."

The attorney general said the DOJ "has already begun to



reach out to community groups and members of the public to learn about their experiences with the MPD," adding federal investigators will also reach out to police officers to gather information related to the training and support they receive.

"The challenges we face are deeply woven into our history. They did not arise today or last year. Building trust between community and law enforcement will take time and effort by all of us, but we undertake this task with determination and urgency knowing that change cannot wait," Garland said at the end of his remarks.

Garland's announcement came one day after a jury found Chauvin guilty on all the three criminal charges against him -- second-degree murder, third-degree murder and second-degree manslaughter -- for kneeling on the neck of Floyd, a black man, for nine minutes and 29 seconds in May 2020.

The former police officer could face up to 40 years in prison for second-degree murder, up to 25 years for third-degree murder and up to 10 years for manslaughter. Enditem

## CRRC Sifang America made railcars begin in-service testing in Chicago

CHICAGO, April 21 (Xinhua) -- An eight-car train left Chicago O'Hare International Airport station at 5:50 a.m. local time Wednesday and headed toward downtown Chicago.

Assembled by China Railway Rolling Stock Corporation (CRRC) Sifang America Incorporated in Chicago, the eight railcars, part of the first batch of the 10 7000-series railcars CRRC Sifang America has delivered to the Chicago Transit Authority (CTA), officially kicked off in-service test run within CTA traffic system.

The 7000-series railcars have bold, blue end caps, new layout of headlights and taillights, and a new seating configuration featuring a mix of forward facing and aisle-facing seats, which has maximized available space and customer comfort.

The new generation railcars have more to brag: they are equipped with LED lighting, improved active vehicle suspension system,

new technologies that help improve the safety and security of day-to-day operations, new touchscreen controls with an operator alert system, remote access capabilities for maintenance diagnostics, and additional high-definition security cameras; and have redesigned, all-glass windbreak panel flanking the passenger side doors, double-sided displays in the center of cars displaying information of next and upcoming stations, an "express mode" for hearing impaired customers, and distinct door chimes for the opening and closing doors to aid vision-impaired riders.

The maximum speed of the rail cars is 70 miles or 112 km per hour. CTA has been testing the 10 railcars from CRRC Sifang America since last summer, operating them out-of-service to evaluate their performance in a wide range of weather and operating conditions. Once the in-service testing, which is expected to continue through early 2022, is satisfactorily completed, batch production and

delivery will start.

CRRC Sifang America won a 1.3-billion-U.S.-dollar contract in 2016 to supply 846 7000-series railcars to CTA. These railcars will replace nearly half of CTA's subway fleet, where the oldest cars have been hitting the tracks for more than 30 years. For the project, CRRC Sifang America has invested 100 million dollars and constructed a factory on the South Side of Chicago. The assembly factory has not only generated hundreds of jobs for Chicagoans but also created significant opportunities for local suppliers and related businesses. More importantly, the factory marked the first time in more than 50 years that railcars were produced in Chicago. "As CTA president, one of my main priorities has been to modernize our system to benefit our customers, as well as the communities we serve," said CTA President Dorval R. Carter, Jr. "These new railcars are the latest step we're taking to build a 21st century transit experience, while also boosting the local economy through the creation of good paying, local jobs."



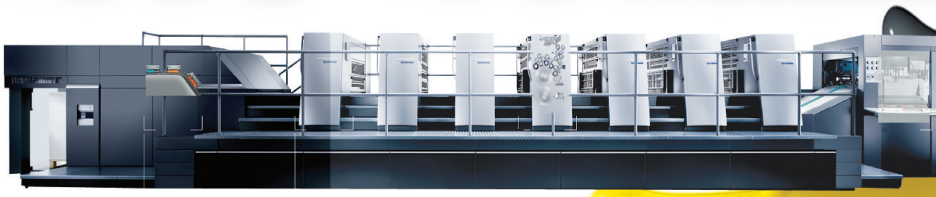
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# WEA LEE'S GLOBAL NOTES

## CORONAVIRUS DIARY

04/21/2021



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## Vaccine Diplomacy Between The Nations

Paraguay is a nation that has diplomatic relations with Taiwan and is the only country in South America that is facing a serious COVID-19 pandemic crisis that is becoming increasingly desperate.

In recent years, Taiwan has upgraded Paraguay's health system and built thousands of homes for the poor, including the building for its Congress.

When this pandemic began to soar, Paraguayan politicians had to come to consider giving up some of its old allies in order to establish diplomatic relations with China.

It is also very sad that the poor nations around the world are still waiting for help in such a difficult time.

It is true that the pandemic is really changing the globe, not

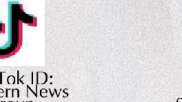
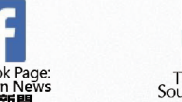
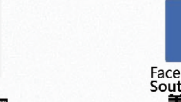


just economically, but also politically.

Minister Acevedo said recently that Beijing had made it clear that it is interested in formal ties with Paraguay.

He has sought to pressure Taiwan and the United States to get vaccine to Paraguay

quickly. The Taiwan government has accused China of using "vaccine diplomacy" to pressure Paraguay to sever ties with Taipei. U.S. Secretary of State Blinken urged the Paraguay government to continue to work with democratic and global partners including Taiwan.



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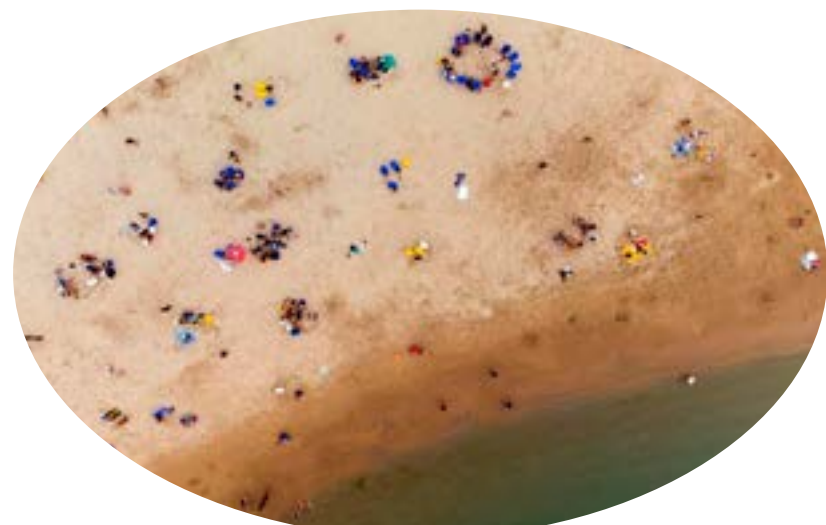
## Editor's Choice



A person reacts after the verdict in the trial of former Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin, found guilty of the death of George Floyd, in front of Hennepin County Government Center, in Minneapolis, Minnesota. REUTERS/Carlos Barria



A boy runs during a dust storm at the Qargha Lake, on the outskirts of Kabul, Afghanistan. REUTERS/Mohammad Ismail



Israelis enjoy the beach of the Mediterranean during a heat wave as coronavirus restrictions ease around the country, in Ashkelon Israel. REUTERS/Amir Cohen



Former Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin is led away in handcuffs after a jury found him guilty of all charges in his trial for second-degree murder, third-degree murder and second-degree manslaughter in the death of George Floyd in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Pool via REUTERS



A girl carries a knife during a scuffle at a demonstration to mark the informal cannabis holiday, 4/20, in Hyde Park, London, Britain. REUTERS/Tom Nicholson



A staff member gives a video tour of an art installation in the form of a pharmacy where everything is made out of felt to a customer, using a phone, in London, Britain. REUTERS/Tom Nicholson



## CDC: Variant Found In Britain Most Common Now In The U.S.



CDC Director Dr. Rochelle Walensky speaks to the press after visiting the Hynes Convention Center FEMA Mass Vaccination Site in Boston, Mass., on March 30, 2021. (Photo/E. Clark-Pool/Getty Images)

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

WASHINGTON—A variant of the coronavirus first identified in Britain is now the most common strain circulating in the United States.

The director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Dr. Rochelle Walensky, says the strain, formally known as B.1.1.7, is “now the most common lineage circulating in the United States.”

The strain has been shown to be more transmissible and infectious among younger Americans, which Walensky says contributed to rising case counts in recent weeks. Walensky says new outbreaks have been tied to youth sports and daycare centers. She particularly encouraged states with rising caseloads to curtail or suspend youth sport activities to slow the spread of the virus. The United States leads the world with 30.8 million confirmed cases and more than 556,000 confirmed deaths.



### Related

#### All Our Recent Progress With COVID-19 Could Be Wiped Out By Variants, CDC Director Says

(CNN)The US is at risk of losing all its recent gains in the battle against Covid-19 as highly contagious variants take advantage of Americans getting lax with safety measures.

“Please hear me clearly: At this level of cases with variants spreading, we stand to completely lose the hard-earned ground we have gained,” said Dr. Rochelle Walensky, director of the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. After weeks of tumbling case numbers, new infections are on the rise again -- about 2% more this past week compared to the previous week, Walensky said Monday. “Similarly, the most recent seven-day average of deaths has also increased more than 2% ... to nearly 2,000 deaths per day.” Walensky also called out states that were easing up on Covid-19 safety mandates. “I am really worried about reports that more states are rolling back the exact public health measures we have recommended to protect people from Covid-19,” she said.



“Please stay strong in your conviction. Continue wearing your well-fitting mask and taking the other public health prevention actions that we know work,” Walensky added. “Ultimately, vaccination is what will bring us out of this pandemic. To get there, we need to vaccinate many more people.”

**New variants keep spreading** March will be a very important chapter in this pandemic. The CDC has predicted the highly contagious B.1.1.7 variant first detected in the UK will become the dominant strain in the US this month.

More than 2,460 infections involving variant strains have been reported, according to the CDC data. The vast majority of those cases -- at least 2,400 -- are of the highly contagious B.1.1.7 strain. Those counts are probably much lower than the actual number of people infected by variants. The numbers represent only those variant cases found through genomic sequencing, the CDC has said. The US has lagged behind dozens of other countries in the proportion of cases tested for variants, but the CDC said it’s working to scale up those efforts.



**Can vaccines fend off the new variants?** Johnson & Johnson, Moderna and Pfizer-BioNTech are trying to make sure their vaccines get ahead of the variants. The B.1.351 strain first detected in South Africa has the most worrying effects on the ability of vaccines to produce an immune response, Dr. Heather Scobie said at the CDC’s Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) meeting on Monday. She also said two doses of the Covid-19

vaccine protect people better than just one dose.

“Five studies have shown that postponing the second mRNA dose may leave some people less protected against the SARS-CoV-2 variants,” Scobie told the ACIP meeting. The Moderna and Pfizer/BioNTech vaccines are mRNA vaccines.

“All of the studies showed improved neutralization of B.1.1.7 and B.1.351 after the second vaccine dose,” she said. “In a few studies, people who had recovered from Covid-19 and received one vaccine dose had moderate protection against B.1.351.”



Johnson & Johnson is working on a booster to help its Covid-19 vaccine deal with new strains of coronavirus variants, CEO Alex Gorsky said Monday.

“While we’re encouraged and we’re confident in the current vaccine that we have, you’ve always got to be preparing for the future and frankly for the unknown,” Gorsky said. Last week, Moderna said it has designed a booster shot to help stave off the B.1.351 strain, which has worried scientists because it has a mutation that might affect the efficacy of vaccines.

That shot would serve as a booster for people who have already been vaccinated and as a primary vaccine for people who haven’t had coronavirus and have not yet been vaccinated. Moderna is also testing a third, lower dose of its current vaccine in trial participants to see if that would protect against troubling variants. Pfizer and BioNTech said last week that they’ve started testing how well a third dose of their authorized vaccine stacks up against new variants.



On Monday, BioNTech CEO Ugur Sahin said

it will take another six to eight weeks to get real-world data that shows how effective the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine is against the B.1.351 variant.

#### Many more need vaccine before herd immunity

While news of third Covid-19 vaccine is worth celebrating, the US is still a long way off from herd immunity. That’s when enough people are protected against a virus that it cannot spread through the population. About 15.3% of the US population has received at least one shot of their two-dose Moderna or Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine, according to CDC data available Monday. About 7.7% of Americans have been fully vaccinated with both doses.

#### Vaccines will be tested in children

Now that the Johnson & Johnson vaccine has proven to be safe and effective in adults, the company will begin studies with children, said Dr. Macaya Douguilh, head of clinical development and medical affairs with J&J’s vaccine arm, Janssen.

“We will conduct several immunogenicity and safety studies in children from 17 years of age down to neonates,” Douguilh told a CDC advisory committee Sunday.

“The study in adolescents, we hope, will open next week. We are also anticipating a study in pregnant women in the second and third trimesters toward the end of March, early April,” Douguilh said.



Johnson & Johnson also plans to begin study in immunocompromised people in the third quarter of this year, Douguilh said. The FDA’s emergency use authorization for the Johnson & Johnson vaccine is currently for use in adults 18 and older. The Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine has been authorized for people 16 and older, and the Moderna Covid-19 vaccine has been authorized for people 18 and older. Both Moderna and Pfizer have started enrolling children in Covid-19 vaccine trials. (Courtesy cnn.com)

## COMMUNITY

### Variant Could Be Dominant Strain By Spring

## U.K. COVID-19 Variant Cases Doubling Every 10 Days In U.S.



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

LA JOLLA, Calif. — The highly contagious variant of COVID-19, first detected in the United Kingdom, is now tearing across the United States. That is the conclusion of a new report led by members of the Scripps Research Institute. Their study finds this rapidly spreading version of coronavirus may become the dominant strain of the illness by the spring. Dubbed B.1.1.7, researchers say the variant may already be moving through at least 30 states as of January 2021. Although previous studies have determined B.1.1.7 is no more deadly than other strains of COVID-19, its ability to spread exponentially is the major concern. According to the findings of this pre-print study — meaning they have not been peer-reviewed yet — cases of the U.K. strain are doubling roughly every 10 days. “We found that while the fraction of B.1.1.7 among SGTF samples varied by state, detection of the variant increased at a logistic rate similar to those observed elsewhere, with a doubling rate of a little over a week and an increased transmission rate of 35-45%,” researchers write in their report in MedRxiv.

#### U.K. COVID variant already reported

#### in 33 states

The origins of B.1.1.7 are still a mystery, but the first cases appeared in the U.K. before the new year. By November, the majority of all new cases of COVID-19 in that country were from the B.1.1.7 strain. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention add that the new variant contains several mutations, including one in the receptor binding domain of its spike protein. This spike has become infamous during the pandemic for attaching to human cells and then cutting into them to reproduce.



Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

there are at least 690 confirmed cases of the B.1.1.7 strain in America. Those infections come from 33 different states, including over 200 in Florida.

‘U.S. on similar trajectory as other countries where B.1.1.7 became dominant variant’

A report in December, by researchers from Public Health England (PHE), discovered that the new strain does not appear to cause more serious infections than earlier ones. In comparison to the more common varieties of COVID, the death rate from B.1.1.7 remained virtually unchanged in a study of over 2,700 British patients.

Despite those earlier findings, the threat from the virus’s higher transmission rates is worrying scientists. The report warns that the U.S. may soon look like Europe in terms of this COVID variant’s widespread impact.

“Our study shows that the U.S. is on a similar trajectory as other countries where B.1.1.7 rapidly became the dominant SARS-CoV-2 variant, requiring immediate and decisive action to minimize COVID-19 morbidity and mortality,” the researchers conclude.

### Related

#### New Coronavirus Variant Doesn’t Cause Worse Infections Or Lead To

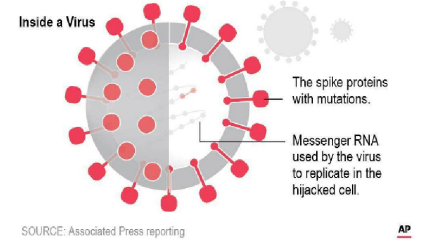
#### More Deaths, Study Says

LONDON — As millions prepare to receive their coronavirus vaccine, fears are growing of a new variant strain of SARS-CoV-2 detected in the United States and England. This new variant, dubbed B.1.1.7, could be more contagious than previous strains of the coronavirus, but a new report is at least bringing some positivity into 2021. Researchers from Public Health England (PHE) find the variant is not likely to put more patients in the hospital or cause more deaths than other COVID strains. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, B.1.1.7 is responsible for 60 percent of the new infections in London since November. The origin of this variant remains a mystery, but the CDC says B.1.1.7 has several mutations, includ-

ing one in the receptor binding domain of its spike protein. This is the part of the virus which attaches to cells and cuts its way into them to reproduce.

A recent study by the Centre for Mathematical Modelling of Infectious Diseases also finds that the new coronavirus variant, which researchers call VOC 202012/01, is 56 percent more contagious than other COVID strains. Despite this, the team from PHE concludes it is not anymore dangerous to patients during the pandemic.

**The new coronavirus variant** The new variant of the virus that causes COVID-19 has several mutations on its spike proteins. These spikes are used by the virus to attach to and infect cells. They also are what vaccines and antibody drugs target.



“Preliminary results from the cohort study found no statistically significant difference in hospitalization and 28-day case fatality between cases with the variant (VOC 20212/01) and wild-type comparator cases,” study authors write in the report, Investigation of novel SARS-CoV-2 variant. **No serious differences in the new coronavirus variant**

The British study examined 1,769 patients with “wild-type” or common strains of SARS-CoV-2 and 1,769 people with the B.1.1.7 variant. The results reveal no major differences in the age of patients, their ethnicities, and living situations. Researchers discovered 16 COVID patients (0.9%) with the B.1.1.7 strain had to go to the hospital due to their illness. In comparison, 26 patients (1.5%) with a wild-type strain were hospitalized during the study. Although scientists did not have complete records on patient deaths, the report finds 12 of 1,340 patients with the new variant died — just under one percent. Only 10 patients out of 1,360 died of a wild-type of COVID-19 (0.73%). Study authors also report that the new coronavirus strain does not seem to raise the risk of contracting the illness a second

time. “There was also no significant difference in the likelihood of reinfection between variant cases and the comparator group,” the report notes. Only two people who had the B.1.1.7 strain ended up getting sick again within 90 days of their illness. The odds are just as rare among common forms of coronavirus, with only three people getting sick a second time. (Courtesy studyfinds.org)



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