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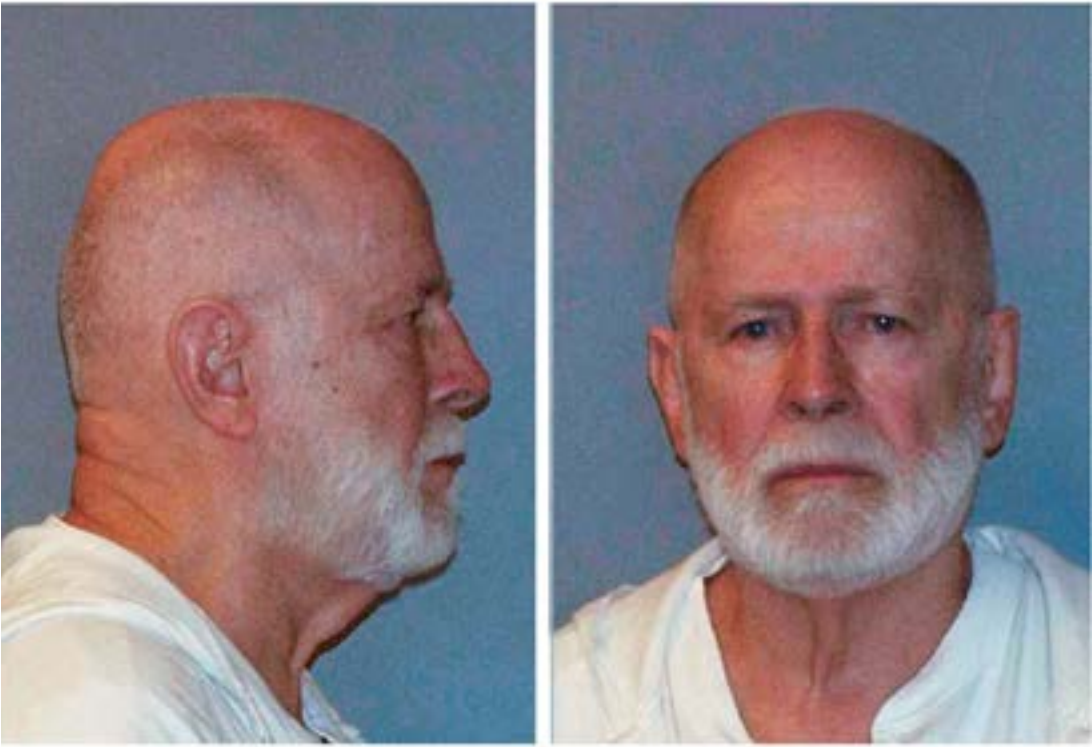
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Boston gangster James ‘Whitey’ Bulger found dead in prison

(Reuters) - James “Whitey” Bulger, who lived a double life as one of Boston’s most notorious mobsters and as a secret FBI informant before going on the run for 16 years, was found dead at a federal prison in West Virginia, the Federal Bureau of Prisons said. The Federal Bureau of Investigation was looking into Bulger’s death, the Bureau of Prisons said in its statement. Bulger’s death at age 89 came a day after he was transferred to the high-security prison. Federal officials did not give a cause of death but the Bureau of Prisons said no other inmates or staff were injured. CNN and the Boston Globe reported that Bulger was killed without giving further details. Henry Brennan, a defense lawyer for Bulger, said in an email he could not confirm or deny the reports. Bulger was convicted in August 2013 of 11 murders, among other charges including racketeering, and sentenced to two consecutive life terms plus five years. Prison had been something Bulger had gone to great lengths to avoid - killing potential witnesses, cultivating corrupt lawmen and living as a fugitive for 16 years. It all ended when a tip from a former Icelandic beauty queen led to his capture in June 2011 in Santa Monica, California, where he was living with a long-time girlfriend.

Bulger and his Winter Hill gang had operated for more than two decades in the insular Irish-dominated South Boston neighborhood, engaging in loan sharking, gambling, extortion, drug dealing and murder. They did so with the tacit approval of an FBI agent who looked the other way when it came to Bulger’s crimes so that he would supply information on other gangsters. Bulger, portrayed by Johnny Depp in the 2015 film “Black Mass,” was feared for his short temper and brutality. Prosecutors said he strangled two women with his hands and tortured a man for hours before shooting him in the head with a machine gun. “We took what we wanted,” Kevin Weeks, a former Bulger lieutenant who would eventually testify against him, wrote in “Brutal,” his memoir. “We



FILE PHOTO: Former mob boss and fugitive James “Whitey” Bulger is seen in a booking mug combination photo

made millions through extortion and loansharking and protection. And if someone ratted us out, we killed him. We were not nice guys.” Bulger was born Sept. 3, 1929, and grew up in South Boston. He was called “Whitey” because of his light blond hair but was said to detest the nickname and preferred being called Jimmy. As a teenager he joined a gang known as The Shamrocks, compiled an arrest record for assault and armed robbery and ended up in a juvenile reformatory

Bulger was a bank robber early in his criminal career, which landed him in prisons such as the infamous Alcatraz, located on an island in San Francisco Bay. Upon his release in 1965, he eventually fell in with the Irish mob in South Boston and worked his way through the ranks as a bookie and loanshark. He survived a gang war between two Irish mobs and was a leading figure in Boston’s underworld by the early 1970s.

U.S. consumer confidence at 18-year high; house price gains slow

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - U.S. consumer confidence rose to an 18-year high in October, driven largely by a robust labor market, bolstering expectations that strong economic growth would continue through early 2019. But a weakening housing market and tightening financial market conditions are casting a shadow on the economic expansion that is in its ninth year, the second longest on record. Home price gains slowed further in August, other data showed, another sign that higher mortgage rates were weighing on housing demand. “We don’t know how long this is going to hold up, but the consumer is bullish on the outlook and this means the economy is going to continue to advance in this long economic expansion from the last recession,” said Chris Rupkey, chief economist at MUFJ in New York. The Conference Board said its consumer confidence index reading rose to 137.9 this month, the highest since September 2000, from a downwardly revised 135.3 in September. Economists polled by Reuters had forecast the consumer index slipping to 136.0 from the previously reported 138.4 in September. Consumers’ assessment of current business and labor market conditions improved despite a sharp stock market sell-off and jump in U.S. Treasury yields, which have tightened financial market conditions. The stock market’s S&P 500 index has dropped more than 8 percent this month.

The Conference Board survey puts more emphasis on the labor market. The survey’s so-called labor market differential, derived from data about respondents saying jobs are scarce or plentiful, was the most favorable since January 2001. This measure closely correlates to the unemployment rate in the Labor Department’s employment report. Economists said it raised the possibility that the unemployment rate could drop further from a near 49-year low of 3.7 percent. The government will publish its October employment report on Friday. “At the end of the day, it is the job market, or the security of having a job with a regular paycheck, that supports confidence and spending,” said Jennifer Lee, a senior economist at BMO Capital Markets in Toronto. “So far, so good.” Consumer confidence at multi-year highs bodes well for spending in the upcoming holiday season. More consumers planned to buy automobiles and houses over the next six months, but the share of those intending to purchase major appliances slipped. The dollar was near a 2 1/2-month high against a basket of currencies, while stocks on Wall Street were higher. U.S. Treasury yields rose. The economy grew at a 3.5 percent annualized rate in the third quarter and is considered on course to achieve the Trump administration’s target of 3.0 percent annual growth this year.

Growth has been spurred by a \$1.5 trillion tax cut. Economists estimate the tax cut stimulus peaked in the third quarter and expect growth to gradually slow from the second half 2019, restrained in part by higher interest rates. The Federal Reserve has increased borrowing costs three times this year and in September removed a reference to monetary policy remaining “accommodative” from its policy statement. The U.S. central bank is expected raise rates gain in December. Higher borrowing costs have cooled housing demand; sales and homebuilding declined in September. A separate report on Tuesday showed the S&P CoreLogic Case-Shiller composite home price index of 20 U.S. metropolitan areas rose 5.5 percent in August from a year ago after increasing 5.9 percent in July. Growth in house prices has slowed from as high as 6.8 percent in March. Prices had been boosted by a shortage of properties on the market, but now mortgage rates have risen to seven-year highs. “The sharp gain in mortgage rates thus far in 2018 continues to weigh on home sales as well as home prices,” said Brent Campbell, an economist at Moody’s Analytics in West Chester, Pennsylvania. “With the Fed continuing to tighten monetary policy through the rest of 2018 and into 2019, mortgage rates are likely to rise even more, resulting in less housing demand and modest house price growth in 2019.”

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The Randalls at 2075 Westheimer was remodeled in 2007. Now it's scheduled to close.

The stretch of Miami was at one time a row of car dealerships, ushering in Houston's stubborn car-minded psyche that exists to this day. According to Fox, Frank Gillman Pontiac was the last car dealer to occupy the Shelor Building, remaining until 1967.

Editor's Choice



Women dressed in Tang-dynasty costumes perform at a show by designer Chu Yan at China Fashion Week in Beijing, China, October 30, 2018. REUTERS/Jason Lee TPX IMAGES OF THE DAY



Central American migrants walk through the Suchiate river, the natural border between Guatemala and Mexico, in their bid to reach the U.S., as seen from Tecun Uman



KCNA picture of North Korean leader Kim Jong Un inspects Samjiyon County



A relative of a passenger on the crashed Lion Air flight JT610 cries at Bhayangkara R. Said Sukan to hospital in Jakarta



Britain's Prince Harry and Meghan, Duchess of Sussex, meet actors in costumes during a visit to Courtenay Creative, in Wellington



Mercedes' British driver Lewis Hamilton celebrates after winning his fifth drivers' title during the F1 Mexico Grand Prix at the Hermanos Rodriguez circuit in Mexico City



Chelsy Montserrat Maldonado, a four-year-old migrant girl from Honduras, wears a U.S. flag themed dress as she stands in a makeshift camp as they take rest in Tapanatepec



Social Democratic Party (SPD) top candidate Thorsten Schaefer-Guembel and Nancy Faeser, General Secretary of SPD Hessen, react after first exit polls following the Hesse state election in Wiesbaden, Germany, October 28, 2018. REUTERS/Thorsten Wagner TPX IMAGES OF THE DAY



The area where the wall is proposed to be built is a refuge for 19 federally threatened and endangered species and 57 state protected species, including the ocelot and other species. A wall could have a serious, and possibly deadly, impact on these species.

The prospect of a border wall between Mexico and the U.S. is now real. President Trump has requested \$1.6 billion for fiscal year 2018 to build three segments totaling 74 miles. The Department of Homeland Security is planning to test the eight prototypes it built this summer in San Diego over the next 30 to 60 days.

There's a long debate over whether physical barriers on the border actually curb the illicit flow of people and drugs. The Border Patrol, which is backing Trump's plan, says they're a "vital tool" in their operation. Migration experts say they're more symbolic than effective.

But what is undeniable is that the 654 miles of walls and fences already on the US-Mexico border have made a mess out of the environment there. They've cut off, isolated, and reduced populations of some of the rarest and most amazing animals in North America, like the jaguar and ocelot (also known as the dwarf jaguar). They've led to the creation of miles of roads through pristine wilderness areas. They've even exacerbated flooding, becoming dams when rivers have overflowed.

Now, DHS is eyeing unfenced areas in two Texas wildlife refuges that conservationists consider some of the most ecologically valuable areas on the border — home to armadillos and bobcats. If a wall were to slice through these ecosystems, it could cause irreversible damage to plants and animals already under serious threat.

"We've been dealing with all these negative environmental impacts of fences on the border for more than a decade," says Dan Millis of the Sierra Club Borderlands project. "And Trump's proposal would make it worse."

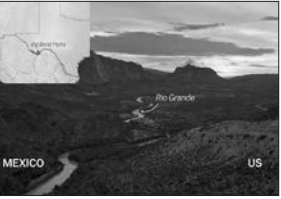
The border region is ecologically rich because a lot of it has been federally protected. The political boundary between the US and

Wall Could Cut Off A Texas Wildlife Refuge And The Habitat Of Big, Beautiful Cats

Trump's Border Wall Could Be An Ecological Disaster

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

Mexico stretches 2,000 miles from the Gulf of Mexico to the Pacific Ocean. Along the way, there are three mountain chains, the two largest deserts in North America, vast cattle ranches, a handful of cities and their sprawling suburbs, and the Southern section of the mighty Rio Grande river.



Much of the region has never been heavily populated, and over the years, several large swaths of land have been designated as protected areas. Today there are 25 million acres of protected US public lands within 100 miles of the line. That includes six wildlife refuges, six national parks, tribal lands, wilderness areas, and conservation areas — all of them managed by various federal agencies and tribal governments.

On the Mexican side, meanwhile, sit protected areas like El Pinacate y Gran Desierto to Altar, which abuts the US Cabeza Prieta National Wildlife Refuge and parts of the Organ Pipe National Monument and Barry M. Goldwater Range in Arizona.

These protected areas have been established, in part, to protect wildlife and plants that span both countries. In the case of the El Pinacate and Cabeza Prieta, desert species like the Sonoran pronghorn (an antelope relative) have been able to migrate back and forth. But in recent years, that's gotten harder with the construction of long sections of vehicle barriers and fences, as you can see from the map.

"People think of deserts as barren lands and flat sand dunes with nothing there," Sergio Avila, a conservation scientist at the Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum, says. "But deserts are very diverse and rich in life."

Saguaro cacti, or "giant cacti," and ocotillo cactus (in bloom)

in the Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument park in the Sonoran Desert. (Photo Urterra / UIG via Getty Images)

The protected areas on the border harbor an incredible array of wild-life and plants

When you trace the border from west to east (as this Story Map project by Krista Schlyer did), you find shrinking pockets of remarkable biological abundance. At the far west is the Tijuana Estuary, a key salt marsh habitat for some 400 species of migrating birds. At the far east, birds and butterflies stop through the Lower Rio Grande Valley, which is also a permanent home for colorful mammals, reptiles, and amphibians.

"There are tropical animal species in some of these canyons that are not found anywhere else," says Jesse Lasky, a biologist at Penn State who has studied the impact of border fences on border species. "They inhabit these little slices of tropical ecosystem that creep up into the US near the Gulf coast."

Not many scientists have measured the border's biodiversity in its totality — or the full impact of fences. One of the few studies to tackle these questions was written by Lasky and co-authors in 2011. They estimated that 134 mammal, 178 reptile, and 57 amphibian species live within about 30 miles of the line. Of those, 50 species and three subspecies are globally or federally threatened in Mexico or the United States. And they survive only because people on both sides have worked hard to conserve them.

Border fences have been terrible for wildlife and plants

Since 1994, the US government has been erecting barriers to keep people and drugs from Mexico and beyond out. By 2010, about one-third of the border had been fenced with materials ranging from barbed wire to steel, bollard to wire mesh, and chain link. In addition, the Department of Homeland Security has built hundreds of miles of roads to allow the Border Patrol to access remote regions, both fenced and unfenced.

All of this construction has sliced and diced a lot of protected land along the border. And ever since the passage of the Real ID Act of 2005, DHS has had the power to waive

most environmental reviews in the name of national security.

So, unlike most federal infrastructure projects, these fences have received little or no input from the public, land managers, conservation groups, or other agencies. Experts had no chance to assess beforehand what impact the fence might have on wildlife, plants, and rivers. Only after the fact have researchers documented instances where fences have interrupted wildlife corridors, and caused erosion and other damage to fragile ecosystems, as well as flooding.

But what evidence we do have is alarming. For instance, Lasky and his co-authors found that the biggest risk comes when fences bisect the range of a small population of a species with a specialized habitat, leaving the majority of the population on one side and the others adrift. His paper found 45 species and three subspecies that the current fence has affected this way.

Cutting off animal populations in this fashion leads to reduced gene flow and inbreeding — leading to a greater risk of extinction. Conservation groups are particularly worried about the Mexican gray wolf; in 2016, there were just 113 in the US and about three dozen south of the border. A wall between them could make the recovery of the population unsurmountable.

Mexican gray wolves are the most endangered wolf in the world. In 2016, there were just 113 in the US and about three dozen south of the border. Don Bartletti / Los Angeles Times via Getty Images

Fences also can restrict animals' access to water sources — particularly problematic in the drought-prone Southwest. And they can make it harder for animals to adapt to climate change. "A lot of species do best in Northern Mexico, but with changes in precipitation patterns, they would need to disperse across the border," says Lasky. "This is something we should be thinking about a lot more — how fast organisms are

responding to climate change."

The wall structures hurt animals and insects in other ways too. Some sections have lights that attract and zap pollinators, like the monarch butterfly, that migrate across the border. And the taller the fence, the more impassable it is for some bats and birds, like the cactus ferruginous pygmy owl.

Trump's proposed wall could have a big impact on still-pristine areas

About two-thirds, or 1,350 miles, of the border remains unfenced. Trump said on July 13 that he intends to build a total 700 to 900 miles of new wall, which will be exceedingly difficult to do. (Cost estimates for walling off the entire border range from \$21 billion to \$40 billion, and 700 miles would cost at least \$12 billion.)

But it's plausible that Congress will give US Customs and Border Patrol, the division of DHS in charge of border security, at least some of the \$1.6 billion that Trump requested to build three segments totaling 74 miles for fiscal year 2018. That would reportedly include "28 miles of new levee wall system in Rio Grande Valley, 32 new miles of border wall system in the Rio Grande Valley, and 14 miles of replacement secondary barrier in San Diego," according to a DHS spokesperson.

San Diego is a sprawling urban center, but just south of it is the Tijuana Estuary, where the Tijuana River meets the Pacific Ocean. It's one of the most biodiverse areas in the entire state of California, according to Millis of the Sierra Club, and has already been impacted by fences. Replacing the fences there could mean more habitat destruction in the estuary.

Activists in Texas who've been tracking fence construction over the years say they think part of the new levee walls CPB would build if Congress allocates the money for them will bisect the Lower Rio Grande Valley National Wildlife Refuge — a collection of dozens of tracts of habitat stretching from Brownsville by the Gulf of Mexico to Rio Grande City, about 100 miles west.

This area is a refuge for 19 federally threatened and endangered species and 57 state protected species, including the ocelot and other species in the illustration below. And a wall could have a serious, in some cases deadly, impact on these species: (Courtesy <https://www.vox.com>)



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President Trump: U.S. Is Economic Envy Of The World

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



President Donald Trump stands with Vice President Mike Pence after delivering remarks about the economy on the South Lawn of the White House, Friday, July 27, 2018, in Washington DC. (AP Photo)

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump on Friday celebrated the release of new economic data, claiming the U.S. is now the “economic envy of the entire world.” Trump was responding to new growth numbers announced on Friday that show the U.S. economy surged in the April-June quarter to an annual growth rate of 4.1 percent — the fastest pace since 2014.

“We’ve accomplished an economic turnaround of historic proportions,” Trump told reporters during hastily arranged remarks on the South Lawn of the White House, where he was joined by Vice President Mike Pence and flanked by members of his economic team.

“Once again, we are the economic envy of the entire world,” Trump said, adding that “America is being respected again.”

Trump is predicting that as he renegotiates trade deals, “we’re going to go a lot higher than these numbers.”

Trump said on the South Lawn of the White House that the economic numbers are “very sustainable.”

The president said the GDP reached 4.1-percent in the second quarter, adding, the U.S. is on track to the highest annual growth rate in 13-years.



Trump said on the South Lawn of the White House that the economic numbers are “very sustainable.”

He also said 3.7 million new jobs have been added since the election, which is a number that was once “unthinkable.”

Additionally, President Trump said the trade deficit has dropped by more than \$50 billion

Finally, Economic Adviser Larry Kudlow praised the economic boom as long-lasting and sustainable.

The numbers were driven by consumers who began spending the tax cuts Trump signed into law last year and exporters who have been rushing to get their prod-

ucts delivered ahead of retaliatory tariffs.

Trump, who has repeatedly attacked the economic record of his predecessor’s administration, pledged during the 2016 campaign to double growth to 4 percent or better. And he has been trying to highlight economic gains ahead of the midterm elections.

But Trump, ever the salesman, predicted even higher growth as he renegotiates the nation’s trade deals, saying, “We’re going to go a lot higher than these numbers.”

And he insisted the economic numbers are “very sustainable” and not “a one-time shot.”

Private forecasters cautioned that the April-June pace is unsustainable because, they say, it stems from temporary factors, including a rush by exporters of soybeans and other products to get their shipments out before retaliatory tariffs took effect.

They predicted the rest of the year is likely to see solid, but slower growth of around 3 percent.

The transformation is also not as dramatic as Trump claims — and in many ways the 4.1 percent annualized growth during the second quarter is in line with an economic expansion that just entered its tenth year.



President Donald Trump stands with Vice President Mike Pence after delivering remarks about the economy on the South Lawn of the White House, Friday, July 27, 2018

During Barack Obama’s presidency, there were four quarters when annualized growth exceeded the level that Trump praised on Friday. And in 2015, full-year economic growth nearly reached the 3 percent level being targeted by the Trump administration this year when it hit 2.9 percent.

Unlike in 2015, growth has accelerated this year, in part, because of the stimulus from Trump’s deficit-funded tax cuts.

Trump has said he sees annual growth of 3 percent or more as sustainable. But Federal Reserve officials and outside economists don’t expect a permanent upshift.

Their forecasts predict that growth will

return to roughly 2 percent, which largely reflects a demographic change beyond the White House’s control.

Due to declines in birth rates, workers will be joining the economy at a slower pace and this hurts overall growth levels. (Courtesy <https://wgntv.com/>)

U.S. economy back on track with strong second-quarter rebound

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - The U.S. economy rebounded sharply in the second quarter as consumers stepped up spending and businesses restocked, putting it on course to close out the year on solid footing.

Gross domestic product expanded at a 4.0 percent annual rate after shrinking at a revised 2.1 percent pace in the first quarter, the Commerce Department said on Wednesday.

The government previously had said the economy contracted at a 2.9 percent rate at the start of the year.

The second-quarter expansion was much stronger than the 3.0 percent economists had expected and added to manufacturing and services sector data in bolstering the outlook for the remainder of the year.

“Today’s report shows greater near-term healing and momentum, reducing the downside risks and leaving us comfortable with our forecast for above 3.0 percent growth through next year,” said Michelle Meyer, a senior economist at Bank of America Merrill Lynch in New York.

Despite the pickup, growth in the first half of the year badly lagged the economy’s estimated 2 percent to 2.5 percent potential, a reminder that the nation’s recovery from the worst recession since the 1930s remains the slowest on record.

Shoppers now hitting the malls as well as shopping online.

A separate report showed private employers added 218,000 jobs to their payrolls this month, a decline from June’s hefty gain of 281,000. Still, hiring remains solid and consistent with

expectations for a stronger second half of the year.

Federal Reserve officials on Wednesday acknowledged the improvement in the economy, but cautioned that labor market slack remained considerable. The U.S. central bank, following the end of a two-day policy meeting, announced a further reduction to the amount of money it is injecting into the economy through monthly bond purchases.

The Fed is not expected to raise interest rates until next June.

The GDP data buoyed the dollar, lifting it to a 10-month high against a basket of currencies as traders speculated about an early rate hike.

Prices for U.S. Treasury debt fell, with the yield on the two-year note touching its highest level since 2011. U.S. stocks were trading mixed.



Mall shoppers taking advantage of improved U.S. economy.

ECONOMY IN MUCH BETTER SHAPE

“We do not feel the report calls for pulling forward the Fed rate hike. The first quarter’s bad weather didn’t change the story, but simply delayed when that train gets to the station,” said Tim Hopper, chief economist at TIAA-CREF in New York.

The government also published revisions to prior GDP data going back to 1999, which showed the economy performing much stronger in the second half of 2013 and for that year as a whole than previously reported.

The economy in the second quarter was buoyed by consumer spending and a swing in business inventories.

Consumer spending growth, which accounts for more than two-thirds of U.S. economic activity, accelerated at a 2.5 percent pace, as Americans bought long-lasting manufactured goods, mostly automobiles, and spent a bit more on services.

It had braked to a 1.2 percent pace in the first quarter because of weak healthcare spending.

Despite the pick-up in consumer spending, Americans saved more in the second quarter. The saving rate increased to 5.3 percent from 4.9 percent in the first quarter as incomes rose, which bodes well for future spending. (Courtesy reuters.com)

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