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USA OUTLOOK

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Foto: Washington Post

Impeachment trial live updates: Dershowitz defends quid pro quo, saying Trump believes his reelection is in the public interest

A new phase of President Trump's historic impeachment trial began Wednesday, with senators posing questions to the House managers and the president's attorneys about Trump's conduct toward Ukraine.

Meanwhile, debate continues outside the chamber over whether to call witnesses, including former national security adviser John Bolton. In a closed-door meeting on Tuesday, Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) told colleagues he doesn't yet have the votes to block witnesses.

Trump faces charges of abuse of power and obstruction of Congress. The crux of the case for his impeachment is the allegation that he withheld military aid and a White House meeting to pressure Ukraine to investigate Joe Biden and his son. Hunter Biden served on the board of Burisma, a Ukrainian energy company, while his father was vice president.

McConnell tells senators he doesn't yet have votes to block witnesses in Trump impeachment trial. In impeachment trial's question time, both sides will press lawyers on their roles. Trump's legal team has multiple arguments against impeachment. Letting the voters decide is the latest rationale.



Foto: Tech Xplore

Amazon's Ring security shares your personal data with Facebook and Google, report says

Ring users may have more than secure passwords and hackers to think about. A report surfaces Monday suggesting that the Amazon-owned company shares tons of users' personal information with lots of different sources including Facebook, even if you don't have a Facebook account.

The Electronic Frontier Foundation published its findings after closely examining the Android version of the Ring app. The non-profit determined that the app is "packed with third-party trackers sending out a plethora of customers' personally identifiable information." And this is done "without meaningful user notification or consent and, in most cases, no way to mitigate the damage done," the EFF said.

Ring collects information like names, private IP addresses, mobile network carriers and sensor data on the devices of paying customers, EFF said. The personal data then goes to four primary recipients including Branch, ApplsFlyer, MixPanel and Facebook. Google-owned Crashanalytics was also named as a recipient.



Foto: Reuters

U.S. refiners, chemical makers pare insurance coverage as accidents boost cost

U.S. refineries and petrochemical plants are cutting back on insurance because several years of severe accidents have driven up the cost of coverage, industry and insurance sources said.

With less insurance coverage for physical damage and business interruption, energy companies could be liable for millions of dollars of costs in repairs and lost business in the case of an explosion or fire. In the worst-case outcome, entire refineries could close if insurance coverage is inadequate. Insurance rates for property damage and business interruption have increased as much as 100% for some refineries, particularly those that have experienced explosions or fires in the past. Energy companies, which have traditionally bought billions of dollars in insurance, are buying less coverage than in the past.

Unexpected refining outages have soared in recent years, surpassing 2,000 incidents in 2019, quadruple 2015 levels, according to Industrial Info Resources, a provider of industrial process and energy market intelligence.

Many U.S. refineries have added units to take advantage of growth in chemicals and plastics demand. Insurance sources said the growing size and complexity of refineries adds to insurance risks, because an interruption in one unit can affect production in several other units, such as petrochemical production.

These new "interdependencies" expose insurers to increasing business interruption risk, said Steffen Halscheidt, global practice lead for oil & gas of Allianz Global Corporate and Specialty. The growth in joint refining ventures and increased acquisition activity can add to risk for insurers, Halscheidt said. Acquisitions that cause workforce turnover can lead to changes to a refinery's operations and the departure of experienced workers.



Foto: KTLA

Helicopter carrying Kobe Bryant and 8 others was 20 to 30 feet from clearing a hilltop when it crashed, investigators say

Preliminary information suggests the helicopter descended rapidly before it crashed in Calabasas, California, NTSB member Jennifer Homendy said.

Investigators are trying to determine what caused the crash and whether the pilot should have been granted special permission to fly in the foggy conditions Sunday morning. FAA records reviewed by CNN reveal Island Express Holding Corp., the company operating the helicopter, was certified only for visual flights. Visual flight rules require pilots to stay clear of clouds and in good visibility while using both visual and instrument navigation.

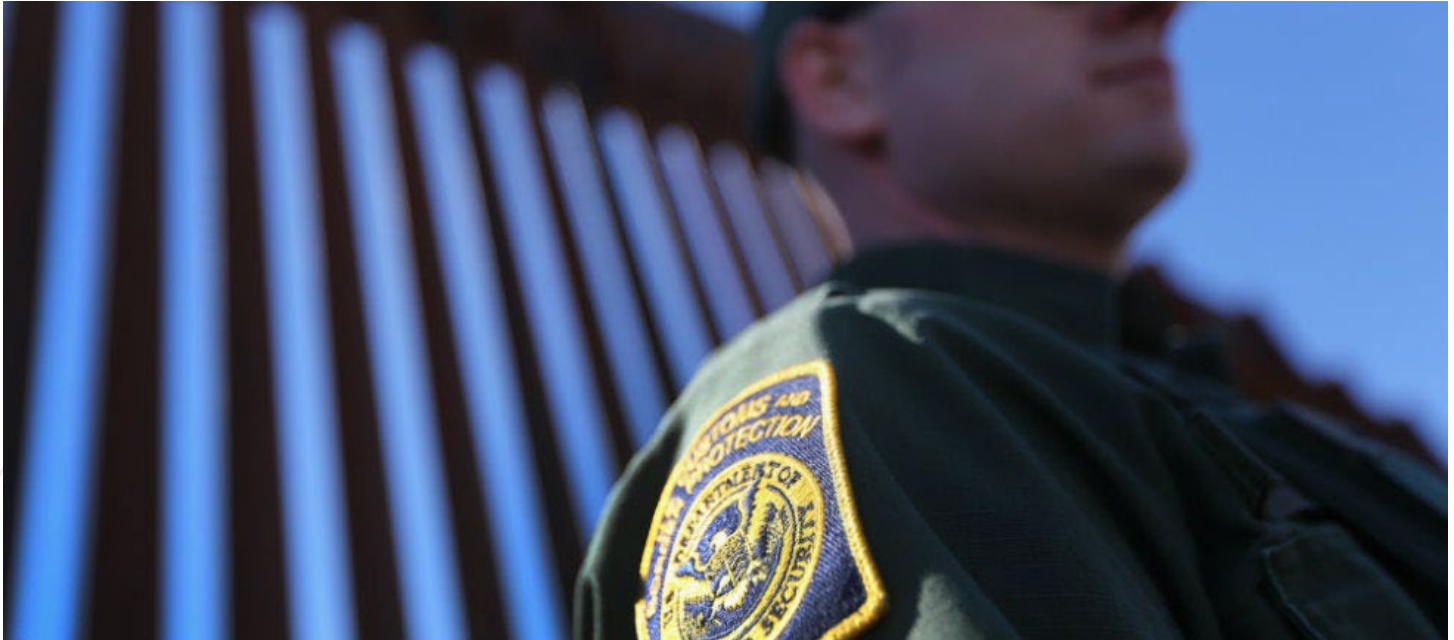


Foto: BBC.com

Border Patrol discovers 'longest' tunnel yet between Mexico and California

The 4,309-foot tunnel starts in Tijuana and ends in the Otay Mesa warehouse district in San Diego, authorities said, according to a USA Today report. Border Patrol told the news outlet that it is the longest tunnel it has ever discovered along the southwest border.

The tunnel is complex, as well, according to the agency. It has average depth of 70 feet below ground and includes an elevator, an extensive rail cart system, forced air ventilation, high-voltage electrical cables and a drainage system, according to the report.

In a statement, Homeland Security Investigations special

agent Cardell Morant said, "while subterranean tunnels are not a new occurrence along the California-Mexico border, the sophistication and length of this particular tunnel demonstrates the time-consuming efforts transnational criminal organizations will undertake to facilitate cross—border smuggling,"

The tunnel entrance was reportedly found by Mexican authorities in August and then mapped by the San Diego Tunnel Task Force, which is made up of Border Patrol Homeland Security Investigations, the Drug Enforcement Administration and the U.S. Attorney's Office.