



Inside C5

Southern DAILY Make Today Different

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Romans decry 'Mangy', city's threadbare Christmas tree, as symbol of decline

ROME (Reuters) - Oh Christmas Tree, Oh Christmas Tree. How mangy are your branches! That could be Rome's version of the classic Christmas carol, which speaks instead of branches, lovely and steadfast. Romans are up in arms over the tree that has been dubbed 'Spelacchio'.

Some have even likened 'Spelacchio' to a toilet brush. Many Romans on social media have pointed a finger at Mayor Virginia Raggi, a leading light in the anti-establishment 5-Star Movement, who has been getting negative seasons greetings because of the dire state of the city.

a shameful spectacle for citizens and tourists," said the consumers' group Codacons. Codacons called for investigation into why nearly 50,000 euros (\$60,000) was spent to transport the sickly tree to Rome from a forest near the Austrian border 700 km (430 miles) away.



A Christmas tree is seen in downtown Rome

Mexican leftist has 11-point lead ahead of 2018 election - poll



Mexican presidential candidate Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador of the National Regeneration Movement (MORENA) smiles to supporters during a pre-campaign rally in Mexico City.

MEXICO CITY (Reuters) - Mexican leftist Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador has an 11-percentage point lead ahead of next year's presidential election, according to an opinion poll taken in the last week, giving him a sizeable advantage even after new rivals formally entered the race.

international investors are concerned about suggestions that he might reverse parts of the government's 2013-14 energy legislation. The poll, carried out and financed by Mexican public opinion firm Parametria, was provided exclusively to Reuters ahead of wider publication later on Tuesday. It was taken between Dec. 14 and Dec. 17.

Rep. Al Green's Statement on Senator-Elect Doug Jones (D-AL)



Washington, DC -- On Thursday, December 14, 2017, Congressman Al Green (D-TX) released a statement on the election results of Senator-Elect Doug Jones (D-AL): "First and foremost, congratulations to all the citizens of Alabama who fought a hard-earned victory for the future of Alabama and our nation."

will not elect this bigot to the Senate. "Also, I want to congratulate Senator-Elect Jones on this inspirational victory. His distinguished career evidences a passionate voice for justice. He has demonstrated how the rule of law will well serve the state of Alabama and the United States of America."

gress from Texas, and as a former president of the NAACP-Houston Branch, I know that grassroots organizing is at the heart of every democratic vote. I commend all of the organizers who mobilized the never-to-be-forgotten African-American voter population in Alabama. I salute all of you and your efforts.



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President Trump declared a new national security strategy on Monday, pledging to replace decades of "failed" U.S. foreign policies with a forceful "America first" agenda.

The new strategy, announced during an address in Washington, D.C., envisions a turbulent world in which nations are in constant competition. The strategy pledges to rescind Obama-era warnings on climate change, declares that the U.S. will confront the "revisionist" Russian and Chinese governments and slams the perceived "weakness" of previous administrations.

"Our leaders engaged in nation building abroad while they failed to build up and replenish our nation at home," Trump told a crowd of mostly uniformed officials at the Ronald Reagan Building. "On November 8, you voted to make America great again. You embraced new leadership and new strategies and also a glorious new hope."

President Trump's first national security strategy, a document that envisions confrontations with "revisionist" powers like Russia and China that are working against U.S. interests.



The document casts the U.S. in a struggle for international influence with China and Russia, both countries it says are seeking to challenge America's role as the world's pre-eminent superpower.

The two nations are "attempting to erode American security and prosperity" and are "determined to make economies less free and less fair, to grow their militaries, and to control information and data to repress their societies and expand their influence," the strategy says.



To maintain the U.S.'s edge, the Trump administration is outlining a plan to de-emphasize international agreements in favor of a go-it-alone approach when confronting rivals on trade and security issues.

Trump Releases 'America First' National Security Strategy

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



President Donald Trump laid out a national security strategy that envisions nations in perpetual competition on Monday.

The strategy also rolls back former President Obama's focus on climate change as a centerpiece of American foreign policy.

But while Trump's strategy goes into great length about pushing back against Russian economic and military developments, it brushes over cyber warfare techniques employed by the Kremlin during its interference in the 2016 election.

Instead, it tackles that question more broadly, accusing Moscow of engaging in "offensive cyber efforts." "Today, actors such as Russia are using information tools in an attempt to undermine the legitimacy of democracies," the document states.

It's the Trump administration's first major attempt at forming the president's "America First" worldview into a comprehensive strategy.

"We will promote a balance of power that favors the United States, our allies, and our partners," the document says. "We will never lose sight of our values and their capacity to inspire, uplift, and renew. Most of all, we will serve the American people and uphold their right to a government that prioritizes their security, their prosperity, and their interests," the document says.

Russia and the U.S. presidential election

The strategy document takes a combative stance on Russian activities across the globe but does not directly address the Putin regime's attempts to influence last year's election.

Instead, it tackles that question more broadly, accusing Moscow of engaging in "offensive cyber efforts."

"Today, actors such as Russia are using information tools in an attempt to undermine the legitimacy of democracies," the document states. "Adversaries target media, political processes, financial networks, and personal data. The American public and private sectors must recognize this and work together to defend our way of life."

The document also accuses Russia of perpetuating "influence campaigns" but offers no proposals on how to counteract them.



The strategy document comes as special prosecutor Robert Mueller's

investigation creeps closer to Trump's inner circle. So far, Mueller's probe has produced four indictments, including a guilty plea from Trump's former national security adviser Michael Flynn.

Trump, who spoke on the phone with Russian President Vladimir Putin twice last week, has been reluctant to accept the U.S. intelligence community's assessment that Putin's government meddled in the election in a deliberate attempt to get him elected.

Climate change Breaking with Pentagon assessments, Trump's strategy does not address climate change as an imminent threat to national security.

Instead, Trump proposes a pro-fossil fuel agenda that is sure to be hailed by industry giants.

"U.S. leadership is indispensable to countering an anti-growth energy agenda that is detrimental to U.S. economic and energy security interests," the strategy document asserts. "Given future global energy demand, much of the developing world will require fossil fuels, as well as other forms of energy, to power their economies and lift their people out of poverty."



Trump said his administration will seek "peace through strength."

Contrastingly, the document also claims that the U.S. will "remain a global leader in reducing traditional pollution, as well as greenhouse gases" but offers little in the way of how that would be achieved. Earlier this year, Trump drew international ire after he pulled the U.S. out of the Paris Climate Accord, which seeks to mitigate global greenhouse gas emissions.

China and North Korea

Trump's document casts the Chinese gov-

ernment as an adversary seeking to "erode American security and prosperity."

Accusing China of enabling Kim Jong Un's iron-fisted rule in North Korea, Trump downplays the importance of diplomacy and "international institutions," instead favoring an approach he dubs "peace through strength."

"Competition does not always mean hostility, nor does it inevitably lead to conflict — although none should doubt our commitment to defend our interests," the document states.

Military might is central to this premise of "competition," Trump added.

His document suggests beefing up the U.S. military and advancing American nuclear capabilities in a show of strength meant to deter adversaries.

"We will preserve peace through strength by rebuilding our military so that it remains preeminent, deters our adversaries, and if necessary, is able to fight and win," the document states.



Immigration

Echoing language employed during the campaign, Trump's strategy argues that sweeping immigration reform is "central to national security."

"Terrorists, drug traffickers, and criminal cartels exploit porous borders and threaten U.S. security and public safety," the document states.



The controversial border wall with Mexico that Trump has called for since the early days of the campaign is central to this vision. Furthermore, Trump's strategy also calls for "enhanced vetting" of immigrants and refugees along with a hardline enforcement of existing immigration laws. "The United States affirms our sovereign right to determine who should enter our country and under what circumstances," the document states. (Courtesy http://www.nydailynews.com/news and www.thehill.com)

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A Snapshot Of The World



Mexican presidential candidate Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador of the National Regeneration Movement (MORENA) greets supporters during a pre-campaign rally in Mexico City



South Korean and U.S. Marines take part in a winter military drill in Pyeongchang
NORTHKOREA-MISSILES/SOUTHKOREA-USA
South Korean and U.S. Marines take part in a winter military drill in Pyeongchang



Technicians work on an electricity pylon as part of maintenance of high-tension electricity power lines, during sunset in Cantin



Representatives participate in a photo opportunity prior to a meeting to discuss strategies to disrupt transnational criminal organisations at the State Department in Washington



Britain's Prince Charles meets schoolchildren from St. Barnabas Church of England school as he arrives for a service of prayers by the Melkite Greek-Catholic community at St. Barnabas Church in London



A woman walks under an umbrella in a park in central Kiev



Rohingya refugees scuffle as they wait to receive aid in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh September 24, 2017. Reuters photographer Cathal McNaughton: "This image sums up the first days of aid relief perfectly. Chaos. Pure desperation on people's faces as they fight for a bag of aid."



Pictures of the Year: Persecuted Rohingya Muslims flee violence in Myanmar



Rohingya refugees carry their child as they walk through water after crossing the border by boat through the Naf River in Teknaf, Bangladesh, September 7, 2017.



In 2009, the FDA ordered Zicam to stop marketing three products that contained zinc gluconate after more than 100 users reported losing their sense of smell.

WASHINGTON — U.S. health officials plan to crack down on a growing number of unproven alternative remedies, focusing on products containing dangerous ingredients that have occasionally been linked to serious injury and death.

The Food and Drug Administration on Monday issued a new proposal for regulating homeopathic medicines that have long been on the fringe of mainstream medicine. The agency plans to target products that pose the biggest safety risks, including those marketed for children or for serious diseases.

But under the government's framework, the vast majority of low-risk products would remain on the market. Long regarded by scientists as a form of modern-day snake oil, homeopathic products are treated as drugs under law, but not supported by modern science.

Homeopathic products are similar to dietary supplements, in that the FDA does not review their safety or effectiveness before they are sold. But unlike supplements, homeopathic medicines can state that they are intended for specific medical symptoms and conditions, similar to drugs.

A handful of products in recent years have been subject to major safety problems, usually involving potentially toxic ingredients.

Last year, the FDA warned consumers about the risks of teething tablets marketed by Hyland's Homeopathic after they were tied to seizures and deaths in infants and children. FDA testing later confirmed the products contained high levels of belladonna, also called nightshade, a poisonous herb that has long been used at low dosages in homeopathic medicine.

The FDA said its proposal also targets products that claim to treat serious diseases like cancer, or are administered via unconventional routes such as ear drops. The agency will take comments on its proposal for 90 days before beginning to finalize the plan.

Consumer advocates said the FDA plan makes sense for products that are mostly harmless, but can be dangerous if manufacturers stray from traditional ingredients, dosing and manufacturing.

"I think the rules do a good job of going after the things that are most problematic," said Dr. Adriane Fugh-Berman, an associate professor at George-

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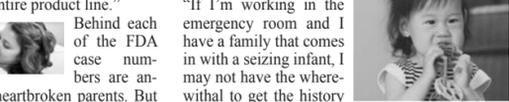
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FDA Officials To Target High-Risk Alternative Remedies

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

(The agency is also investigating two other deaths tied to teething remedies but declined to confirm the manufacturer of the products or provide the case reports.) Following an FDA warning in September, Hyland's said that it would no longer manufacture the teething products. But they remained on some store shelves for months, and are still available on the Internet. They likely continue to be used in homes nationwide.



Behind each of the FDA case numbers are angry and, in some cases, heartbroken parents. But a STAT examination — and the first detailed look at the case reports — also raises questions over the response of regulators.

It took four years until the FDA pushed Hyland's to reformulate its remedies, in 2010. In the seven years since then, there has been a steady stream of reports of adverse events tied to Hyland's homeopathic teething products. "The FDA could bring the hammer down on them," said Sarah Sorscher, an attorney for the nonprofit Public Citizen Health Research Group.

Despite the FDA's difficulty in proving Hyland's products harmed children, some doctors had no doubt. In case 462749, dated Sept. 15, 2011, a physician sent Hyland's a handwritten note, stating his patient, a 5-month-old girl, was unresponsive for 45 minutes after taking its teething tablets.

"I am sure this was not an allergic reaction," he wrote. "I would like you to report it, find a contact at the FDA, so we can start an investigation and pull this dangerous, unregulated product from the shelves."

One mother wrote the company to say her son's pupils dilated "like marbles with big black eyes." Another described seizures her daughter continued to have after taking the tablets and told the company, "I hate hate hate u for this."

An industry giant in a giant industry Hyland's and its parent company, Standard Homeopathy Co., are considered major players in the homeopathic market. CEO John P. Borneman comes from a family that has been in the business for generations, and is president of the industry group that publishes the Homeopathic Pharmacopeia, a compendium that serves as the bible of the industry.

Homeopathy has become a multibillion-dollar industry. Its products are big sellers around the world, and popular with adherents from Cher to Prince Charles. The industry also has political clout: It has been able to exempt itself from many rules proposed by Congress and the FDA over the years.

Unlike pharmaceutical company-produced drugs, homeopathic products don't have to prove that they are effective at treating anything in particular before going on the market. It is left to the FDA's drug division to determine whether they are unsafe after they are on the market — a difficult task since the adverse event reports are generally considered to represent only a fraction of the actual incidents and may lack sufficient information to allow for thorough investigations.

"If I'm working in the emergency room and I have a family that comes in with a seizing infant, I may not have the wherewithal to get the history of homeopathic use," said Dr. Edward W. Boyer, a toxicologist in Harvard Medical School's emergency medicine department.

In some cases, parents assume that products described as natural remedies, as is the case with Hyland's tablets and gels, could not possibly result in complications, and never mention their use to a doctor. Without sufficient evidence of a problem, the FDA lacks what it needs to use the enforcement tools it does have.

"Deadly nightshade" In investigating Hyland's teething products, the FDA focused on an ingredient known as atropa belladonna, an herb known colloquially as "deadly nightshade."

In diluted form, the substance is not expected to pose any health risk. In 2010, however, FDA inspectors who examined Hyland's facilities criticized the company for substandard manufacturing practices and found inconsistent levels of atropa belladonna in its products.

The agency issued a public warning, noting "reports of serious adverse events in children taking this product that are consistent with belladonna toxicity."

It also noted that "infants are very susceptible to the neurotoxicity of drugs" because of how the body distributes and responds to drugs, and noted that "absorption of belladonna from the skin and mouth was fairly rapid."

The company voluntarily took the products off shelves and agreed to reformulate them, although it insisted they were safe. "We felt it was the right thing to do so that parents didn't have to be concerned about the product," said Borneman, the spokeswoman.

But the number of serious adverse events tied by the FDA to the products kept climbing. Some pediatricians and neurologists concluded the tablets and gels were the cause. Many parents wrote to the FDA, accusingly, asking why the pills were still on the market.

In September 2016, the FDA announced that it was investigating more adverse events reports and recommended that consumers stop using Hyland's

and other homeopathic teething products and dispose of any in their possession. Some stores, including Target and CVS, which sold Hyland's and other homeopathic teething products, pulled them in response.

"Homeopathic medicine has a very large margin of safety," she said. "Our testing ensures there's not too much belladonna in any bottle" of tablets.

Several weeks ago, on Jan. 27, the FDA issued another warning, saying that laboratory analysis of Hyland's teething tablets found levels of belladonna "sometimes far exceeding the amount claimed on the label." The agency warned consumers not to use the products and to seek medical care immediately if their child has seizures, difficulty breathing, lethargy, muscle weakness, or other problems after using homeopathic teething products.

The FDA also said there was no evidence that they actually worked. Critics say the fact that homeopathic products are generally highly diluted has kept them on the FDA's back burner.

"It's low on their priority list," said Dr. Aaron S. Kesselheim, who co-authored a paper in the New England Journal of Medicine last year on the subject. "FDA for a long time just kind of deferred on homeopathic products because they are mostly inert and so diluted. The harm comes from people wasting their money, or diverting them from things that do work."

One problem the FDA has in doing so is a matter of staffing: The agency has a medical officer review each report from manufacturers, but it doesn't have someone who can routinely follow up with the patient, the patient's family, or physician for missing records necessary to take a serious enforcement action.

Outraged by the standoff between FDA and Hyland's, Connecticut Democratic Rep. Rosa DeLauro introduced a bill last week called the Recall Unsafe Drugs Act. The proposal would give the FDA mandatory recall authority over homeopathic products and drugs.

"Hyland's refusal to recall its teething tablets, despite numerous health and safety warnings from the FDA, is downright shameful," DeLauro said, adding that the company "is choosing instead to prioritize the company's profits and reputation before the safety of our children."

"As it stands the FDA would have to go through an arduous legal process to take action against manufacturers such as Hyland's. This is unacceptable and threatens the health and safety of American families."

For the parents of Case 10723317, any action would come too late. A mother reported that on July 9, 2014, her 9-month-old daughter died after being given two teething tablets, crushed, for the first time. She gave her infant the tablets, then a bottle, and then left her to sleep. When she checked on her 45 minutes later, she was dead in her crib, beside a puddle of vomit.

Five months later, after reading online reports suggesting babies may experience seizures after taking belladonna, she contacted Hyland's. "Customer did not request a refund or replacement," noted the Hyland's staffer who filed the report with the FDA. Hyland's also noted that it was not able to test the bottle, because the customer threw it away.

"Due to the limited information provided by the reporter no further investigation is possible at this time of this incident," the company concluded. (Courtesy http://www.foxnews.com/health)

Behind each of the FDA case numbers are angry and, in some cases, heartbroken parents. But a STAT examination — and the first detailed look at the case reports — also raises questions over the response of regulators.

It took four years until the FDA pushed Hyland's to reformulate its remedies, in 2010. In the seven years since then, there has been a steady stream of reports of adverse events tied to Hyland's homeopathic teething products.

Despite the FDA's difficulty in proving Hyland's products harmed children, some doctors had no doubt. In case 462749, dated Sept. 15, 2011, a physician sent Hyland's a handwritten note, stating his patient, a 5-month-old girl, was unresponsive for 45 minutes after taking its teething tablets.

"I am sure this was not an allergic reaction," he wrote. "I would like you to report it, find a contact at the FDA, so we can start an investigation and pull this dangerous, unregulated product from the shelves."

One mother wrote the company to say her son's pupils dilated "like marbles with big black eyes." Another described seizures her daughter continued to have after taking the tablets and told the company, "I hate hate hate u for this."

An industry giant in a giant industry Hyland's and its parent company, Standard Homeopathy Co., are considered major players in the homeopathic market. CEO John P. Borneman comes from a family that has been in the business for generations, and is president of the industry group that publishes the Homeopathic Pharmacopeia, a compendium that serves as the bible of the industry.

Homeopathy has become a multibillion-dollar industry. Its products are big sellers around the world, and popular with adherents from Cher to Prince Charles. The industry also has political clout: It has been able to exempt itself from many rules proposed by Congress and the FDA over the years.

Unlike pharmaceutical company-produced drugs, homeopathic products don't have to prove that they are effective at treating anything in particular before going on the market. It is left to the FDA's drug division to determine whether they are unsafe after they are on the market — a difficult task since the adverse event reports are generally considered to represent only a fraction of the actual incidents and may lack sufficient information to allow for thorough investigations.

"If I'm working in the emergency room and I have a family that comes in with a seizing infant, I may not have the wherewithal to get the history of homeopathic use," said Dr. Edward W. Boyer, a toxicologist in Harvard Medical School's emergency medicine department.

In some cases, parents assume that products described as natural remedies, as is the case with Hyland's tablets and gels, could not possibly result in complications, and never mention their use to a doctor. Without sufficient evidence of a problem, the FDA lacks what it needs to use the enforcement tools it does have.

"Deadly nightshade" In investigating Hyland's teething products, the FDA focused on an ingredient known as atropa belladonna, an herb known colloquially as "deadly nightshade."

In diluted form, the substance is not expected to pose any health risk. In 2010, however, FDA inspectors who examined Hyland's facilities criticized the company for substandard manufacturing practices and found inconsistent levels of atropa belladonna in its products.

The agency issued a public warning, noting "reports of serious adverse events in children taking this product that are consistent with belladonna toxicity."

It also noted that "infants are very susceptible to the neurotoxicity of drugs" because of how the body distributes and responds to drugs, and noted that "absorption of belladonna from the skin and mouth was fairly rapid."

The company voluntarily took the products off shelves and agreed to reformulate them, although it insisted they were safe. "We felt it was the right thing to do so that parents didn't have to be concerned about the product," said Borneman, the spokeswoman.

But the number of serious adverse events tied by the FDA to the products kept climbing. Some pediatricians and neurologists concluded the tablets and gels were the cause. Many parents wrote to the FDA, accusingly, asking why the pills were still on the market.

In September 2016, the FDA announced that it was investigating more adverse events reports and recommended that consumers stop using Hyland's

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The annual salary needed to own a home in Houston's top neighborhoods

By Heather Leighton



Home ownership is a goal for many in their lifetime, but a common cross-road that some come across is whether they make enough money to own a home. Private Houston Realtor Paige Martin crunched the numbers for her clients on Houston Properties online and calculated the exact annual salary to own a home in various different Houston neighborhoods for 2017. No surprise here, but River Oaks remains the most expensive neighborhood to live in Houston with homes averaging in the \$2.05 million range. In order to afford a home in this prestigious 'hood, you'd have to make over \$542,089 annually. No big deal, right? To calculate the salaries needed to own a home in select local neighborhoods, Martin and her team took into consideration a 20-percent down payment on a 30-year mortgage, 3.8-percent interest rate, Texas' property tax rates and insurance costs. With this, the numbers were then crunched in an online Mortgage Calculator. Martin and her team noted that homeowners should plan to spend at most 28 percent of their annual income to "comfortably afford" a home in a certain area. The annual home prices for each neighborhood were calculated by HAR data from Jan. 1, 2017 to Aug. 15, 2017.

River Oaks **Area includes top ranked schools Annual salary needed: \$542,089 Monthly payment: \$12,649 Median housing price: \$2,050,000

Memorial Villages **Area includes top ranked schools Annual salary needed: \$413,165 Monthly payment: \$9,640 Median housing price: \$1,562,450

Tanglewood **Area includes top ranked schools Annual salary needed: \$376,818 Monthly payment: \$8,792 Median housing price: \$1,298,625

West University **Area includes top ranked schools Annual salary needed: \$343,403 Monthly payment: \$8,013 Median housing price: \$1,298,625

Bellaire **Area includes top ranked schools Annual salary needed: \$287,076 Monthly payment: \$56,698 Median housing price: \$1,085,625

Memorial Park Annual salary needed: \$378,140 Monthly payment: \$8,823 Median housing price: \$1,430,000

Royden Oaks/Afton Oaks Annual salary needed: \$218,819 Monthly payment: \$5,106 Median housing price: \$887,450

Highland Village / Midlane Annual salary needed: \$234,672 Monthly payment: \$5,476 Median housing price: \$887,450

Royal Oaks Annual salary needed: \$185,104 Monthly payment: \$4,319 Median housing price: \$700,000

Montrose Annual salary needed: \$166,593 Monthly payment: \$3,887 Median housing price: \$630,000

Rice / Museum District Annual salary needed: \$166,329 Monthly payment: \$3,881 Median housing price: \$629,000

Memorial West **Area includes top ranked schools Annual salary needed: \$149,868 Monthly payment: \$3,497 Median housing price: \$566,750

Rice Military Annual salary needed: \$117,541 Monthly payment: \$2,743 Median housing price: \$444,500

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