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Inside C2

Southern DAILY

Make Today Different

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Trump adviser Bannon charged after defying Capitol riot subpoena

Nov 12 (Reuters) - Stephen Bannon, a prominent adviser to former U.S. President Donald Trump, has been criminally charged for defying a subpoena issued by a congressional committee investigating the Jan. 6 attack on the Capitol, the Justice Department said on Friday.

Bannon has refused to cooperate with the House of Representatives select committee seeking testimony and documents from him, citing Trump's insistence - already rejected by one judge - that he has a right to keep the requested material confidential under a legal doctrine called executive privilege.

Bannon, 67, was charged with one count of contempt of Congress for refusing to appear for a deposition and a second count for refusing to produce documents. Contempt of Congress is a misdemeanor punishable by up to one year in jail and a maximum fine of \$100,000.

Justice Department spokesperson Bill Miller said Bannon is "expected to self-surrender" on Monday in Washington and make his first court appearance in the case that afternoon.

Trump has sought to stonewall the committee, which is scrutinizing his actions relating to the deadly Capitol riot, and directed his former associates not to cooperate. The charges against Bannon may bolster the committee's efforts to secure testimony and documents from other Trump associates. Bannon's indictment was announced just hours after Trump's former White House chief of staff Mark Meadows refused to appear for a deposition before the committee, risking also being found in contempt of Congress. As a top adviser to Trump's 2016 presidential campaign who later served as White House chief strategist, Bannon helped articulate the "America First" right-wing populism and fierce opposition to immigration that helped define Trump's presidency.

Bannon, who has promoted a variety of right-wing causes and candidates in the United States and abroad, continued to offer Trump advice after leaving his White House post in 2017. Bannon is a prominent figure in right-wing media circles and previously headed the Breitbart News website.



Former White House Chief Strategist Stephen Bannon arrives for the showing of a documentary on the government of Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro in Washington,

'CLEAR MESSAGE'

"Steve Bannon's indictment should send a clear message to anyone who thinks they can ignore the Select Committee or try to stonewall our investigation: no one is above the law," Democrat Bennie Thompson and Republican Liz Cheney, the leaders of the committee, said in a statement. Bannon did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

It is the second time in 15 months that Bannon has faced criminal charges. Bannon was charged in August 2020 with defrauding donors to We Build the Wall, a private fund-raising effort to boost Trump's wall project along the U.S.-Mexican border, and arrested aboard a yacht belonging to a fugitive Chinese billionaire. Trump subsequently issued a pardon to Bannon before that case could go to trial.

The Democratic-led House voted to hold Bannon in contempt of Congress in October. Most of Trump's fellow Republicans in Congress opposed creating an independent commission or a committee to investigate the events surrounding Jan. 6.

On that day, a mob of Trump supporters rioted at

the Capitol in a failed bid to prevent formal congressional certification of President Joe Biden's election victory. Before the riot, Trump gave a speech to his supporters repeating his false claims that the election was stolen from him and urged them to go to the Capitol and "fight like hell" to "stop the steal."

The committee has said Bannon made public statements suggesting he knew in advance about "extreme events" that would occur on Jan. 6. Bannon said on a Jan. 5 podcast that "all hell is going to break loose tomorrow."

After the House voted to hold Bannon in contempt, it was up to Biden's Justice Department, headed by Attorney General Merrick Garland, to decide whether to bring charges. Garland in a statement on Friday said his department "adheres to the rule of law, follows the facts and the law and pursues equal justice under the law."

Trump on Oct. 18 sued the committee and the National Archives, which holds material dating from his presidency, in a bid to keep hundreds of pages of records secret. A judge rejected Trump's lawsuit on Tuesday, saying the public interest in learning about Trump's actions on Jan. 6 was paramount. Trump appealed that ruling.

The last successful prosecution for contempt of Congress was in 1974 when a judge found G. Gordon Liddy, a conspirator in the Watergate scandal that drove President Richard Nixon to resign, guilty.



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WEA LEE'S GLOBAL NOTES

CORONAVIRUS DIARY

11/13/2021

First Black Immigrant
Becomes Rice's President



university in 1912 with the stipulation that it only served white Texans. Throughout the pandemic, the students demanded removal of a monument on the Rice campus and said Rice was a slaveholder.

We really appreciate over the last eighteen years President Leebron and First Lady Ping Sun's contribution to our local and global community, especially because we have

had the opportunity to sponsor many international events with Rice through the president's office. Their help and support has included the Texas African Summit event at the Baker Institute.

We are so happy that we will have such an outstanding son of immigrants who has become a top leader at one of the world's most famous universities. This could only happen in America.



Rice University's Board of Trustees has named Dr. Reginald DesRoches to be the university's next president. He was born in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, and is the first black immigrant and first engineer to lead the private research university.

As an internationally recognized engineer and earthquake expert, DesRoches will succeed President Davis Leebron who announced he is stepping

down this summer.

DesRoches said in his statement that he is deeply honored to be named the next president of Rice and looks forward to building on the tradition of excellence established by President Leebron and those who served before him.

Rice University was established after William Rice set aside money before he died to help start the

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Editor's Choice



Migrants walk along a road in a caravan heading to the northern border, in Santo Domingo Zanatepec, Mexico November 11, 2021. REUTERS/Jacob Garcia



A girl looks on inside a migrant camp near the El Chaparral border crossing in Tijuana, Mexico November 8, 2021. REUTERS/Toya Sarno Jordan



A migrant pushes a shopping cart with his daughter as he walks along a road in a caravan heading to the northern border, in Santo Domingo Zanatepec, Mexico November 10, 2021. REUTERS/Jacob Garcia



Migrants walk up an overpass in a caravan heading to the northern border, in Tapanatepec, Mexico November 9, 2021. REUTERS/Jacob Garcia



Cell phones charge at a migrant camp near the El Chaparral border crossing, as the coronavirus restrictions ease in the U.S., in Tijuana, Mexico November 6, 2021. REUTERS/Jorge Duenes



A girl plays outside a migrant camp near the El Chaparral border crossing in Tijuana, Mexico November 8, 2021. REUTERS/Toya Sarno Jordan

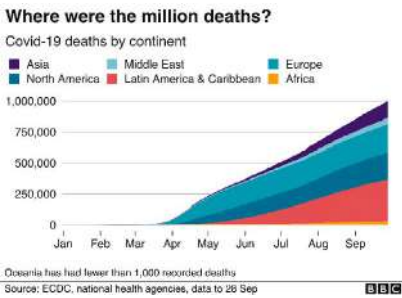
COVID-19 Global Death Toll Tops Five Million In Under Two Years



Relatives of Luis Enrique Rodriguez, who died of COVID-19, visit where he was buried on a hill at the El Pajonal de Cogua Natural Reserve, in Cogua, north of Bogota, Colombia, Monday, Oct. 25, 2021. Rodriguez died May 14, 2021. Relatives bury the ashes of their loved ones who died of coronavirus and plant a tree in their memory. (AP Photo/Ivan Valencia)

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

The global death toll from COVID-19 topped 5 million on Monday, less than two years into a crisis that has not only devastated poor countries but also humbled wealthy ones with first-rate health care systems. Together, the United States, the European Union, Britain and Brazil — all upper-middle- or high-income countries — account for one-eighth of the world's population but nearly half of all reported deaths. The U.S. alone has recorded over 745,000 lives lost, more than any other nation. "This is a defining moment in our lifetime," said Dr. Albert Ko, an infectious disease specialist at the Yale School of Public Health. "What do we have to do to protect ourselves so we don't get to another 5 million?" The death toll, as tallied by Johns Hopkins University, is about equal to the populations of Los Angeles and San Francisco combined. It rivals the number of people killed in battles among nations since 1950, according to estimates from the Peace Research Institute Oslo. Globally, COVID-19 is now the third leading cause of death, after heart disease and stroke.



The staggering figure is almost certainly an undercount because of limited testing and people dying at home without medical attention, especially in poor parts of the world, such as India. Hot spots have shifted over the 22 months since the outbreak began, turning different places on the world map red. Now, the virus is pummeling Russia, Ukraine and other parts of Eastern Europe, especially where rumors, misinformation and distrust in government have hobbled vaccination efforts. In Ukraine, only 17% of the adult population is fully vaccinated; in Armenia, only 7%. "What's uniquely different about this pandemic is it hit hardest the high-resource countries," said Dr. Wafaa El-Sa-

BUSINESS

dr, director of ICAP, a global health center at Columbia University. "That's the irony of COVID-19."



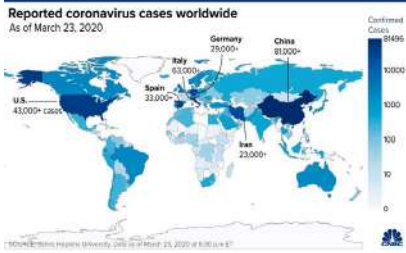
Patients lie on beds in a COVID-19 isolation room at the University Emergency Hospital in Bucharest, Romania, Oct. 22, 2021. (AP Photo/Andreea Alexandru, File)

Wealthier nations with longer life expectancies have larger proportions of older people, cancer survivors and nursing home residents, all of whom are especially vulnerable to COVID-19, El-Sadr noted. Poorer countries tend to have larger shares of children, teens and young adults, who are less likely to fall seriously ill from the coronavirus. India, despite its terrifying delta surge that peaked in early May, now has a much lower reported daily death rate than wealthier Russia, the U.S. or Britain, though there is uncertainty around its figures.

The seeming disconnect between wealth and health is a paradox that disease experts will be pondering for years. But the pattern that is seen on the grand scale, when nations are compared, is different when examined at closer range. Within each wealthy country, when deaths and infections are mapped, poorer neighborhoods are hit hardest. In the U.S., for example, COVID-19 has taken an outside toll on Black and Hispanic people, who are more likely than white people to live in poverty and have less access to health care.

"When we get out our microscopes, we see that within countries, the most vulnerable have suffered most," Ko said.

Coronavirus Cases Across The World



Wealth has also played a role in the glob-

al vaccination drive, with rich countries accused of locking up supplies. The U.S. and others are already dispensing booster shots at a time when millions across Africa haven't received a single dose, though the rich countries are also shipping hundreds of millions of shots to the rest of the world.

Africa remains the world's least vaccinated region, with just 5% of the population of 1.3 billion people fully covered. "This devastating milestone reminds us that we are failing much of the world," U.N. Secretary-General António Guterres said in a written statement. "This is a global shame."

In Kampala, Uganda, Cissy Kagaba lost her 62-year-old mother on Christmas Day and her 76-year-old father days later.

"Christmas will never be the same for me," said Kagaba, an anti-corruption activist in the East African country that has been through multiple lockdowns against the virus and where a curfew remains in place.

The pandemic has united the globe in grief and pushed survivors to the breaking point.



Reena Kesawani holds a photograph of her husband, Anand Babu Kesawani, who died of COVID-19, in their hardware shop, Monday, Oct. 25, 2021, in the Chhitpalgarh village, in India's northern Uttar Pradesh state. (AP Photo/Rajesh Kumar Singh)

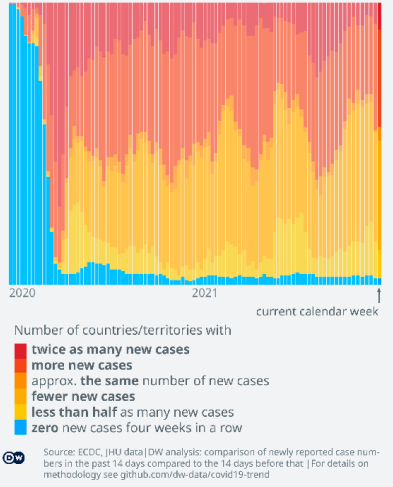
"Who else is there now? The responsibility is on me. COVID has changed my life," said 32-year-old Reena Kesawani, a mother of two boys, who was left to manage her late husband's modest hardware store in a village in India.

Her husband, Anand Babu Kesawani, died at 38 during India's crushing coronavirus surge earlier this year. It overwhelmed one of the most chronically underfunded public health systems in the world and killed tens of thousands as hospitals ran out of oxygen and medicine.

In Bergamo, Italy, once the site of the West's first deadly wave, 51-year-old Fabrizio Fidanza was deprived of a final farewell as his 86-year-old father lay dying in the hospital. He is still trying to come to terms with the loss more than a year later.

"For the last month, I never saw him," Fidanza said during a visit to his father's grave. "It was the worst moment. But coming here every week, helps me." Today, 92% of Bergamo's eligible population have had at least one shot, the highest vaccination rate in Italy. The chief of medicine at Pope John XXIII Hospital, Dr. Stefano Fagioli, said he believes that's a clear result of the city's collective trauma, when the wail of ambulances was constant.

Week 44: Global COVID-19 cases trend



In Lake City, Florida, LaTasha Graham, 38, still gets mail almost daily for her 17-year-old daughter, Jo'Keria, who died of COVID-19 in August, days before starting her senior year of high school. The teen, who was buried in her cap and gown, wanted to be a trauma surgeon. "I know that she would have made it. I know that she would have been where she wanted to go," her mother said. In Rio de Janeiro, Erika Machado scanned the list of names engraved on a long, undulating sculpture of oxidized steel that stands in Penitencia cemetery as an homage to some of Brazil's COVID-19 victims. Then she found him: Wagner Machado, her father. "My dad was the love of my life, my best friend," said Machado, 40, a saleswoman who traveled from Sao Paulo to see her father's name. "He was everything to me." (Courtesy apnews.com)

Southern DAILY Make Today Different

Threat Of A Vaccine-Proof Variant Only 'A Few Mutations Away?'



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

July 30, 2021 — CDC Director Rochelle Walensky, MD, made a dire prediction during a media briefing this week that, if we weren't already living within the reality of the COVID-19 pandemic, would sound more like a pitch for a movie about a dystopian future. "For the amount of virus circulating in this country right now largely among unvaccinated people, the largest concern that we in public health and science are worried about is that the virus...[becomes] a very transmissible virus that has the potential to evade our vaccines in terms of how it protects us from severe disease and death," Walensky told reporters on Tuesday. A new, more elusive variant could be "just a few mutations away," she said. "That's a very prescient comment," Lewis Nelson, MD, professor and clinical chair of emergency medicine and chief of the Division of Medical Toxicology at Rutgers New Jersey Medical School in Newark, tells Medscape Medical News. "We've gone through a few mutations already that have been named, and each one of them gets a little more transmissible," he says. "That's normal, natural selection and what you would expect to happen as viruses mutate from one strain to another." "What we've mostly seen this virus do is evolve to become more infectious," says Stuart Ray, MD. "That is the remarkable feature of Delta — that it is so infectious." He says that the SARS-CoV-2 has evolved largely as expected, at least so far. "The potential for this virus to mutate has been something that has been a concern from early on." "The viral evolution is a bit like a ticking clock. The more we allow infections to occur, the more likely changes will occur. When we have

lots of people infected, we give more chances to the virus to diversify and then adapt to selective pressures," says Ray, vice-chair of medicine for data integrity and analytics and professor in the Division of Infectious Diseases at Johns Hopkins School of Medicine in Baltimore, Maryland.

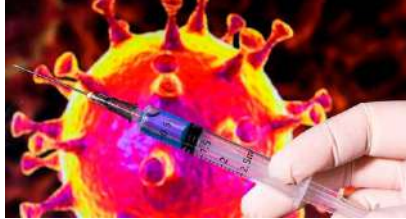


"The problem is if the virus changes in such a way that the spike protein — which the antibodies from the vaccine are directed against — are no longer effective at binding and destroying the virus, and the virus escapes immune surveillance," Nelson says. If this occurs, he says, "we will have an ineffective vaccine, essentially. And we'll be back to where we were last March with a brand-new disease." **Technology to the Rescue?** The flexibility of mRNA vaccines is one potential solution. These vaccines could be more easily and quickly adapted to respond to a new, more vaccine-elusive variant. "That's absolutely reassuring," Nelson says. For example, if a mutation changes the spike protein and vaccines no longer recognize it, a manufacturer could identify the new protein and incorporate that in a new mRNA vaccine. "The problem is that some people are not

taking the current vaccine," he adds. "I'm not sure what is going to make them take the next vaccine."

Nothing Appears Certain

When asked how likely a new strain of SARS-CoV-2 could emerge that gets around vaccine protection, Nelson says, "I think [what] we've learned so far there is no way to predict anything" about this pandemic. "The best way to prevent the virus from mutating is to prevent hosts, people, from getting sick with it," he says. "That's why it's so important people should get immunized and wear masks."



Both Nelson and Ray point out that it is in the best interest of the virus to evolve to be more transmissible and spread to more people. In contrast, a virus that causes people to get so sick that they isolate or die, thus halting transmission, works against viruses surviving evolutionarily.

Some viruses also mutate to become milder over time, but that has not been the case with SARS-CoV-2, Ray says.

Mutations Not the Only Concern

Viruses have another mechanism that produces new strains, and it works even more quickly than mutations. Recombination, as it's known, can occur when a person is infected with two different strains of the same virus. If the two versions enter the same cell, the viruses can swap genetic material and produce a third, altogether different strain. Recombination has already been seen with influenza strains, where H and N genetic segments are swapped to yield H1N1, H1N2, and H3N2 versions of the flu, for example. "In the early days of SARS-CoV-2 there was so little diversity that recombination did not matter," Ray says. However, there are now distinct lineages of the virus circulating globally. If two of these lineages swap segments "this would make a very new viral sequence in one step without having to mutate to gain those differences."

"The more diverse the strains that are circulating, the bigger a possibility this is," Ray says.



Protected, for Now

Walensky's sober warning came at the same time the CDC released new guidance calling for the wearing of masks indoors in schools and in any location in the country where COVID-19 cases surpass 50 people per 100,000, also known as substantial or high transmission areas.

On a positive note, Walensky says: "Right now, fortunately, we are not there. The vaccines operate really well in protecting us from severe disease and death." (Courtesy web-smd.com)

Related

Is The Lambda Variant Vaccine Resistant?

KEY POINTS
Japanese researchers found the lambda variant could be resistant to COVID-19 vaccines. Three mutations in the lambda variant's spike protein allow the variant to resist antibodies.

As the delta variant surges across the United States, there is a new COVID-19 variant that is just as transmissible, but could also be more resistant to vaccines. The lambda variant, first detected in Peru in August 2020 and spreading through South America, made its way to the U.S. for the first time on July 22 in a Houston hospital.

There are 1,053 cases of the lambda variant in the U.S. since the first case was detected, according to GISAID, an initiative dedicated to promoting COVID-19 data through genomic sequencing. The U.S. ranks second in cases behind Chile, and 41 countries have reported at least 1 lambda case.

The threat of lambda comes as the delta variant is the dominant variant of COVID-19 in the U.S. — it now accounts for 93% of cases, up from the previous rate of 83%, according to data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.



Houston Methodist Hospital, which operates eight hospitals in its network, said the first lambda case was confirmed last week. Here's what we know about the lambda variant so far.

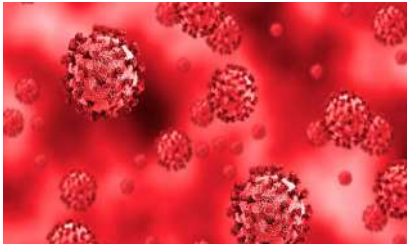
Japanese researchers at the University of Tokyo posted a lambda variant study that shows it is highly infectious and more resistant to COVID-19 vaccines. This study posted on July 28 on bioRxiv, a database for unpub-

lished preprinted studies, has not been peer reviewed or published.

The study shows three mutations in the lambda variant's spike protein — RSYLT-PGD246-253N, 260 L452Q and F490S — which allow for the variant to resist vaccine-induced neutralizing antibodies. Two other mutations — T76I and L452Q — are responsible for making lambda highly infectious. Spike protein is the part of the virus that helps it penetrate cells in the human body — which is what vaccines target.

How does the lambda variant compare to delta?

The lambda variant isn't showing signs to spark concern about it becoming the dominant strain of COVID-19 in the United States like delta, said Dr. Abhijit Duggal, a staff ICU physician and director for critical care research for the medical ICU at the Cleveland Clinic. Since the lambda variant was first detected in Peru, it hasn't spread globally at the same pace as the delta variant. It has, however, become widespread in South America, but this could be due to the "founder effect," according to Dr. S. Wesley Long, medical director of diagnostic biology at Houston Methodist, where the case was identified in the U.S. The founder effect means the variant first took hold in a densely populated and geographically restricted area, making it the primary variant over time.



How concerned should you be about the lambda variant?

On June 14, the World Health Organization flagged the lambda variant as a "variant of interest" versus a "variant of concern." A variant of interest depends on evidence about a unique outbreak cluster or limited expansion in the U.S. or other countries, according to the CDC. A variant of concern shows widespread evidence of treatments, vaccines and transmissibility.

The University of Tokyo study said, "Because the Lambda variant is a (variant of interest), it might be considered that this variant is not an ongoing threat compared to the pandemic (variants of concern). However, because the Lambda variant is relatively resistant to the vaccine-induced (antibodies), it might be possible that this variant is feasible to cause breakthrough infection." (Courtesy <https://www.tennessean.com/news/>)