

FBI PUBLIC AFFAIRS – DIRECTOR'S AM NEWS BRIEFING

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Trump Says He Did Not Pressure Ukraine Over Bidens, Has Yet To Decide About Releasing Transcript.

Transcript. Coverage of the continuing controversy over a whistleblower complaint regarding President Trump's communications with a foreign leader focuses on whether or not the President admitted to pressuring Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky to investigate former Vice President Joe Biden and his son, and on whether Trump will release the transcript of the telephone call in question. The possibility of Presidential pressure on a foreign power over a possible 2020 rival is leading some Democrats who had wavered on opening an impeachment investigation into Trump to now call for proceedings to begin.

Margaret Brennan opened the [CBS Evening News](#) (9/23, lead story, 2:19, 4.27M) with the story, reporting, "More answers lead to even more questions about President Trump's July phone call with the new leader of Ukraine. The President confirmed they did discuss Joe Biden and his son. [Trump] also publicly accused the Bidens of being corrupt, but he denied putting any pressure on Ukraine to open an investigation." CBS' Weijia Jiang: "The phone conversation between President Trump and [Zelensky] is the talk of the town as President Trump meets with world leaders in New York City. The President has been on the defensive since it was revealed that a whistleblower filed a complaint about his communications with Ukraine. The question: Did Mr. Trump in that July 25 call threaten to withhold military funding if the Ukrainians did not investigate Joe Biden and his son?" Trump: "I didn't. No, I didn't." Jiang: "Today, he confirmed they discussed foreign aid, but no quid pro quo." Trump: "I put no pressure on them whatsoever. I could have. I think it would probably possibly have been okay if I did. But I didn't."

David Muir said on [ABC World News Tonight](#) (9/23, story 2, 3:19, 7.06M) that Trump was "defiant" Monday, "saying he was not putting pressure on the new President of Ukraine." ABC's Jonathan Karl: "Trump insisted he did nothing wrong by asking the President of Ukraine to investigate his campaign rival, Joe Biden. ... [At] another point today, the President seemed to acknowledge he did consider withholding aide unless the investigation into his political rival went forward." Trump: "We're supporting a country, we want to make sure that country is honest. It's very important to talk about corruption. If you don't talk about corruption, why would you give money to a country that you think is corrupt?"

Kristen Welker reported on [NBC Nightly News](#) (9/23, story 2, 2:16, Holt, 5.91M) that Trump is "dismissing new impeachment calls from Democrats and defending his July phone call with the leader of Ukraine, insisting he never threatened to withhold military aid if Ukraine didn't investigate accusations against Joe Biden and his son. ... The President raising eyebrows with this comment about media coverage." Trump: "If a Republican ever did what Joe Biden did, if a Republican ever said what Joe Biden said, they would be getting the electric chair right now." Welker: "There's been no evidence of wrongdoing by Biden."

Jake Tapper said on [CNN's The Lead](#) (9/23, 4:01 p.m. ET, 937K), "President Trump now has not only admitted that, when he spoke with Zelensky in July, he brought up the Bidens and his accusations against them, allegations that the Ukrainian prosecutor says he knows of no evidence to support. Today, the President went a step further. While he denied today an explicit quid pro quo or putting pressure on Zelensky, the President seemed to acknowledge that he saw the \$250 million in military aid that Ukraine was at the time trying to get from the US as tied to his general desire to have Ukraine pursue the Bidens. ... One Trump adviser telling CNN's Jim Acosta today – quote – 'This is a serious problem for us. He admitted doing it' – unquote."

The [AP](#) (9/23, Mascaro) reports, "Lawmakers in Congress on Monday pressed for full disclosure of a whistleblower's complaint" about Trump as the President "insisted he did nothing wrong. Democrats, and some Republicans, urged the White House to be forthcoming amid the reports that the president pressured Ukraine's leader to help investigate" Biden. [Reuters](#) (9/23, Zengerle, Holland) reports Trump "shrugged off talk about impeachment." When "asked how seriously he was taking the threat of impeachment by Congress, Trump said, 'Not at all seriously.'" Trump [tweeted](#), "@FoxNews bombshell information reports that the so-called Whistleblower did not have firsthand knowledge of that phone conversation with Ukraine's President.' Wow! @HARRISFAULKNER It is all a Democrat/Adam Schiff Scam! Doing this for 3 years now, and found NOTHING!"

[USA Today](#) (9/23, Fritze, Jackson, 10.31M) reports Trump "arrived at the UN with an agenda that included increasing global pressure on Iran but was immediately confronted Monday with a widening scandal. ... Already at odds with some U.S. allies on the Middle East, trade and climate, the president is facing scrutiny over his contacts" with Zelensky. But he "rejected suggestions from Democrats that he used U.S. taxpayer-funded foreign aid as leverage to push the country to investigate a political rival. ... 'I didn't do it,' Trump told reporters during a meeting with Polish president Andrzej Duda. 'I did not do that at all.'" The [Washington Post](#) (9/23, Gearan, Rucker, Parker, 14.2M) reports, "Trump used his meetings with heads of state to flay Biden."

[Politico](#) (9/23, Oprysko, 4.29M) says the President "asserted that the transcript of his call with Ukraine's president would show he never directly threatened to withhold military aid if the country didn't investigate Joe Biden and his son." The [Washington Post](#) (9/23, Wagner, 14.2M) quotes Trump as saying, "I didn't do it ... When you see the call [transcript], you're going to be very surprised. ... I hope you get to see the call." The [New York Times](#) (9/23, Fandos, Crowley, 18.61M) reports Biden "chimed in via the president's favorite platform, Twitter, responding to Mr. Trump's dismissal of charges of misconduct by writing, 'So release the transcript of the call then.'" The [Wall Street Journal](#) (9/23, Ballhaus, Hughes, Restuccia, Subscription Publication, 7.57M) reports Trump remained noncommittal about releasing the transcript, saying it could set a bad precedent.

The [New York Post](#) (9/23, Hicks, Fredericks, 4.57M) reports Trump "wavered on whether he would release" the transcript. Kaitlan Collins said on [CNN](#) (9/23, 3:02 p.m. ET, Baldwin, 1M) that Trump "seems to be wavering on...whether or not that transcript should be released, because he says it would reveal that he's right here, that there was no wrongdoing or inappropriate conversations during that call." But Trump later seemed to echo "what we have heard from aides, that they're worried, if they did release this transcript, it could lead to them to being forced to release a slew of others."

Peter Baker writes in the [New York Times](#) (9/23, 18.61M), "The last time he was accused of collaborating with a foreign power to influence an election, he denied it and traveled the country practically chanting, 'No collusion!' This time, he is saying, in effect, so what if I did?" The [Washington Post](#) (9/23, Demirjian, Dawsey, Nakashima, Leonnig, 14.2M) reports Trump told Acting Chief of Staff Mulvaney "to hold back almost \$400 million in military aid for Ukraine at least a week before" the phone call. OMB officials "relayed Trump's order to the State Department and the Pentagon during an interagency meeting in mid-July, according to officials who spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss internal deliberations."

Michael Kruse writes in [Politico Magazine](#) (9/23, 4.24M), "That Trump would so quickly in the wake of the Mueller investigation commit a brazen act some critics say represents an egregious and impeachable abuse of power has mystified many observers. ... Those who know him best say this is merely the latest episode in a lifelong pattern of behavior for the congenitally combative Trump. He's always been this way." [CQ Roll Call](#) (9/23, Bennett, 154K) says Trump "opened the line of attack on Biden last week as RealClearPolitics' average of a handful of public opinion polls shows gave [Biden] an 11.7-percentage point lead nationally over Trump in a hypothetical general election race."

The [Washington Post](#) (9/23, A1, Viser, Stanley-Becker, 14.2M) says on its front page, "The skirmish illustrated how ill-equipped Democrats, busy battling one another in the fight for the nomination, are to compete with Trump's online megaphone, which includes not just his own Twitter feed and that of the Republican National Committee's leadership, but also a regiment of conservative talking heads and highly active Internet trolls who have closed ranks around the president."

The [Washington Examiner](#) (9/23, Chaitin, 448K) reports Rep. Devin Nunes (R-CA) "told Fox & Friends on Monday that little is actually known about this complaint, and that it may not have anything to do with" the Trump-Zelensky call. Trump [tweeted](#), "The very thing that they are accusing President Trump of doing (which I didn't do), was actually done by Joe Biden. Continues to be a double standard." @RepDevinNunes @foxandfriends These people are stone cold Crooked. Also, who is this so-called 'whistleblower' who doesn't know the correct facts. Is he on our Country's side. Where does he come from. Is this all about Schiff & the Democrats again after years of being wrong?"

The [New York Times](#) (9/23, 18.61M) editorializes, "The president, who says he did nothing wrong, should welcome the opportunity to let Congress clear up this matter" by letting Acting DNI Joseph Maguire turn over the whistleblower complaint – which Intelligence Community Inspector General Michael Atkinson, "a Trump appointee, [found] to be of 'urgent concern and credible,'" to Congress. The Times says "this should not be a partisan issue. Lawmakers from both parties have an interest, and a duty, in making clear that any president, in accordance with the law, is accountable to Congress."

The [Washington Post](#) (9/23, 14.2M) editorializes, "Trump is right about Ukraine in one respect: For many years, the country's politics have been dominated by a complex and ugly struggle over corruption. ... What Mr. Trump does not explain is that he and his lawyer, Rudolph W. Giuliani, have sided with the bad guys in this struggle: the Russians, the oligarchs and the compromised officials. The false stories they tell about Joe Biden and other U.S. Democrats result from this misguided alliance." The [Wall Street Journal](#) (9/23, Subscription Publication, 7.57M) says in an editorial that the transcript of the call should be released, not just to show whether Trump did anything wrong but to expose whether Biden did.

Ex-DNI James Clapper said on [CNN's Cuomo Prime Time](#) (9/23, 9:12 p.m. ET, Cuomo, 1M), "Whether there was a direct discourse here where, you know, if you don't do something about investigating former Vice President Biden, you're not going to get the aid, I doubt it was that overt. ... We don't know the actual content of the whistleblower complaint. ... And I think that's very important to know the content of that because this was done, submitted by a mature, seasoned employee, not some junior person. Moreover, the Inspector General of the Intelligence Community found it credible and urgent. This is an appointee of this Administration."

Anderson Cooper said on [CNN's Anderson Cooper 360](#) (9/23, 8:00 p.m. ET, 940K), "Both today and over the weekend, the President of the United States admitted to talking to a foreign leader about investigating the President's leading domestic political

rival and today he suggested he was using \$250 million in military aid as leverage. ... It's important not to let what President Trump said, what he himself has already admitted, get lost in all the noise surrounding this story. That noise, the goalpost-moving, the denying of wrongdoing, even while seemingly admitting to it all, they're all from a playbook this President has used before."

Chris Hayes said on [MSNBC's All In](#) (9/23, 8:01 p.m. ET, Hayes, 808K), "When it comes to the President's actions with Ukraine, we don't have all the facts or access to the whistleblower complaint, which is still being withheld from congress in an apparent violation of law. ... We don't have the transcript of the conversation, even though [Trump] said, quote, 'I hope you get to see it and I hope you get to see that soon.' Take that with a grain of salt. But what is clear now is that the basic contours are essentially agreed to by all parties, including the President."

Matt Vespa of [Townhall](#) (9/23, 177K) writes, "Apparently, Trump spoke to a foreign leader. That's the story. The level of scandal is just... appalling, said by no one serious. Trump supposedly pressured Ukrainian leaders to investigate [Biden.] Yeah, Trump can say that – and Ukraine can ignore the request. It's a conversation of no importance." Erielle Davidson of [The Federalist](#) (9/23, 126K) writes, "The complaint was based on hearsay. According to an official briefed on the matter, the whistleblower 'didn't have direct knowledge of the communications.' Instead, the information in the complaint apparently came from 'learning information that was not obtained during the course of their work.'" [Bloomberg](#) (9/23, Sink, Wingrove, 4.73M), the [Washington Times](#) (9/23, Boyer, 492K), and the [Washington Examiner](#) (9/23, Gage, 448K) also cover the President's remarks.

Giuliani: Ukraine Laundered Money To Hunter Biden. The [New York Post](#) (9/23, Moore, 4.57M) reports Giuliani "early Monday accused Ukraine of laundering \$3 million to Joe Biden's son Hunter. ... 'NEW FACT: One \$3 million payment to Biden's son from Ukraine to Latvia to Cyprus to US,' Giuliani [wrote](#) on Twitter at 2:22 a.m." The [Washington Times](#) (9/23, Miller, 492K) reports Giuliani "called out the 'big money' deals with Ukraine and China that lined the pockets" of Hunter Biden. The [Washington Examiner](#) (9/23, Pearce, 448K) reports Giuliani "promised to release more damaging information" on the Bidens' "connections with China and Ukraine."

Giuliani said on [Fox News' Hannity](#) (9/23, 9:30 p.m. ET, Hannity, 1.54M), "I knew this back in November. Somebody came to me and told me this entire fact pattern back in November. ... Biden was involved in very, very horrible corruption. ... I don't want to pick on the kid. But if you have \$1.5 billion to a guy they got thrown out of the military for drug addiction just a couple of days before... This stinks to high heaven. It's a disgrace. It will be one of the great American scandals when it's eventually uncovered."

Author Charlie Hurt said on [Fox News' Tucker Carlson Tonight](#) (9/23, 9:21 p.m. ET, Carlson, 1.48M), "I think there are a lot of very serious questions about all of it. It's very strange. You know, they are [Biden's] own words. That's the other thing. But then the real hell for me is the way all of these so-called mainstream media outlets are trying to pooh-pooh the story and say we don't know what's going on here. We just don't know."

Trump: Giuliani Took "Fredo" Cuomo "To The Cleaners." The [New York Post](#) (9/23, Fredericks, Hicks, 4.57M) reports Trump on Monday defended Giuliani "over his appearance last week on Chris Cuomo's CNN show in which he first denied that he'd mentioned Joe Biden's son to Ukrainian officials only to admit seconds later that he had." The [Washington Examiner](#) (9/23, Gage, 448K) quotes Trump saying, "I watched Rudy take apart Fredo. Rudy Giuliani took Fredo to the cleaners."

McConnell: Senate Intelligence Committee Seeking Briefing On Complaint. [The Hill](#) (9/23, Carney, 2.98M) reports Senate Majority Leader McConnell said Monday that Senate Intelligence Chairman Richard Burr "is trying to schedule a briefing for this week" on the whistleblower complaint. McConnell said, "Chairman Burr has been working to get the Intelligence Community's Inspector General before the committee this week to discuss the matter."

The [New York Times](#) (9/23, Fandos, 18.61M) reports Senate Minority Leader Schumer "called on Senate Republicans to join Democrats in demanding that the administration furnish details about" Trump's call with Zelensky, and "warned that Republicans would be complicit in Mr. Trump's actions if they failed to demand that the White House release a transcript of [the] call...and subpoena a related whistle-blower complaint." The [Washington Times](#) (9/23, Swoyer, 492K) reports McConnell said Schumer "has been politicizing the committee's work." The [Washington Examiner](#) (9/23, Ferrechio, 448K) also reports.

Three House Chairs Set Deadline For Pompeo To Reply On Relevant Documents. The [Washington Post](#) (9/23, Bade, 14.2M) reports that in a joint statement, House Oversight and Reform Chairman Elijah Cummings, House Foreign Affairs Chairman Eliot Engel, and House Intelligence Chairman Adam Schiff criticized Secretary of State Pompeo "for withholding documents about the Ukraine matter," and "gave Pompeo until Thursday to let the panels know if he intends to comply with a request they sent him two weeks ago." On the [CBS Evening News](#) (9/23, story 2, 1:28, Brennan, 4.27M), Nancy Cordes said the committees "first asked for those documents a couple weeks ago, but haven't gotten any of them yet." [The Hill](#) (9/23, Beavers, 2.98M) also reports.

Pelosi Reportedly Reconsidering Impeachment As Seven Moderates Endorse It. The [Washington Post](#) (9/23, Bade, DeBonis, 14.2M) reports House Speaker Pelosi "has been quietly sounding out top allies and lawmakers about whether the time

has come to impeach President Trump, a major development as several moderate House Democrats resistant to impeachment suddenly endorsed the extraordinary step of trying to oust the president." Pelosi, "according to multiple senior House Democrats and congressional aides, has been gauging the mood of her caucus members about whether they believe that allegations that Trump pressured a Ukrainian leader to investigate a political foe are a tipping point. ... Seven freshman Democrats with previous service in the military, defense and U.S. intelligence said in a Monday night Washington Post op-ed that if the allegations against Trump are true, 'we believe these actions represent an impeachable offense."

In the [Washington Post](#) (9/23, 14.2M), moderate freshman Reps. Gil Cisneros (D-CA), Jason Crow (D-CO), Chrissy Houlahan (D-PA), Elaine Luria (D-VA), Mikie Sherrill (D-NJ), Elissa Slotkin (D-MI), and Abigail Spanberger (D-VA) write, "The president of the United States may have used his position to pressure a foreign country into investigating a political opponent, and he sought to use U.S. taxpayer dollars as leverage to do it. ... This flagrant disregard for the law cannot stand. To uphold and defend our Constitution, Congress must determine whether the president was indeed willing to use his power and withhold security assistance funds to persuade a foreign country to assist him in an upcoming election." Slotkin makes a similar case in a [Detroit Free Press](#) (9/23, 1.52M) op-ed.

[Politico](#) (9/23, Caygle, Ferris, Bresnahan, 4.29M) reports that "a growing number of freshman Democrats in swing districts are rethinking their stance against impeachment after...Trump's alleged attempt to pressure Ukrainian officials for his own political gain." On [ABC World News Tonight](#) (9/23, story 3, 2:01, Muir, 7.06M), Mary Bruce reported, "Pelosi is now hinting at impeachment, warning, 'They will be entering a grave new chapter of lawlessness which will take us into a whole new stage of investigation.' Now, even Democrats who have resisted calls to impeach say they may have little choice." Schiff: "He may force us to go down this road. And we may very well have crossed the Rubicon here." Rep. Al Green (D-TX) said on [MSNBC's All In](#) (9/23, 8:21 p.m. ET, Hayes, 808K), "This is an important story. It could be the straw that will break the camel's back for a number of people who haven't come on board."

Rep. Joaquin Castro (D-TX) said on [MSNBC's All In](#) (9/23, 8:06 p.m. ET, Hayes, 808K), "I sit on the Intelligence Committee and can't speak to what we were briefed on last week by the Inspector General, but between Donald Trump and Rudy Giuliani, they basically confirmed about 75 percent of the reporting. And I believe that the Speaker has laid down a gauntlet and ask that the whistleblower information be brought to Congress by Thursday. If that information is not presented on Friday, we should move forward with a formal impeachment proceeding."

Rep. Steve Cohen (D-TN) said on [CNN's Anderson Cooper 360](#) (9/23, 8:09 p.m. ET, Cooper, 940K), "It depends on the facts as they are developed. And if they are very close to what we've read in the reports from the Washington Post of him basically leveraging military aid to the Ukraine that they need to defend themselves from Russian invasion, on their investigating allegations about Joe Biden's son Hunter, then if they're close, I think it'll bring us to a new place where we'll have another article of impeachment, and maybe an article we can all get on and agree is something the Republicans should join us on."

Michelle Goldberg writes in her [New York Times](#) (9/23, 18.61M) column, "Part of Pelosi's rationale for not impeaching after the release of the Mueller report was that such a move didn't have majority support in the country or bipartisan support in Congress," and that Trump would not be convicted in the Senate. Goldberg says these "were reasonable concerns, but inaction signaled to Trump that he would face no consequences for obstructing justice or for seeking a foreign power's help in undermining a political opponent. Now Trump has used the power of the presidency to do just that."

Trump Tweets Video Of Romney's 2012 Defeat Following Senator's Critique. [The Hill](#) (9/23, Carney, 2.98M) reports Sen. Mitt Romney (R-UT) said Monday, "I think it would be very helpful to get the transcript. ... Absolutely, let's see the transcript." In response, [Politico](#) (9/23, Choi, 4.29M) reports, Trump [tweeted](#) "a video of Mitt Romney's 2012 defeat to President Barack Obama."

Weld Suggests Trump Could Be Executed For Treason. [The Federalist](#) (9/23, 126K) reports ex-Gov. Bill Weld (R-MA), a presidential candidate, "doubled down on comments Monday that the president could face execution" over the matter. Appearing on MSNBC, Weld "affirmed his stance and falsely said again that 'the only penalty for treason is death,' adding that he believes Trump needs to be 'carted off to save us all.'"

McCabe Memo Indicates Rosenstein Serious About Wearing White House Wire. [Fox News](#) (9/23, Re, 27.59M) reports a newly released two-page memo "written by then-Acting FBI Director Andrew McCabe outlined how former Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein proposed wearing a wire in the White House 'to collect additional evidence on the president's true intentions,' and thought the scheme was plausible because 'he was not searched when he entered the White House.'" The contemporaneous memo, "which the Justice Department released after a transparency lawsuit by Judicial Watch, provided the strongest documentary evidence to date to undercut previous claims by DOJ officials that Rosenstein was joking when he apparently made the suggestion." McCabe "said in the partially redacted memo that Rosenstein offered to wear a recording device to gather evidence on the firing of former FBI Director James Comey and related matters." McCabe "noted that

he took Rosenstein's suggestion seriously enough that 'I told him that I would discuss the opportunity with my investigative team and get back to him.'

Michael Flynn Pleads Fifth, Refuses To Be Testify Before Schiff. The [Washington Times](#) (9/23, Scarborough, 492K) reports, "The attorney for retired Army Gen. Michael Flynn is refusing to let the former national security adviser testify before Rep. Adam Schiff, saying the California Democrat disregards 'ethics in your theatrical demand.'" Attorney Sidney Powell "said Monday in a letter that Flynn is invoking his rights under the Fifth Amendment to avoid being 'paraded, harassed or disparaged' by Democrats on the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence."

US Soldier Accused Of Planning To Bomb News Network, Sharing Bomb Instructions. ABC

[News](#) (9/23, News, 2.97M) reported on its website that the FBI on Saturday arrested Jarrett William Smith, "a US soldier who allegedly discussed plans to bomb a major American news network" and "allegedly suggested targeting Democratic presidential candidate Beto O'Rourke." [Axios](#) (9/23, Knutson, 521K) says Smith also "spread instructions online about how to build explosives." The [AP](#) (9/23, Balsamo, Hegeman) reports the "criminal complaint" also "alleges that Smith discussed his plan to kill far-left-leaning 'antifa' activists," and the [New York Times](#) (9/23, Mervosh, 18.61M) that "if convicted, he could face up to 20 years in prison."

[NBC News](#) (9/23, Li, 6.14M) reports, "In a chat Friday on the cloud-based instant messaging service Telegram, an undercover agent said he wanted to target a 'liberal Texas mayor' for bombing and asked Smith if he had any other suggestions, according to an affidavit by FBI Special Agent Brandon LaMar. 'Outside of Beto?' Smith allegedly responded, in an apparent reference to Democratic presidential candidate and El Paso native Beto O'Rourke. 'I don't know enough people that would be relevant enough to cause a change if they died.'"

[The Hill](#) (9/23, Rodrigo, 2.98M) reports, "O'Rourke's presidential campaign said in a statement to ABC that they are in contact with the FBI over the threat. 'We're grateful to the FBI for their diligence in handling this case and for their work to keep our country safe in the face of domestic terror threats,' they said. 'We take any threat like this very seriously, and our team is in direct contact with the FBI regarding this case.'"

[CNN](#) (9/23, Polantz, 83.16M) reports, "Smith allegedly discussed with a confidential source to the FBI that 'the headquarters of a major American news network would be a suggested target, utilizing a vehicle bomb,' an FBI agent wrote in court papers," and "two sources familiar with the matter say the network Smith discussed targeting with a vehicle bomb was CNN."

The [Washington Times](#) (9/23, Mordock, 492K) reports "prosecutors say Mr. Smith was in contact with another American, Craig Lang, and the two discussed fighting in the Ukraine alongside the Right Sector, a far-right group in that country." The Times adds "a Facebook page for a Craig Lang that says he lives in the Ukraine and recently became engaged...to a woman there was taken down shortly after the Justice Department announced Mr. Smith's arrest."

The [Daily Beast](#) (9/23, Rawnsley, 1.39M) reports, "Lang was arrested in 2016 after he allegedly deserted from Fort Bliss, loaded up his vehicle with military equipment and told another soldier he was going to kill his pregnant wife. 'I told my commanders repeatedly that I was going to murder her,' Lang later told Vice. 'The [expletive]s thought I was bluffing.'"

The [Washington Post](#) (9/23, Barrett, 14.2M) recounts "the FBI was alerted to Smith's alleged statements on Facebook and used a confidential informant as well as an undercover agent to engage in online discussions with him. Over time, Smith allegedly offered bombmaking formulas to them both."

[BuzzFeed News](#) (9/23, Tillman) reports, "Lt. Col. Terence Kelley, a spokesperson for the US Army, said in an email to BuzzFeed News that the Army's law enforcement team cooperated with the FBI on Smith's arrest over the weekend. According to Kelley, Smith completed his training at Fort Benning, Georgia, and served at Fort Bliss, Texas, from November 2017 until he was assigned in June to Fort Riley in Kansas; Smith has never deployed."

All three major network newscasts reported the story last night. In its lead segment, [ABC World News Tonight](#) (9/23, lead story, 2:15, Thomas, 7.06M) said "the FBI locked onto the 24-year-old Smith last March after receiving a tip that he was allegedly using Facebook to distribute information about how to build improvised explosive devices." The [CBS Evening News](#) (9/23, story 3, 1:34, Pegues, 4.27M) showed Katherine Schweit, a former FBI special agent, saying, "This subject routinely provided advice and direction on how to build bombs. That's frightening." [NBC Nightly News](#) (9/23, lead story, 1:50, Williams, 6.07M) also led with the story, reporting "the FBI says its bomb technicians determined his method for building a car bomb would not have worked, and last Friday, the FBI says, he was telling the undercover agent other ways to build bombs." [USA Today](#) (9/23, Johnson, Brook, 10.31M) and the [New York Post](#) (9/23, Saul, Fitz-Gibbon, 4.57M), among other news outlets, also report the story.

Missouri Man Pleads Guilty In Terror Plot. The [AP](#) (9/23) reports from Jefferson City, Missouri, "A 28-year-old Missouri man charged with plotting a terrorist attack on buses, trains and a train station in Kansas City has pleaded guilty to one count." Robert Lorenzo Hester, of Columbia, Missouri, "entered his plea Monday to providing material support or resources to terrorists." Federal prosecutors "charged Hester in February 2017 after a monthslong FBI investigation." The AP adds, "An affidavit released at the time said undercover agents posing as Islamic State sympathizers met with Hester several times," and "at their request, he provided materials such as nails and duct tape that he believed would be used to create bombs." According to the AP, "An FBI employee told Hester the attacks were planned for Presidents Day in Kansas City."

Authorities Seek Park Photos, Videos In Search For Missing New Jersey Girl. The [Cumberland County \(NJ\) News](#) (9/23, Gray, 1.75M) reports, "Authorities looking for missing 5-year-old Dulce Maria Alavez are asking anyone who visited the Bridgeton park where the child was last seen on Sept. 16 to share any photos or videos from that day." Dulce "disappeared from a playground at Bridgeton City Park last Monday and an Amber Alert was issued the following day over fears that the child was abducted." According to the News, "Her mother, Noema Alavez Perez, had taken her kids and an 8-year-old relative to the park after stopping for ice cream," and "the kids ran off to a nearby playground, while the mom and 8-year-old remained in the car. Minutes later, her 3-year-old son came running back in tears and pointing to the spot where he last saw Dulce," and "since then, police have combed the park and chased hundreds of leads in a desperate search to find the child with the assistance of the FBI."

[ABC News](#) (9/23, Shapiro, 2.97M) reports, "Anyone who was near the Bridgeton City Park between 3 p.m. and 6 p.m. EST on Sept. 16 is asked to check their phones to see if they took photos or videos during that time, Cumberland County Prosecutor Jennifer Webb-McRae said Monday." According to ABC News, "The images may seem unimportant but could be a 'valuable piece of the puzzle in helping us bring Dulce home,' the prosecutor said."

The [Cumberland County \(NJ\) News](#) (9/23, Grom, 1.75M) reports that as the search for Dulce "spans into a second week, Bridgeton's police chief is asking for members of the city's burgeoning immigrant community to come forward without fear – regardless of immigration status – to help find the girl. 'Our policy is to not ask their immigration status,' Bridgeton police Chief Michael Gaimari told NJ Advance Media. 'We wouldn't know if someone is undocumented or not.' Gaimari "said he believes someone in the city of 25,000 people, many of them immigrants from Mexico and Guatemala, has to know something that would help authorities locate Dulce, who went missing Sept. 16 while playing with her younger brother in Bridgeton City Park."

[NJ News](#) (9/23, Heyboer, 1.72M) reports, "When state Attorney General Gurbir Grewal introduced new rules for how local police interact with immigrant communities, he said no immigrants living illegally in New Jersey should fear they will be turned over to immigration officials if they help police with investigations. 'We know from experience that individuals are far less likely to report a crime to the local police if they fear that the responding officer will turn them over to federal immigration authorities,' said Grewal said when he introduced the state's new 'Immigrant Trust Directive.'" The directive, "which went into effect in March, says local and state police in New Jersey can't turn over immigrants living in the country illegally to Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents just because the immigrants come forward to help police investigate local crimes."

FBI, Texas Rangers Raid San Antonio Offices Of Constable. The [San Antonio Express-News](#) (9/23, Contreras, 762K) reports, "Authorities are searching the offices of Precinct 2 Constable Michelle Barrientes Vela this morning." According to the Express News, "The raid by the FBI and Texas Rangers is part of an ongoing investigation into allegations of irregularities of the constable, sources said. 'The FBI and Texas Department of Public Safety are on scene executing a search warrant,' FBI special agent Michelle Lee said. 'It's a joint investigation by Texas Rangers and the FBI. To ensure the integrity of the investigation, that's all the information I can provide.'"

The [San Antonio Express-News](#) (9/23, Huddleston, 762K) reports, "State and federal authorities on Monday raided the office and home of a Bexar County constable who earlier this year was accused of forcing park visitors to pay her for providing unwanted security services and has been sued for alleged discrimination by two of her former deputies." According to the Express-News, "The morning searches by Texas Rangers and FBI agents were the latest public troubles for Precinct 2 Constable Michelle Barrientes Vela, who has been involved in several scandals and has clashed with other public officials, including District Attorney Joe Gonzales, Sheriff Javier Salazar and County Judge Nelson Wolff."

[KABB-TV](#) San Antonio (9/23, Tracy, 54K) reports, "Vela is claiming it's a part in a conspiracy, reaching back to when she began campaigning for the position." Vela "held a press conference Monday evening, detailing what she knew of FBI and Texas Ranger raid. 'What they are looking for, I have no idea,' Constable Vela said. 'But I can tell you right now, I think it's a politics stunt that's going on today. In the past I have voiced a lot of concerns about corruption in Bexar County and I'm going to keep on voicing them.'" Vela "tells us when she arrived to her office in the morning, a Texas Ranger notified her of the

search warrant, which she claims is 'very vague,'" and "Vela said she thinks this is a last-ditch effort for other county officials to force her resignation."

[KIII-TV](#) Corpus Christi, TX (9/23) reports that Vela "said she was not officially notified of the investigation and she believes she is being attacked. 'Yes, I am being attacked,' Barrientes Vela said. 'I don't know why they are in my office today, or what they are looking for. I will just say we have done nothing in this office. All I have done is stand up for my community and I will continue to do that.'"

[Texas Public Radio](#) (9/23, Kirkpatrick) reports, "Vela blamed a conspiracy of top county leaders – including the county judge, the district attorney and the sheriff – determined to remove her from office. 'I haven't created not one problem,' she said. 'I have only come in here to do my job, and that is strictly what I have done.'" Vela "also claimed that unidentified 'higher ups' sent gang members to her home to intimidate her when she ran for constable. She said she thinks one of her tires was punctured with nails to intimidate her during the campaign." At a press conference on Monday, Bexar County Sheriff Javier Salazar "confirmed some of his deputies have been assigned to the FBI's anti-corruption unit to assist their investigation. 'We've got deputies, two now, assigned to the public corruption task force among other task forces that are there,' he said." [KIII-TV](#) Corpus Christi, TX (9/23), [KABB-TV](#) San Antonio (9/23, Galli, 54K), and [KSAT-TV](#) San Antonio (9/23, Ibanez, 198K) also report.

Jeffrey Epstein "Arranged Payoffs" From Jail After Women Contacted By FBI.

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(9/23, Siegler, 1.6M) reports Jeffrey Epstein arranged to "pay women for their silence from jail, Page Six has exclusively learned." The outlet writes that "at least two women familiar with the infamous multimillionaire pedophile were given envelopes of cash to keep quiet after he was arrested at Teterboro Airport on July 6." A source "told us that the women were approached by a reporter to dish on their involvement with the creep and refused to talk to the journalist." The source also "said that an Epstein crony had also gotten in touch with them in mid-July about a financial arrangement" for \$10,000 in cash each, to "make sure that she was comfortable not speaking to any press," said the source. The women were "in a panic over the FBI coming to speak to them. The money was to alleviate their panic, and assure their silence," the source explained.

US Charges Man In Pittsburgh Overdose Deaths. The [Pittsburgh Post-Gazette](#) (9/23, Ove, Bradbury, 616K) reports, "Early Sunday morning, a man at a party in a South Side apartment cut into a kilo of white powder with a knife, scooped it onto the blade and offered it to partygoers to snort." According to the Post-Gazette, "At least six people ingested the powder. All overdosed. Three died," and "federal authorities on Monday charged 25-year-old Peter Rene Sanchez Montalvo with distributing the deadly drugs, which authorities suspect contained fentanyl."

The [Washington Post](#) (9/23, Horton, 14.2M) reports, "Saturday night at a club blurred into Sunday morning when a man passed around a knife tipped with drugs in a Pittsburgh apartment, offering a bump to the men gathered for the after-party," and "by sunrise, three men were dead and four others hospitalized after overdosing on a drug that investigators believe could be fentanyl, court documents said." Sanchez Montalvo "has been charged with 'illegal distribution of a controlled substance resulting in death and serious bodily injury,' officials said." In court documents, "an FBI agent re-created the night during which a group of men at the Insomnia Discotec, a club in the Brookline neighborhood popular with the Hispanic community, offered a band there money to play at an after-party in an apartment on the city's south side."

[KDKA-TV](#) Pittsburgh (9/23, 144K) reports, "The charges come after undercover law enforcement officials raided a home in McKees Rocks overnight in connection with the series of overdoses." Neighbors "say the raid happened around 3 a.m. at a home on Patterson Street," and "FBI Pittsburgh confirms they 'conducted law enforcement activity' at the location."

The [Daily Beast](#) (9/23, McNamara, 1.39M) reports, "The seven victims, all men, were found at or near a luxury South Side Pittsburgh apartment block early Sunday morning. Five were found in the apartment, one in an elevator, and another was found outside the building, police said." Police "said they quickly identified two nearby events that were handing out orange wristbands to patrons," and Sanchez Montalvo "was at the one of those events, the Insomnia Discotec in the Brookline neighborhood of Pittsburgh, according to a police press release." The Daily Beast adds, "At some point in the evening, Sanchez Montalvo left Insomnia and joined others who were also at the event for an 'after-party' at the South Side apartment, according to the release."

"Operation Devil's Highway" Nets 38 Drug Arrests In Massachusetts. The [Boston Globe](#) (9/23, Lovato, 972K) reports, "An extensive 10-week operation to combat opioid distribution in the Merrimack Valley resulted in police charging 38 people with federal drug charges and seizing 48 kilograms of drugs over the summer, prosecutors said." According to the Globe, "Operation 'Devil's Highway' focused on street-level drug trafficking in Lawrence, which is 'a hub of illegal drug distribution for all of New England,' U.S. Attorney Andrew E. Lelling said in a statement Monday. The operation also targeted distribution from Lawrence to destinations in New Hampshire." The operation "resulted in the seizure of 14 kilograms of fentanyl, 29 kilograms of cocaine, five kilograms of heroin, four firearms, and body armor, Lelling's office said in a statement."

The [Boston Herald](#) (9/23, 410K) reports, "Feds trying to cut off the 'Devil's Highway' of drugs into New Hampshire have rounded up nearly 40 people and seized large amounts of fentanyl and cocaine in Lawrence – the city that" Lelling "has promised he'd keep 'hammering away' at as long as it's a transfer point for narcotics. 'Operation Devil's Highway was tremendously successful in targeting street-level drug trafficking in Lawrence, which is a hub of illegal drug distribution for all of New England,' Lelling said in a statement Monday. 'This kind of operation can only succeed with the full commitment of federal, state and local law enforcement agencies, coupled with realistic planning to target the most prolific drug distributors.'"

The [Springfield \(MA\) Republican](#) (9/23, DeForge, 395K) reports, "The operation as held over the summer and targeted on the city of Lawrence north to the New Hampshire border and focused on the distribution of opioids," and "in addition to the 38 who face federal drug charges, at least a dozen other people face state drug charges, said Christina DiLorio-Sterling, spokeswoman for" Lelling.

The [North Andover \(MA\) Eagle Tribune](#) (9/23, Harmacinski, 78K) reports, "Lawrence police Chief Roy Vasque said while local officers and detectives were involved, the federal agencies took the lead this summer in the investigation. He praised the outside agencies for their continued help. 'We can't do it alone. I applaud the U.S. attorneys and others for getting involved,' said Vasque, noting the operation targeted both drug users and drug dealers." The Eagle Tribune adds, "The operation 'should serve as a warning to others thinking of filling the void created by these arrests — we aren't finished. Everyone arrested this summer allegedly exploited Lawrence as their drug-trafficking hub, bringing perilous opioids like fentanyl and heroin – in addition to cocaine and marijuana – to neighborhoods across New England,' said Joseph R. Bonavolonta, special agent in charge of the FBI Boston Division." [WHDH-TV](#) Boston (9/23, O'Laughlin, 167K) also reports.

US Charges MyPayrollHR CEO In Bank Fraud Scheme. [NBC News](#) (9/23, Stelloh, 6.14M) reports, "The CEO of a New York payroll company was arrested and charged Monday in a \$70 million bank fraud scheme that left hundreds of small businesses across the country scrambling, federal authorities said." Michael Mann, 49, "allegedly obtained millions in bank loans and lines of credit over the last decade that he diverted to fake companies, the United States Attorney for the Northern District of New York said in a statement." Mann was CEO of MyPayrollHR, "a payroll processing company that abruptly shuttered on Sept. 5 after Mann's banks, suspecting him of fraud, froze his accounts, authorities said."

The [Albany \(NY\) Times Union](#) (9/23, Williams, 457K) reports that Mann "appeared in U.S. District Court Monday afternoon with his attorney Michael Koenig, a week after FBI agents searched his lakefront home in Edinburg." Mann "was charged with bank fraud in a criminal complaint filed by an FBI agent that was unsealed during his appearance and subsequently released on \$200,000 bond, secured by his home as well as two cars."

[WAMC-AM](#) Albany, NY (9/23, Levulis, 355) reports, "Authorities say Mann, of Saratoga County, fraudulently obtained at least \$70 million in loans from banks and other financial institutions." US Attorney Grant Jaquith and James Hendricks, Special Agent in Charge of the FBI's Albany office, "say Mann 'created companies that had no purpose other than to be used in the fraud; fraudulently represented to banks and financing companies that his fake businesses had certain receivables that they did not have; and obtained loans and lines of credit by borrowing against these non-existent receivables.'" The FBI "is seeking information from people and businesses who may have suffered financial loss due to the alleged activities of Mann, MyPayroll, and affiliated companies."

2020 Campaigns Receive Help From Government On Cybersecurity, Counterintelligence. [NBC News](#) (9/23, Lederman, Memoli, 6.14M) reports hacking experts "are scanning the networks of Democratic presidential campaigns, searching for vulnerabilities and openings to inject malicious code." For weeks at a time, they're hitting campaign officials "with phishing emails not unlike those that Russian hackers used to infiltrate the Democratic National Committee in 2016." The campaigns are "part of a sweeping effort by US national security agencies to help campaigns of both parties protect themselves against cyberattacks, intelligence operations and physical threats ahead of the 2020 election." As campaigns work to safeguard their websites, databases and email systems, the federal government "has been providing defensive briefings to all the Democratic campaigns that will take them, US and campaign officials tell NBC News." The effort has involved "the FBI, the Homeland Security Department, and the ODNI."

Huawei Aims To Persuade US Firms It's Not A Chinese Spying Tool. The [Washington Post](#) (9/23, Marks, 14.2M) reports in the Cybersecurity 202 column that Huawei is now "making its case directly to American companies." A company official tells me Huawei "is reaching out to firms to defend its reputation and outline how it protects against Chinese espionage." They're also becoming "a visible player in forums for industry pros: Huawei officials increased their presence at an annual convention of US wireless carriers last week to push back against the government's claims, the official noted, and even

sponsored a panel discussion titled 'Let's Collaborate to Make America's Communication Networks Safer.' The broader P.R. campaign "could also help improve their reputation in other countries where the company is not facing government bans."

Warner: Countering Huawei Requires Help From US Allies. [Bloomberg](#) (9/23, 4.73M) reports Senator Mark Warner, the top Democrat on the Senate Intelligence Committee, "criticized President Trump Monday for not enlisting allies to counter China, including the threat posed by Huawei's technology." Speaking at the US Institute for Peace in Washington, Warner "said the US may need to create an 'industrial policy' with top allies to ensure a powerful, global competitor to Huawei on 5G technology so countries aren't stuck using a company that he said has no true independence from the Chinese Communist Party."

FBI Cuts Work On Montana Human Trafficking Cases. The [Billings \(MT\) Gazette](#) (9/23, Tollefson, 180K) reports, "The FBI has cut in half the time its human trafficking agent in Montana will spend on the crime." FBI Special Agent Brandon Walter "has been reassigned to now work 50% of his time on human trafficking, and 50% on Indian Country cases, according to Penny Ronning." Ronning, "co-founder of the Yellowstone County Area Human Trafficking Task Force, called the change 'a blow' to anti-trafficking efforts in Montana. 'This decision made our state more dangerous for our children who live here and our visitors, and it made for greater opportunities for traffickers,' Ronning said." The Gazette adds, "Asked to explain the decision, FBI spokeswoman Sandra Barker said only that it's not uncommon for agents to work on different focus areas over the course of their career."

The [AP](#) (9/23) reports, "Officials say two state Division of Criminal Investigation agents will be dedicated to full-time human trafficking enforcement."

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