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More companies end ties with NRA as pressure mounts



Inside C5

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Make Today Different

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North Korean leaders used Brazilian passports to apply for Western visas

(Reuters) - North Korean leader Kim Jong Un and his late father Kim Jong Il used fraudulently obtained Brazilian passports to apply for visas to visit Western countries in the 1990s, five senior Western European security sources told Reuters. A scan obtained by Reuters shows an authentic Brazilian passport issued to North Korea's leader Kim Jong-un. Handout via REUTERS While North Korea's ruling family is known to have used travel documents obtained under false pretences, there are few specific examples. The photocopies of the Brazilian passports seen by Reuters have not been published before. "They used these Brazilian passports, which clearly show the photographs of Kim Jong Un and Kim Jong Il, to attempt to obtain visas from foreign embassies," one senior Western security source said on condition of anonymity. "This shows the desire for travel and points to the ruling family's attempts to build a possible escape route," the security source said.

The North Korean embassy in Brazil declined to comment. Brazil's foreign ministry said it was investigating.



A scan obtained by Reuters shows an authentic Brazilian passport issued to North Korea's leader Kim Jong-un

A Brazilian

source, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said the two passports in question were legitimate documents when sent out as blanks for consulates to issue.

Four other senior Western European security sources confirmed that the two Brazilian passports with photos of the Kims in the names of Josef Pwag and Ijong Tchoi were used to apply for visas in at least two Western countries. It was unclear whether any visas were issued. The passports may also have been used to travel to Brazil, Japan and Hong Kong, the security sources said. Japanese newspaper Yomiuri Shimbun reported in 2011 that Jong Un visited Tokyo as a child using a Brazilian passport in 1991 - before the issue date on the two Brazilian passports. Both 10-year passports carry a stamp saying "Embassy of Brazil in Prague" with a Feb. 26, 1996, issue date. The security sources said facial recognition technology confirmed the photographs were those of Kim Jong Un and his father. The passport with Jong Un's photo was issued in the name of Josef Pwag with a date

of birth of Feb. 1, 1983. So little is known about Jong Un that even his birth date is disputed. He would have been 12 to 14 years old when the Brazilian passport was issued. Jong Un is known to have been educated at an international school in Berne, Switzerland, where he pretended to be the son of an embassy chauffeur. Jong Il's passport was issued in the name

Ijong Tchoi with a birth date of April 4, 1940. Jong Il died in 2011. His true birth date was in 1941. Both passports list the holders' birthplaces as Sao Paulo, Brazil. The first security source declined to describe how the passport

copies had been obtained, citing secrecy rules. Reuters has only seen photocopies of the passports so was unable to discern if they had been tampered with.



A scan obtained by Reuters shows an authentic Brazilian passport issued to North Korea's late leader Kim Jong-il. Handout via REUTERS

Republicans in Congress reject new gun limits

FORT LAUDERDALE, Fla./WASHINGTON (Reuters) - Republican leaders of the U.S. Congress said on Tuesday that they would not raise the minimum age for gun buyers, in a sign that one of President Donald Trump's proposals likely will not get far on Capitol Hill after a deadly Florida school shooting. The second-deadliest shooting at a U.S. public school has reignited the long-running national debate over gun rights, pitting many of the students who survived the Feb. 14 high school shooting in Parkland, Florida, against powerful gun rights groups like the National Rifle Association. Trump has suggested arming teachers and raising the minimum age to buy semiautomatic rifles from 18 to 21, but Republicans in Congress said they were not likely to act on either idea. "We shouldn't be banning guns from law-abiding citizens. We should be focusing on making sure that citizens who should not get guns in the first place don't get those guns," House of Representa-

tives Speaker Paul Ryan told a news conference. Ryan said local governments, not Congress, should decide whether to arm teachers. White House says Trump still backs raising age to 21 for some guns Senate Democrats push for 'universal' gun background check bill Trump still supports raising the age limit and will release specific policy proposals this week, White House spokeswoman Sarah Sanders said. Ryan's comments made it clear that more aggressive gun limits, like a ban on the military-style rifle used by the 19-year-old Parkland shooter, were unlikely to gain traction in Congress. Prosecutors have said that Nikolas Cruz killed 17 people at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland with a legally purchased rifle. Federal and local law enforcement agencies have acknowledged receiving multiple warnings about Cruz's potential for violence.



A visitor tests a Smith & Wesson gun model M&P9, 9 millimetre, at the MILIPOL International State Security Exhibition in Paris

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A Snapshot Of The World



Trump meets with local and state officials about improving school safety at the White House in Washington



FILE PHOTO: Worker Marilyn MacKay assembles a rifle at the Sturm, Ruger & Co., Inc. gun factory in Newport, New Hampshire



Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School shooting survivors meet with the House Speaker Paul Ryan in the U.S. Capitol in Washington



A man lights a candle for a tribute to murdered Slovak investigative reporter Jan Kuciak at Slovak National Uprising Square in Bratislava



Models present creations by designer Anthony Vaccarello as part of his Autumn/Winter 2018-2019 women's ready-to-wear collection show for fashion house Saint Laurent during Fashion Week in Paris



A barista prepares coffee using a siphon brewing method as Starbucks Corp opens the first up-scale Starbucks Reserve store at the Starbucks headquarters in Seattle



MLB: Spring Training-Miami Marlins at Washington Nationals



An armed forces member patrols during an operation against drug dealers in Vila Alianca slum, in Rio de Janeiro



President Donald Trump greets U.S. Supreme Court Associate Justice Stephen G. Breyer before his first State of the Union address in Washington

The 22nd Annual Texas Lunar New Year Celebration took place on Saturday, February 24, 2018, in front of the Southern News Group Building in Southwest Houston, 11122 Bellaire Blvd., in southwest Houston.

The festival not only celebrated an important part of Asian tradition, but also included many International performances. In the Chinese lunar calendar a different animal or mythological beast represents every year in a twelve year cycle. The year of 2018 is the year of the Dog.

At the annual Texas Lunar Festival, the impressive qualities of every culture are celebrated.

For the past 22 years, community leaders and volunteers have worked hard to promote the remarkable diversity and impressive leadership of Houston's greater Asian community while fostering friendship among nearly every culture.



The traditional ribbon cutting to open the event was followed by a proclamation presented to Southern News Chairman Wea H. Lee by U.S. Congressman Al Green.

The 22nd Annual Texas International Lunar Festival was attended by political and business VIPs and included United States Congressman Al Green, Harris County Attorney Vince Ryan and other mainstream politicians. The Director of the Taipei economic and cultural Office in Houston, Chenjia Yan, Director of the Overseas Chinese culture and Education Center Zhuangya Shu, and the Chinese Consulate General in Houston, Deputy Consul General Wang Yu and other diplomatic and consular representatives, community leaders and other community people attended the ribbon-cutting ceremony. More than 50 exhibition booths and more than 30 ethnic performances, attracted the crowds to join in the festivities for a lively celebration of the Lunar New Year.

The 22nd Annual Texas International Lunar New Year Festival Was A Great Success

By Reporter Tina Huang
Compiled And Edited By John T. Robbins, Southern News Editor



The 22nd Annual Texas International Lunar Festival Brought People Together From Many Countries Around The World To Enjoy And Participate In A True Global Celebration.



Thousands of citizens across the great State of Texas visit our festival every year. From the exciting entertainment to the remarkable cuisine, the Texas Lunar Festival not only celebrates Houston...but every culture across our beautiful planet.

The Opening Ceremony included the dragon and lion dances with traditional Chinese New Year musical sound, while all guests received red envelopes for bring good luck according to Chinese tradition, which was then followed by the ribbon-cutting and playing of the U.S. national anthem.



After greeting the guests to the Lunar Festival, Southern Chinese News chairman Wea H. Lee delivered his opening remarks. Chairman Lee said that in this historical critical moment today, we are gathered together to celebrate the Lunar New

Year celebration with a special significance. We come from all over the world and come to this beautiful country to live and work, but we do not ever forget the origins of our Chinese culture. Chairman Lee also stressed that everyone in the International District of Houston should join together to strengthen the Chinese power while hoping to unite in order to establish in the future a more complete and more developed and more prosperous community. This year the host team included Ma Jian, Zhang Yan and Liu Jinlu.

Chairman Lee also invited the government officials and business VIPs to participate in the ribbon-cutting ceremony, including the Chinese Consulate General in Houston, Deputy Consul General Consul General Li Qiang Wang Yu, who dedicated ribbon-cutting on behalf of the



people in attendance, on behalf of the 2018 robust Dog, representing loyalty and wealth, he congratulated the auspicious Year of the Dog, wishful happiness and good health to all. Consul General Li also congratulated the New Year festival's emphasize on the "international" on behalf of multi-ethnic integration and praised the development of the activities that have been carried out so smoothly.

Director Chenjia Yan then joined her colleagues with the Chinese Culture Center. Director Zhuang Yashu accompanied the group to enjoy the wonderful song and dance performances.

Other VIPs in attendance including Harris County Attorney Vince Ryan, presidents of the Caribbean Chamber of Commerce Association and the Myanmar Chamber of Commerce and other VIPs delivered their remarks, congratulated the guests and wished them all a safe and happy new year. Congressman Al Green with his assistant Tanqiu mentioned his great friendship with Chairman Lee and mentioned Chairman Lee's cultural contribution to the International Management District for Chairman Lee's commitment to the promotion of traditional Chinese culture, and awarded him the special governmental proclamation on behalf of the International Management District.



To celebrate the Lunar New Year of the Dog, this year's New Year festival offered a specially designed red and white two-color garden party Dog T-shirt, printed with the top Dog mascot, a Southern News logo.

The international center stage came alive with colorful performances, singing, dancing, martial arts and all kinds of folk style fashion show and was greatly welcomed by the audience. The audience was encouraged to tune in to the company's STV 15.3 digital television and participate in a special New Year's sweepstakes. Chairman Lee said that a list of lucky winners would be drawn and the list of the lucky winners will be posted in the Southern Chinese Daily News newspaper, the company website and on the company's digital TV station STV 15.3. Everyone was encouraged to "stay tuned."

About Southern News

Since 1979, Southern News Group has not only built the largest Asian media complex in the southwestern United States, but has also reached out to the broader community of southwest Houston with programs that respond to the growing ethnic diversity of this unique section of one of America's fastest growing cities.

We have initiated and been the driving force behind many community projects, programs and events that include the Texas Lunar New Year Festival, the McDonald's Education Workshops, the Texas African Summit, the ITC Education Institute and have aired many more educational, cultural and business-related television programs on our digital television station, STV 15.3, as well as having hosted over 200 international business related meetings and events at our International Trade Center.

The 22nd Annual Texas Lunar Festival is hosted by Southern News Group, Chinese New Year Festival Inc., International Trade Center, International Management District, and STV 15.3

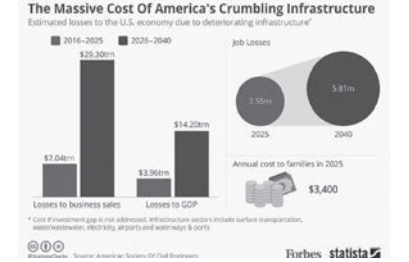
Special Thanks To Our 2018 Festival Sponsors.

The next planned item on Congress's and the Administration's agenda will likely be a sweeping infrastructure plan. The Administration has promised that it will rebuild and repair an American infrastructure in desperate need of just that. CED's 2017 policy brief, "Fixing America's Roads & Bridges: The Path Forward," outlined the problems facing the nation's roads and bridges and proposed solutions for fixing them. Now is as good a time as any to revisit the issues and solutions that CED put forward in its 2017 brief.

Issues Now Being Faced

America's roads and bridges cause issues that range from the small daily inconveniences of longer commutes to safety concerns and economic burdens. Below, CED has highlighted US infrastructure's most pressing problems.

1. In 2014, traffic congestion wasted 6.9 billion hours of motorists' travel time and almost 3.1 billion gallons of fuel.
2. Driving on poor roads cost motorists roughly \$112 billion in additional repair and operating costs annually.
3. If the average daily delay for a UPS truck is five minutes due to bad road conditions or congestion and capacity issues, that translates to \$105 million in additional annual costs to UPS alone.



4. Americans take over 200 million trips daily across deficient bridges in the 102 largest metropolitan regions
5. U.S. roads infrastructure received a D rating in the most recent American Society of Civil Engineers report; poor infrastructure has led to an increase in traffic fatalities by 7% from 2014 to 2015.

Possible Solutions:

1. Form public-private partnerships – not only private investment in public capital but also public investment in private technology.

From early investment in technology to the building and maintaining of roads, the private and public sectors have countless opportunities to work together.

The private sector often comes armed with the tools to make sweeping changes that the public sector neither has the budget nor the expertise to enact. Consequently, CED has highlighted the potential for public/private partnerships throughout the road building process. CED believes that the new program should facilitate extensive partnerships that take the form of de-

sign-build-finance-operate-maintain contracts, in which private corporations are involved in every step.



These partnerships should extend beyond just the building and maintenance of roads; local, state, and federal governments can improve the state of American infrastructure by investing in private organizations that research and develop improvements in all areas related to transportation. Driverless vehicles, better construction materials that prolong the lives of roads and bridges, real-time traffic and weather alerts, and more should be universal in the 21st century and could have an enormous impact on the health of American infrastructure. With public-private partnerships, these technological developments are not far off.

2. Transition from a fossil fuel tax to a mileage-based user fee or managed traffic lanes to fund bridges and roads.
- New sources of funding are needed to keep our roads and bridges safe and reliable. CED has recommended transitioning to mileage-based user fees or MBUFs to meet this need. Drivers would pay a distance-based fee to use the roads with the price per mile depending on the demand for road space at that time of day. Such change would not only increase funds for road upkeep but would also decongest roads as people may opt to drive at a "cheaper" time.
- Like mileage-based user fees, managed lanes would be an additional source of rev-

Commentary The Glaring Issue Of America's Decaying Infrastructure

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



venue that can go towards maintenance and creation of new roads and bridges. In this system, unlike with MBUFs, people would opt in to pay a fee or a premium to use uncongested lanes, thus achieving a more reliable commute or travel experience. Managed traffic lanes would ultimately have the same effect as MBUFs, with less congestion and more funds to go towards future infrastructure improvement.

INVESTING IN INFRASTRUCTURE - OUR NATION'S ECONOMIC ENGINE

IF YOU DON'T INVEST IN INFRASTRUCTURE, THE ECONOMIC GROWTH WILL BE ONLY 1.5% PER YEAR THROUGH 2025.

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- \$2.4 Trillion in lost tax revenue
- 3.5 million jobs lost

THE \$1.1 TRILLION GAP

THE \$1.1 TRILLION GAP IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE \$1.2 TRILLION IN NEED AND THE \$0.1 TRILLION IN CURRENT INVESTMENT.

3. Develop a big-picture, data-driven approach to project selection.
- Too often road and bridge projects are driven by politics rather than system needs, wasting both time and money. Instead, CED urges governments to employ a more data-driven approach that emphasizes engineering reviews in their infrastructure project selection.
4. Streamline the regulatory review process
- CED prioritizes smart regulation when it comes to our financial and monetary systems—and this also holds for infrastructure as well. In 2011, the average time to secure approvals for a major infrastructure project in the US was between six and eight years. The federal government could help improve our roads and bridges by easing the onerous burden of regulatory approval.
5. Alert the public of the need for infrastructure improvements
- Though it may sound trite, our government leaders respond to the demands of their constituents. Americans must urge that their tax dollars are spent efficiently and effectively. Ultimately, the state of our roads and bridges affects every American

daily and should be a high priority. The public return on infrastructure merits public dollars of investment, including careful planning and innovation.



As a candidate for President, Trump promised to spend \$1 trillion on infrastructure: Internet link: <https://www.cnbc.com/2017/02/27/trump-pledges-to-spend-big-on-infrastructure.html>

It should be noted that while infrastructure is a broad term, CED's research focuses exclusively on roads and bridges. We have chosen to dedicate our time and resources on those two aspects of infrastructure specifically as they account for 88 percent of person miles of travel as compared to 8 percent of PMT through air travel and 1 percent by buses and trains. Ultimately, these numbers indicate that the economic cost of poor road and bridge maintenance and the potential gains from improvement are the greatest in roads and bridges.

America has many infrastructure problems. It's useful to cut America's infrastructure needs into three categories: existing infrastructure, future infrastructure, and, overlapping with both categories, how America builds infrastructure. Let's take them in turn.

When people talk about "crumbling" infrastructure, they're talking about existing infrastructure — bridges that have already been built, roads that have already been laid, airports that are already in operation. The need here is maintenance, and maintenance is difficult for a few reasons. First, politicians don't prioritize maintenance, because while you can put your name on a bridge or attend a ribbon-cutting ceremony for a road, few cheer for the beams you quietly reinforce or the potholes you fill.

Second, the federal government gives states a lot of money to build new highways but is not quite so excited about funding their long-term maintenance. (Not to mention the Highway Trust Fund is going broke, which Trump's budget simply accepts.) Third, maintenance disrupts traffic and flights and subway schedules and water delivery, so constituents are often actively angry at you while it's happening. But

if you want to fortify America's "crumbling" infrastructure, you have to solve the unsexy problem of maintaining the infrastructure we have.

Future infrastructure is what politicians like to talk about: high-speed rail, new highways, smart electrical grids, rural broadband, gleaming airports. Everyone gets dewy-eyed imagining the infrastructure of tomorrow.

One problem here is big infrastructure investments are costly and require long-term funding commitments. The other problem is that Congress's main legislative vehicle for improving infrastructure is surface transportation bills that push investment toward building more highways that we usually don't need. This is the kind of challenge that makes people's eyes glaze over when you talk about it, but Congress looks at infrastructure through a decades-old lens designed around the need for a national highway system, and that distorts the decisions they make today.



Then there's the question of how we decide what infrastructure to build, and how much it costs to build it. Infrastructure investment is often used to pay off constituencies rather than meet national needs. Trump's plan, for instance, sets 25 percent of its funding aside for rural infrastructure, even though far less than 25 percent of the population lives in rural areas.

But this is a problem that reaches far beyond Trump. New York's Second Avenue Subway looks like it will be the most expensive subway project in the world per kilometer of track. (The New York Times has had a great series showing why.) Transportation analyst Alon Levy has surveyed the cost of modern subway projects across Europe and found that, far from the \$1 billion-plus New York is paying per kilometer, \$100 million to \$300 million per kilometer is standard. And it's not as if France doesn't have unions, or London doesn't have density, or Italy doesn't have political corruption.

How Trump's plan stacks up

There is much within the purview of the presidency that Trump is clearly not interested in. But Trump spent much of his life in the building trades, and whatever else you want to say about his career, it was marked by a genuine ambition, an audacity in the projects he chose and the quantities of (often other people's) money he threw at them.

When Trump speaks of America's infrastructure problems, he does so with real passion; and you can hear the disappointment in his voice. (Courtesy <https://www.vox.com/policy-and-politics>)