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| --- |
| Jihad Report Oct 07, 2017 -Oct 13, 2017  |
| Attacks | 29  |
| Killed | 184  |
| Injured | 93  |
| Suicide Blasts | 5  |
| Countries | 13 |

**Drone wars Update**

**Ukrainian military leaders and defense industry officials** showed off their experimental [Phantom robot](http://ukroboronprom.com.ua/en/produktsiya-ta-poslugy/fantom-voyin-majbutnogo-2.html) on Monday at the Association of the U.S. Army show in Washington, D.C. It has an extendable frame that can be outfitted with treads like a tank or with six wheels, and armed with anti-tank weapons, grenade launchers, or machine guns. Currently in testing, the Phantom could be sent into action against Russian-backed forces as early as next year, they said.

Russia, too, has a wide array of ground bots it could dispatch to the conflict, though Moscow has not signaled its readiness to do that. But Russian drones of the flying variety have been used to tremendous effect there. They [identify enemy positions](http://www.defenseone.com/technology/2015/03/ukraine-tomorrows-drone-war-alive-today/107085/?oref=search_drone%20war%20ukraine) to target fires. They hijack cell-tower signals to deliver false messages and texts, an effect experienced by [Ukrainian soldiers](https://www.techdirt.com/articles/20170514/15060437365/russian-military-apparently-using-cell-tower-spoofers-to-send-propaganda-directly-to-ukrainian-soldiers-phones.shtml) and even [NATO soldiers](https://www.wsj.com/articles/russia-targets-soldier-smartphones-western-officials-say-1507109402) outside the country.

Meanwhile, the Russians have been [quite up-front](https://www.bellingcat.com/news/mena/2016/01/15/did-russia-deploy-a-combat-robot-in-syria/) about using ground robots in Syria, although Russian media outlets reporting on their missions have been [all over the map](https://www.bellingcat.com/news/mena/2016/01/15/did-russia-deploy-a-combat-robot-in-syria/). Such unmanned ground vehicles, or UGVs, include the [Platforma-M](https://www.rt.com/news/310291-russia-military-robot-sevastopol/%C2%A0%29), the [Nerehta](https://www.armyrecognition.com/december_2016_global_defense_security_news_industry/russian_ugvs_unmanned_ground_vehicles_soratnik_and_nerehta_took_part_in_military_exercises_13112163.html), and the [Uran-9](http://www.army-technology.com/projects/uran-9-unmanned-ground-combat-vehicle/). Still, the Russians are not known to have deployed UGVs in the destabilization war against their Western neighbor. My guess is that there is a big difference between the dry streets of Damascus and the muddy hills of Ukraine. Not to mention, the sophisticated fighters in Ukraine have access to the most advanced and vicious cyber weapons on Earth.

“What’s interesting about the Ukrainian conflict is that it’s the Ukrainian side that is developing unmanned systems it thinks will help it fight. Phantom is one such machine,” said Samuel Bendett, an associate research analyst with the Center for Naval Analyses’ International Affairs Group.

The Phantom — occasionally spelled “Fantom” in promotional literature — was designed with input from frontline Ukrainian troops who have been slugging it out against Russian forces.

Maj. Gen. Andriy Kovalchuk, the chief of staff and first deputy commander of Ukraine’s Airborne Armed Forces, described hard lessons about defending their products and weapons from Russian forces, and particularly highly sophisticated electronic warfare attacks.

In the early days of the conflict, “civilians were trying to make something that can stand against Russian electronic warfare systems,” he said through an interpreter. Since then, he said, scores of small business have propped up to productize hard-won info on Russian electronic warfare artifacts.

Three-plus years of those difficult experiences are embedded in the robots like the Phantom. It has a backup microwave communication link and can return to its last waypoint when the link to the operator is jammed or severed. If all else fails, or the electronic warfare environment is too tough to allow and wireless control, you can also steer the robot with a 7 kilometer cable, like a 19th-century diver connected to the surface via a breathing tube—which goes to show how, in warfare, every step forward can be a step back.

**For more than two years**, the U.S. military’s contingent of 300 or so soldiers have been quietly helping train an enormous allied military in western Ukraine. Meanwhile, Russian-backed separatists appear to be keeping pace some 800 miles to the east, showcasing entire parking lots full of new tanks and artillery just a 15-minute drive from the front lines.

“Every 55 days we have a new battalion come in and we train them,” said U.S. Army National Guard Capt. Kayla Christopher, spokesperson for the Joint Multinational Training Group-Ukraine, at Yavoriv Combat Training Center in western Ukraine. “And at the end of that 55-day period, we’ll do a field training exercise with that battalion.” The U.S. and partnered armies have trained seven battalions in the past roughly two years or so.

That’s what she calls the “main line of effort that you tend to see most of the time in the news.”

Building a host-nation’s military, [the U.S. has learned painfully](https://fas.org/sgp/crs/natsec/R44313.pdf) in the 21st century, has rarely been a good news story. And Ukraine’s conflict has largely taken a backseat to the sequel to one of those stories: the war on ISIS, in which eight Americans have lost their lives fighting since 2014. In the same period, Ukraine is believed to have lost nearly 4,000 soldiers to Russian-backed separatists.

Since Crimea was annexed in 2014, the U.S. and partner militaries have helped grow Ukraine’s forces from just over 100,000 troops to nearly 250,000 today. Just since January, Capt. Christopher’s [unit](https://www.dvidshub.net/news/220392/thunderbirds-arrive-ukraine) of 250 soldiers has added another 3,000 or so Ukrainian soldiers to Kiev’s ranks.

“But that’s not the real end state,” she said. “Essentially, what we’re trying to do is get them to the point where they are running their own combat training center,” like the U.S. Army’s National Training Center at Fort Irwin, Calif., or the Joint Readiness Training Center at Fort Polk, Louisiana.

In other words, their task is to build an army’s entire training infrastructure almost from the ground up — a tall order following [decades of not-so-casual corruption](http://www.defenseone.com/ideas/2014/05/how-corruption-guts-militaries-ukraine-case-study/84646/) that has plagued Ukraine’s and many post-Soviet countries’ militaries across eastern Europe.

“Our overall goal is essentially to help the Ukrainian military become NATO-interoperable,” Christopher said. “So the more they have an opportunity to work with different countries — not just the U.S., but all their Slavic neighbors, and all the other Western European countries that come” and train or exercise with Ukraine’s military.

That includes Poland, Estonia, Lithuania, Canada, and the U.K. The U.S. has also sent a variety of non-lethal military help to Ukraine — equipment like Humvees, medical supplies, bulletproof vests, and radars to track the hundreds of artillery shells that have fallen on the eastern Donetsk and Luhansk regions. Maybe Javelin anti-tank missiles, Defense Secretary Mattis [said](https://www.nytimes.com/2017/08/24/world/europe/mattis-ukraine-russia.html) in August. But Christopher’s unit is far from the fighting. Their mission is “[training the trainers](https://www.army.mil/article/188357/)” and in particular, adding to Ukraine’s NCO corps — the stern disciplinarians who help ensure that units are fit and ready for combat.

**Terrorism in the east**

Advertisement

For Ukraine’s new soldiers, combat means fighting terrorists — at least according to the U.S. military’s way of looking at things.

“They’re called anti-terrorism operations rather than something else because of the issue with the Russian-backed separatists,” said Capt. Christopher. “So they’re not really Russians, you know. They’re essentially terrorists.”

So the U.S. calls eastern Ukraine’s most troubled regions an Anti Terrorism Operation zone, or ATO, where those Russian-backed forces have attacked and counterattacked Ukraine’s soldiers and civilians. (See, for example, [this interactive day-by-day map](http://uacrisis.org/ato-interactive-map) of alleged shelling by Ukrainian government and separatist forces.)

In just the first two days of this month, UN monitors [recorded](http://www.osce.org/special-monitoring-mission-to-ukraine/347521?download=true) dozens of violations to the Minsk II ceasefire, an [agreement](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/ukraine/11408266/Minsk-agreement-on-Ukraine-crisis-text-in-full.html) reached in February 2015 between Russia, Ukraine, France and Germany. The deal never really stuck. It called for all heavy weapons — tanks, rocket launchers and artillery — to be pulled away from the front lines and kept in monitored storage. [By that time](http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-31392473), more than 5,400 civilians had already been killed in the fighting. In the months after Minsk II was signed, the death toll barely slowed.

**The Ukraine conflict, since 2014:**

* At least 10,225 soldiers and civilians have died.
* Another 24,500 have [been injured](http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Countries/UA/UAReport19th_EN.pdf).
* Some [1.6 million](http://www.un.org.ua/en/information-centre/news/4211-two-thousand-conflict-affected-people-in-ukraine-will-receive-livelihood-support-from-germany-and-iom) have been displaced.
* Nearly 10,000 prisoners are [believed to be held](http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=21730) in the east. Last October, Kiev itself has [said](https://www.seattletimes.com/nation-world/ukrainian-war-prisoners-languish-in-limbo-on-both-sides/) it was holding 500 or so prisoners of its own.

The UN calls these statistics “a conservative estimate based on available data,” and inevitably incomplete “due to gaps in coverage of certain geographic areas and time periods.” Military casualties, especially injuries, have been particularly under-reported, the UN says.

Most of the civilians killed in the fighting were killed by tanks and artillery, 55 percent; followed by IEDs, 36 percent; and small arms fire, 9 percent. For months it puzzled observers how allegedly local separatists could have obtained so much heavy weaponry, even factoring in Ukraine’s [legacy](http://www.cnn.com/2014/07/20/world/europe/ukraine-rebels-weapons/index.html) as a sort of junkyard of old Soviet weapons factories. The appearance of more advanced equipment — drones and armored vehicles, [for example](http://www.newsweek.com/ukraine-arms-deal-deals-blow-putin-backed-rebels-647276?amp=1) — revealed Russia’s hand in Ukraine as early as January 2015, although President Vladimir Putin didn’t admit Russia’s role [until](https://www.google.com/amp/s/amp.theguardian.com/world/2015/dec/17/vladimir-putin-admits-russian-military-presence-ukraine) that December. Since then, their advanced equipment has only grown more [sophisticated](http://www.defenseone.com/technology/2017/02/war-weary-ukraine-reaches-out-once-again-washington/135153/) and [deadly](https://www.google.com/amp/s/www.bbc.com/news/amp/world-europe-34425454) for Ukraine’s frontline soldiers.

International ceasefire monitors aren’t having an easy go of their job in 2017, either. [During the first six months](http://www.osce.org/special-monitoring-mission-to-ukraine/338136?download=true), they were restricted from or intimidated through armed confrontation (see photo below) inside regions mandated by the Minsk agreement no fewer than 480 times. More than 75 percent of those occurred in separatist-held areas.

## A world away

U.S. troops are largely kept away from the conflict. That is by design; the U.S. and the international community have struggled with the appropriate response to Russia’s invasion of Ukraine and annexation of Crimea.

Speaking alongside Ukrainian Prime Minister Petro Poroshenko in August, U.S. Defense Secretary James Mattis said, “We do not, and we will not, accept Russia’s seizure of Crimea and despite Russia’s denials, we know they are seeking to redraw international borders by force, undermining the sovereign and free nations of Europe.”

So far, sanctions have been the U.S. and its European allies’ preferred response, [hitting](http://www.cnn.com/2014/07/16/politics/ukraine-russia-sanctions/index.html) Russia’s major banks and energy companies. But President Trump has indicated that he feels sanctions may not be in the best interest of the U.S. In August, he complained about a [new round of sanctions](http://www.pbs.org/newshour/rundown/read-trumps-full-statement-russia-sanctions-bill-seriously-flawed/) passed by Congress, calling it “seriously flawed.” But the measure reached the Oval Office with a veto-proof majority, and so he grudgingly signed it into law.

But that is a world away from the U.S. Army in Yavoriv, and even the fighting on the other side of Ukraine feels remote, Christopher said. “It’s actually pretty remarkable how little you feel the effect of the conflict on the western side of Ukraine. It’s almost as if nothing is happening,” she said. “And if I didn’t work directly with soldiers every day, I don’t think you would really know. I mean, we see it on the news every day, and I work with soldiers every day. So we know about it. But you go out into Lviv, or any of the other big cities around this area and you really don’t feel the effects of there being war here.”

Except, perhaps, for the U.S. and NATO soldiers who [for months](http://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2017/06/12/how-russia-targets-the-us-military-215247) have had their phones and social media accounts breached by what appear to have been Russian hackers. On top of that, Moscow has spent the past few months ferrying troops around its border with Ukraine and into Belarus for [extended exercises](http://www.defenseone.com/threats/2017/09/what-you-need-know-russias-big-wargame-natos-doorstep/140871/) that run from the Barents Sea to the Mediterranean.

So Russia is hardly backing down from a tense region. And apparently, neither is the U.S. Despite the Trump administration’s [hesitancy](http://www.defenseone.com/politics/2017/06/trump-administration-working-hold-russia-accountable-ukraine-whether-trump-likes-it-or-not/138841/?oref=d-channelriver), its approach in Ukraine is not terribly different from the Obama administration’s.

“The U.S. will continue to press Russia to honor its Minsk commitments and our sanctions will remain in place until Moscow reverses the actions that triggered them,” said Mattis in August during the visit with Ukraine’s Poroshenko.

For its part, Moscow’s latest move has been not to reverse its annexation of Crimea, but rather to [fence off](http://www.newsweek.com/russia-wants-build-trumps-wall-ukraine-673243) some 30 miles of land on the seized peninsula. One Russian lawmaker even [said](http://www.defenseone.com/threats/2017/05/russian-lawmaker-we-would-use-nukes-if-us-or-nato-enters-crimea/138230/) in May that Moscow would use nuclear weapons if the U.S. or NATO tried to enter Crimea.

Which would suggest that the U.S. Army’s quiet mission in Ukraine may go quietly on for many, many months to come.

**Terrorists Shut Down Civil War Reenactment**

## The FBI is investigating the “suspicious package” and bomb threats that caused an evacuation at one of Virginia’s oldest, largest, and longest-running Civil War reenactments, Saturday.

The Frederick County Sheriff’s Office shut the event down after a visitor found a “suspicious package” near the Cedar Creek and Belle Grove National Historical Park around 4 p.m. Saturday. Due to its proximity to the Civil War reenactment, the sheriff’s office [evacuated](http://www.nbc12.com/story/36599976/fbi-investigating-after-suspicious-device-found-at-civil-war-reenactment-site) the event and shut down the festivities, a local NBC affiliate reported.

Authorities soon rendered the device safe, and no one was reported harmed. Participants were allowed back after police scanned the area for additional threats.

The sponsors of the event, the Cedar Creek Battlefield Association, had acknowledged that threats were made before the event began and had already arranged for increased security. The sponsors posted a notice to that effect on the event website several days ago.

“We would like to make everyone aware that the Cedar Creek Battlefield Foundation has received a letter threatening bodily harm to attendants of this event,” the event [website](https://www.ccbf.us/) read. “With this in mind security has been increased, and we ask that everyone work with us for a safe and enjoyable event. Please pardon the inconvenience as you may experience increased security measures when enjoying the event.”

After the incident with the device, Sunday’s activities were canceled.

This year’s event was set to commemorate the 153rd anniversary of the Battle of Cedar Creek and the event has been held annually since 1990. The reenactment is one of the largest annual events in the region drawing each year between 3,000 and 5,000 reenactors from all over the east and near Midwest as well as Canada.

**Climate Change Update**

Mass starvation has wiped out thousands of penguin chicks in Antarctica, with unusually thick sea ice forcing their parents to forage further for food in what conservationists Friday called a "catastrophic breeding failure".

French scientists, supported by WWF, have been studying a colony of 18,000 pairs of Adelie penguins in East Antarctica since 2010 and discovered only two chicks survived the most recent breeding season in early 2017.

They attributed the disaster to extensive sea ice late in the summer, meaning the adult penguins had to travel further to find food, with the chicks dying as they waited.

Yan Ropert-Coudert, senior penguin scientist at Dumont D'Urville research station, adjacent to the colony, said the region was impacted by environmental changes linked to the breakup of the Mertz glacier.

"The conditions are set for this to happen more frequently due to the breaking of the Mertz glacier in 2010 that changed the configuration of the stretch of sea in front of the colony," he told AFP.

"But there are other factors needed to have a zero year: a mix of temperature, wind direction and strength, no opening of polynya in front of the colony."

A polynya is an area of unfrozen sea within an ice pack.

He added that the coming season seemed to be better for the birds in terms of sea ice "but we never know how it will turn unfortunately".

Surviving mostly on a diet of krill -- a small shrimp-like crustacean -- Adelie penguins, slick and efficient swimmers, have been generally faring well in East Antarctica.

But they have been declining in the Antarctic region more generally where climate change has taken its toll, with shifting ice reducing habitat while warming seas affect their prey.

Four years ago, the same colony, which numbered 20,196 pairs at the time, failed to produce a single chick.

Heavy sea ice, combined with unusually warm weather and rain followed by a rapid drop in temperature, resulted in them becoming saturated and freezing to death.

News of the penguin's problems came ahead of an annual meeting next week in Hobart of the 25-member Convention on the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR).

Last year CCAMLR agreed to create the world's largest marine sanctuary covering more than 1.55 million square kilometres (600,000 square miles) -- roughly the size of Britain, Germany and France combined -- in the Ross Sea area of Antarctica.

But time ran out on a second proposed protected area in East Antarctica, covering another one million square kilometre zone, where the penguins died.

Hopes are high it will get the green light this time with WWF's head of polar programmes Rod Downie saying it would help secure the future for Adelie penguins.

"The risk of opening up this area to exploratory krill fisheries, which would compete with the Adelie penguins for food as they recover from two catastrophic breeding failures in four years, is unthinkable," he said

**Silicon Valley Decides the News**

## James O’Keefe of [Project Veritas](https://breaking.projectveritas.com/NYTimes1.html) discussed his [expose](http://www.breitbart.com/big-journalism/2017/10/10/james-okeefe-james-comey-new-york-times/) of bias at the New York Times with SiriusXM host Alex Marlow on Wednesday’s Breitbart News Daily.

“We’re very excited about this project. This is a hidden camera investigation into and inside the *New York Times*. ‘All the news that’s fit to print’; this is the so-called ‘paper of record.’ Alex, the one thing the *New York Times* always says, at least to me, is that the difference between them and people like me, people like you, is that they are objective. They’re the real journalists. They don’t have any political agenda,” said O’Keefe.

“This investigation quite clearly shows that they do, in fact, have an agenda – one that actually contravenes their own ethical policies,” he said.

“In this 15-minute long Video Number One, you hear this guy who’s – a lot of what he says is true, all of what he says might be true, we just can’t confirm the bit where he says, ‘James Comey is my godfather.’ He’s under a psychosis or he’s a sociopath or he is, in fact, James Comey’s godson,” said O’Keefe, referring to a claim made by NYT video editor Nick Dudich in the undercover video.

“But there’s also tape where he talks about how he’s trying to target the Trumps’ business, he used to work for the Hillary Clinton campaign – we did confirm that. He knows people, for example, in social media companies, and he uses that to sort of curate videos. He hints at that, and there’s more of that to come. He’s talking about how, basically, he has an agenda, that he is the gatekeeper, that his imprint is on every single video the *New York Times* does. He says, ‘That’s why I’m here,’” O’Keefe noted.

“My favorite bit in the video is when he says, ‘I’ll say that I’m objective’ and then leans into the hidden camera and he goes, ‘But I’m really not.’ That’s sort of what he says. And the managing editor of the *New York Times* has responded and said that it was a violation of his ethical policy. No word on whether they fired him or not, but we’ll see what happens over the next few hours,” he reported.

Marlow proposed that the individual caught in the Project Veritas video sting was representative of a deep, unacknowledged culture of bias at the *Times* and other major media outlets, citing the long-hidden revelations about Hollywood mogul Harvey Weinstein’s depravity as another example of institutional bias in action.

“The last investigation we did was on CNN, and that was also pretty riveting,” O’Keefe recalled. “That was a guy in Atlanta from CNN saying that the Russia stuff was B.S. This guy is an editor for the video department at the *New York Times.* His imprint is on all the videos. He does help curate the videos. He’s not necessarily as low-level as the *Times* is making him out to be.”

“We’ll finally be able to see inside the heart and soul of who these people really are,” he anticipated. “There’s one moment where this *New York Times* editor is sitting in a cafe below the building, and he’s talking about James Comey and his book deal, and he’s just kind of a despicable person. He really is, if you look at the video and his agenda. He wants to target Trump’s ‘dumbf\*\*k of a son.’”

“They’re going to say, Alex, as they always do, that it’s an isolated incident, that it’s a rogue employee. Of course, Veritas is to drop Video Number Two, Video Number Three, Video Number Four,” he teased. “When you do this type of journalism, you have to focus on specific instances in order to make it systemic. You have to show one at a time.”

Marlow noted that Breitbart News has also learned the value of conducting multiple complementary investigations and releasing the results in installments to keep the mainstream media from burying stories it doesn’t like or dismissing them as flukes with no greater meaning.

O’Keefe agreed that the media, including the tech giants of New Media, still aggressively seeks to delegitimize renegade news sources like Project Veritas. “We’re not verified on Twitter, and I had a lot of these lefties on Twitter go, ‘Well, you’re not even verified!’ And I said, ‘Listen, I don’t want to be verified. We’re an existential threat to the establishment.’”

“I don’t think people have the balls to break the story on Harvey Weinstein in 2004. They’re not going to have the balls to go after the *New York Times.* I dare name any journalist – I ask them, please name other journalists who achieve the type of results that we achieve. We go after the sacred cows,” he said.

Marlow told the audience that Project Veritas’s further videos in the *New York Times* series are “explosive” and include evidence of collusion between the NYT and YouTube that “could potentially be criminal.”

O’Keefe agreed that Silicon Valley has become an integral part of the mainstream media.

“As you alluded to, without giving too much away, there is a connection between what we released yesterday and Silicon Valley,” he said.

O’Keefe described the response from the *New York Times* as “very serious” and upfront about how the remarks made by its employee in the video violated the paper’s ethical policies. However, he dinged the *Times* for dismissing Dudich as a “junior level staffer” to “lower expectations” and diminishing his influence and chuckled at the efforts of NYT management to warn the rest of its staff that undercover video sting operations against it might be on the way.

“I just rewteeted them and said, ‘Too late! More videos coming,’” O’Keefe said impishly.

“They’re ‘reviewing the situation,’” he said, quoting the *New York Times’* statement. “We’ll see if they fire him, take disciplinary action, say he’s a rogue employee – and then we’ll drop Video Number Two.” (The [second video was released](https://twitter.com/Project_Veritas/status/918146224343183361) shortly after O’Keefe completed his *Breitbart News Daily* interview.)

O’Keefe said he usually asks supporters to donate to his non-profit organization, “but today I’m going to ask the Breitbart audience for something else: we can’t do this without insiders.”

“We can’t do this unless people on the inside cooperate with us, tell us where the bodies are buried – people who are actually employed by these organizations,” he said. “We don’t always ask them to violate their NDAs. We just want to have a conversation and, of course, protect our identities. So I’d like to invite the people listening here: if you’re on the inside of one of these groups, one of these establishment media groups, Deep State groups, Silicon Valley groups, I want you to [send us an email](https://breaking.projectveritas.com/tips.html): VeritasTips at ProtonMail.com.”

“I want you to help us in our undercover work. Your security is our priority. We will protect you,” he promised.

**Economic Update**

I’m not really sure when it began. The results are plain enough to see in the sociology. The American family was unique in the world. Japan has had thousands of years of a male-dominated culture with a philosophy centered on the good of conformity. Children from a very young age are dressed identically, marched to school in their matching raincoats, and smoothed into a homogenous community. A nail sticking up is hammered down. It comes from the notion that Japanese people do not wear shoes in the homes, so a nail sticking up can injure a person who is walking around the house. In their culture, it means there is no room for genius or stupidity in the Japanese community. Did this contribute to their survival and prosperity? Almost too well. They became so unintegrated with the rest of the world, that they are an island, still.

The Western family was different. From the very beginning, it was designed for and by creative genius. The two resounding themes that changed the world were freedom and liberty. It was designed to have no limits to the success one could achieve as a primary motivation to make progress. The entire economy from 1670 to 1970 was driven by young couples with dreams, who worked insane hours and took risks for the future that changed not just America, it brought the whole world from horseback to the Moon in less than 100 years. After 200 centuries of walking everywhere, the American took us flying in 1906.

As recent as the 1960’s, men got married in their early 20’s, and women sometimes in their late teens. They had three or four children, two cars, and everyone paid for their own college education. We had milk men and service station attendants, and science fairs. Everything, and I do mean everything from clothes to cars, to houses, was originally designed and functionalized my men to convince women to breed with them.

Then, in the 1980’s women suddenly changed. No, seriously. They changed. Let me first establish an irrefutable sociological reality that if the survival of the human race depended upon the female sex drive, it would have gone extinct 199 centuries ago. So it should surprise no one that once women in the 1980’s began to tell men to go screw themselves, that they started doing just that.

One would think that once society realized that all the buildings, cars, clothes, and domiciles became functionalized to what men want for themselves, that women would come crawling back. They most certainly did not. Women decided to do exactly the same thing, and the result was 200 million adult Americans, the majority of which are living alone with no breeding partner and no spouse.

The value stream structure of society, which once supported families with children, became focused on profit and risk mitigation for the entity itself. Of course, the mack daddy of entities is the Federal government. With 24 million employees, the vast majority of whom earn in excess of $100 thousand year and are guaranteed a lifetime pension after 30 years of unionized service, they consume all the tax revenue we the people generate plus about $1 trillion in new debt every year.

The Federal debt is so large now, that if interest rates go up even one percent, it will be impossible to pay it back. The best we can hope for is to make payments on the debt by borrowing the money each year to do so. As long as that process is sustainable until the current Federal population dies of old age, that is all that matters.

In the year 2017, the end of life as we know it is inevitable. The median age has risen to 39, and less than half of adults are married, or plan to become married. More than half the men over the age of 55 with an advanced degree do not have full-time employment. The vast majority of males over the age of 60 have not had continuous employment for 7 years or more. 71% of Americans this age have less than $10 thousand saved for their retirement. This is also the age at which health care expenses see their first increase in a normal lifespan. Most of the time, health care can be purchased without any long term expenses, until the person reaches 65, which is the age at which they are eligible for Medicare, for which they paid premiums for 40 or 50 years already.

But between the ages of 50 and 65, it is important to make healthy life choices. Refraining from smoking, drinking alcohol in excess, obesity, and unprotected sex will allow 85% of people to get through this 15-year period for about $12 thousand. 15% of the people will manifest some sort of lasting health issue, even with healthy life choices, but less than 10 million people nationwide are considered incurable.

Health care costs are not why the American family is extinct. That being said, insurance costs on employers is one of the top three reasons why full-time employment is practically non-existent in America in 2017.

The top three reasons jobs do not exist are:

* Access to Capital
* Obamacare
* Federal Regulations

Lack of **access to capital** has created the lowest ratio of business startups since records have been kept. Records have been kept since 1675. Why can’t new business find capital to get started? Since July of 2010, Obama made it illegal for banks to loan money to any business that does not have two years of continuous profits. There are other restrictions, such as the interest rate of the company’s current debt structure. If you’re paying more than 10% for debt, you are disqualified from bank lending. If you have factored accounts receivable in the past 24 months, you are disqualified. This has functionally wiped startup businesses from the American landscape.

**Obamacare** costs have driven companies with 100 or more employees with more than 5 years of profits into bankruptcy. Simple as that.

**Federal Regulations** are designed to protect global, multi-billion dollar corporations from competition by small businesses. Every industry is benefitted by one or more of 650 different Agencies that write laws, assess taxes, fees, fines and enforcement actions to protect the leaders against dilution. Each agency has a community of industry CEO’s who agree to serve in the Agency for a short time to make sure that the world’s largest economy and the world’s largest customer buys product from their companies. The Agencies only answer to the Executive Branch of government with little or no oversight by Congress.

There is no chance that the Agency Government can be defeated. They are too large, and they can crush any civilian uprising against them. Even if a thousand new businesses try to start up in each State, the enforcement actions would obliterate them in a matter of months. It would be easier to start importing heroin than to start up a new business in America in 2017.

There is a shrinking opportunity for America to survive. Hopefully, the voters will listen and replace the Progressives in whatever Party they claim to be a member of. We won a major battle on November 8th of last year, but that was not the war. It is vital that we follow through in November of 2018. If we do not make it to the polls for that election, we may lose America. Without America, freedom and liberty will have no champion. Once those two principals have been unraveled by the Progressives, they will be removed from the Earth, and they will never again be reestablished.

**The Agency Government is Winning the Auto Wars**

Luxury electric vehicle maker Tesla Inc. fired about 400 employees this week, including associates, team leaders and supervisors, a former employee told Reuters.

The dismissals were a result of a company-wide annual review, Tesla said in an emailed statement, without confirming the number of employees leaving the company.

"It's about 400 people ranging from associates to team leaders to supervisors. We don't know how high up it went," said the former employee, who worked on the assembly line and did not want to be identified.

Though Tesla cited performance as the reason for the firings, the source told Reuters he was fired in spite of never having been given a bad review.

The Palo Alto, California-based company said earlier in the month that "production bottlenecks" had left Tesla behind its planned ramp-up for the new Model 3 mass-market sedan.

The company delivered 220 Model 3 sedans and produced 260 during the third quarter. In July, it began production of the Model 3, which starts at $35,000 - half the starting price of the Model S.

**Takata was Main Airbag Supplier**

There are only a few approved airbag suppliers in the US market. The only large company that works with companies producing less than half a million vehicles in a single model, is Takata. They have been under attack for many years. But let me lay out what the truth is.

Airbags operate with a dry explosive known as sodium azide. It explodes with an electric spark in a little device we call the hockey puck. The signal is applied when certain crash parameters are met, and that changes just about every year. Now, bags have a sort of half-explosion at 16 miles an hour, and a full explosion at 35 miles an hour. Vehicles are not designed to prevent death above 35 miles an hour.

The issue is with the shelf life of the explosive. For decades we have asked the DOT to allow car owners to exchange the hockey puck under a warranty program to make sure it has not been compromised with moisture. Water reacts with the sodium to make a hard explosive rock, so when the airbag deploys, and it only does it once in all the time the card exists until it is crushed at the junk yard, the rocks tear through the fabric of the bag and keep going into the flesh of the passenger. The DOT refused to allow it.

Who is responsible for the injuries to people with airbags? The DOT. How many people are injured every year by airbags?

Well for one thing, every car maker who used Takata was hurt. Several vehicle platforms were terminated and never made it to the market at all, further reducing competition. The FBI frequently raided Takata’s offices in Michigan, taking files, laptops, and records. This occurred years before the DOT finally launched the killing blow.

Plaintiffs in a class-action lawsuit over defective Takata airbag inflators have reached a settlement with Toyota, Subaru, Mazda and BMW that's worth $553 million. The plaintiffs filed papers to settle their claims against the companies Thursday, saying the deal covers nearly 16 million vehicles.

The settlement does not cover claims of personal injury or property damage, the plaintiffs, say. The deal is now in the hands of a federal court in Miami.

Here's a breakdown of how many vehicles are in question, and the amount automakers will pay:

* Toyota: 9.2 million vehicles; $278,500,000
* BMW: 2.3 million vehicles; $131,000,000
* Subaru: 2.6 million vehicles; $68,262,257
* Mazda: 1.7 million vehicles; $75,805,050

The settlement will compensate people who own or lease vehicles affected by the air bag recall in a variety of ways, from providing rental cars to those who are deemed to be at the greatest risk to "a possible residual distribution payment of up to $500."

The plaintiffs in the case will continue to pursue their claims against other automakers named in the suit, which include Ford, Honda, and Nissan.

More than 14 million of the air bags have been repaired in the U.S., according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. But the plaintiffs in the class-action suit say the pace of recalls and repairs has been slow: As of late April, they say, all of the auto makers in today's settlement had completed less than a third of their air-bag related recalls.

The deal would create a new outreach program for those whose vehicles have the defective air bags.

"The low number of recalls to-date demonstrates the need for a settlement of this type, and we look forward to accelerating the removal of defective Takata airbags from the roads," said Peter Prieto, the court-appointed chair lead counsel, who helped negotiate the settlement. He added, "We appreciate the efforts of Toyota, BMW, Mazda and Subaru to do right by their customers in reaching these agreements."

Defective Takata airbags have been blamed for rupturing and sending dangerous debris into vehicle cabins. As the Two-Way reported at the time of that settlement, "At least 16 deaths, [11 of them in the U.S.](https://www.nhtsa.gov/press-releases/nhtsa-confirms-11th-us-fatality-tied-rupture-takata-air-bag-inflator), have been linked to the defect."

Last summer, at least four automakers acknowledged that they were installing the same type of air bags in new vehicles — equipment whose inflators contain ammonium nitrate but do not include a chemical drying agent — as [NPR's Sonari Glinton reported](http://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2016/06/02/480392873/defective-takata-airbags-still-being-installed-in-new-cars).

The U.S. Department of Transportation has tools for determining which vehicles are affected by the defect at the [SaferCar.gov](https://www.safercar.gov/) website.

News of the proposed settlement comes months [after Takata agreed](http://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2017/01/13/509665912/takata-to-pay-1-billion-over-airbag-fraud-3-executives-criminally-charged) to pay $1 billion over air bag fraud; three of the company's executives were also criminally charged. That total included $125 million that's earmarked as restitution to people who are physically injured by defective air bag systems.

In the United States the deploying air bag has been responsible for nearly 200 deaths and thousands of  severe injuries. It is clear that the forces of deployment are not insignificant and must be respected by the vehicle occupant. A review of the literature indicates that the serious and fatal injuries, which were once produced in the laboratory setting, are now being observed in ‘real-world’ collisions. Many clinicians may not be aware of the injury-producing power of the deploying air bag and must be informed of the patterns associated with air bag-induced injuries. The motoring public must also be informed and warned of the dangers of air bag deployment, just as the automotive industry was over 30 years ago.

**The Paddock Mystery**

### 1.) Why do witnesses keep disappearing?

But there were a few witnesses who had a very clear recall of the event and they are telling very different stories. Stories of multiple shooters. Stories of shooters right in the crowd. Stories of early police reports that could have prevented the entire tragedy.

**Jesus Campo** was the security guard who was shot in the leg when he approached Paddock’s room. ([One reporter found that Campo either was not in the employee database or had been removed](http://gotnews.com/exclusive-lauraloomer-mandalay-bay-security-guard-removed-hotel-employee-system/).) He had scheduled [interviews with the media and then didn’t show up](http://popculture.com/trending/2017/10/13/las-vegas-mandalay-bay-security-guard-jesus-campos-disappears/). [One reporter said there was a gag order on Campo and his family](http://www.shtfplan.com/headline-news/video-reporter-doorstops-vegas-security-guards-house-i-can-confirm-his-family-has-a-gag-order_10132017) but this has not been verified. No one seems to know the whereabouts of Campo.

Another eyewitness was 28-year old **Kymberley Suchomel**, who had attended the music festival. She told a very detailed [story of multiple shooters, actual fireworks as a distraction. She escaped unharmed only to die unexpectedly](http://www.shtfplan.com/conspiracy-fact-and-theory/las-vegas-massacre-survivor-abruptly-dies-just-days-after-posting-eyewitness-account-of-multiple-shooters-and-subsequent-cover-up_10132017)in her home a week later “of natural causes.”

These people aren’t alone in their stories that don’t match the official narrative. [Read this article](http://www.collective-evolution.com/2017/10/04/eye-witness-at-las-vegas-shooting-states-there-were-7-confirmed-shooters/) and [watch this video](http://www.shtfplan.com/headline-news/las-vegas-shooting-victim-there-was-100-more-than-one-shooter-gates-to-concert-were-locked-shortly-before-attack_10122017?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+SHTFplan+%28SHTF+Plan+-+When+It+Hits+The+Fan%2C+Don%27t+Say+We+Didn%27t+Warn+You%29) for more eyewitness stories. And guys…be careful.

### 2.) Why does the timeline keep changing so dramatically?

Obviously, investigations are fluid and we learn things as we go on. But there have been some really dramatic changes to the timeline and a lot of apparent CYA (Cover Your A$$) at work.

The first change was [the inclusion of the shooting of unarmed security guard Jesus Campo](http://theantimedia.org/police-change-timeline-las-vegas-shooting/), mentioned above. This dramatically changed the timeline of when officials were notified about a shooter on the 32 floor.

A veteran from two floors below Paddock’s room tried to notify the front desk and 911 regarding the origin of the shootings and recalls no one answering. He said :

“It seems like it just never stops,” he recalled. “Seconds are going by, minutes are going by, and the rounds are continuously going.”

“Changing weapons, changing calibers,” Bethel continued. “You can hear the difference in the gunshots of the different rifles that he is shooting.” ([source](http://www.zerohedge.com/news/2017-10-03/meet-iraq-war-veteran-who-led-police-vegas-shooter))

If you [watch this video](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=khtcXWpetTQ), a maintenance man at Mandalay Bay said that he called for help – stating that he and Jesus Campo called in being under fire more than 10 minutes before the shooter began unloading his weapon on concert-goers. It wasn’t until [a recording was unearthed](http://thefreethoughtproject.com/vegas-hotel-worker-warned-shooter-before/) of Stephen Schuck calling for help with gunshots in the background that the official timeline was changed…again.

### 3.) Why don’t the recordings match the official story?

The audio recordings from the shooting are graphic… and many of them don’t match the official story.

* First, [here are the 911 calls](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rZG9geDhczk) reporting the shooting.
* Here is [the entire recording of the police scanner audio](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gpMrm1xUJ40) during the shooting.
* This is [the audio from when SWAT breached the door](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7EyoKuaJ10Q) of Paddock’s hotel room.

This is a condensed version of the audio.

Notice how they mention multiple shooters and multiple locations. How much of that is battle fog and how much is real?

### 4.) Why were the laptops and phones of witnesses wiped before they were returned?

If you only learn one lesson, learn this one. If you ever witness an event like this, upload your video and photos immediately. If your story differs from the one that authorities are telling, your proof will be gone once they get their hands on your devices.

Workers at the Route 91 festival during which Stephen Paddock unleashed his massacre have reportedly been given back their phones and laptops by the FBI only to discover that all messages and videos from the night of the attack have been wiped clean.

According to a Las Vegas resident who posted a status update on Facebook, “A bunch of people that worked the Route 91 said they got their cell phones back today. They all said that all their phones are completely wiped clean! All messages and info from that weekend are completely gone. Anyone else experience this?”

“A few different people who were vendors there are all saying the same thing,” the woman later comments. ([source](http://www.shtfplan.com/headline-news/report-fbi-wipes-phones-and-laptops-of-las-vegas-massacre-eyewitnesses_10122017))

What did these people record that is counter to the official narrative? Do they even know they caught something that they shouldn’t have?

### 5.) What about these excellent questions that aren’t being answered?

Alternative media is asking the questions that the mainstream is not. [From Ann Coulte](http://www.breitbart.com/2nd-amendment/2017/10/11/ann-coulter-media-begging-us-conspiracy-theories-las-vegas/)r:

Why would Paddock unload 200 rounds into the hallway at a security guard who was checking on someone else’s room before beginning his massacre?

How can it possibly take eight days to figure out when the alleged shooter checked into the hotel?

Why was Paddock wearing gloves if he was about to commit suicide?

Have any other solitary mass shooters ever had girlfriends?

If Paddock wasn’t making money on video poker — and he wasn’t — why would he be cycling millions of dollars through a casino, turning every dollar into, at best, 99 cents?

As well, check out [Brandon Smith’s brilliant tactical analysis](http://www.alt-market.com/articles/3293-a-tactical-analysis-of-the-las-vegas-mass-shooting-incident), which has many other unanswered questions like:

Paddock called hotel security at least twice to complain about “loud music” on the floor below him the day of the shooting.  Why would a mass shooter care, or take the risk of drawing too much attention to himself?

Why, after so much careful planning, did Paddock expose his position by smashing two separate windows in his adjacent hotel rooms? There are other ways of providing a shooter’s loophole with less exposure?

Who set off this alarm which conveniently helped to give away Paddock’s position early, and why?

Why did Paddock prepare for an escape, use his cameras to allow him to fire at hotel security through his door, equip rounds capable of annihilating any SWAT team that stacked up to breach his room, but decided to shoot himself instead before SWAT ever entered?…No one noticed the man placing cameras about the area?

A witness on site at the concert stated that a woman (and her apparent boyfriend) approached people near the stage 45 minutes before the attack, telling them that “they were all going to die.” She was later escorted out of the venue by security. Who was this woman? Was she trying to menace the concertgoers or warn them? Or, was it all coincidence?

Despite the fact that these questions get right to the heart of method and motive, no one else seems to be asking them.

### 6.) WHY?

Most of all, WHY? Why the heck did this rich gambler who had no history of hurting anyone or being a hardcore gun guy unload thousands of rounds on 22,000 innocent people?

There is little in his history that would make us think, “Yeah, that guy is gonna go postal one day.”

Everyone who knew him was stunned. Baffled. Gobsmacked. Everyone from his [weird brother](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SHz2kaM-dT8) to his [foreign girlfriend](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0jwL8RNsV5g) to [neighbors](https://www.pastemagazine.com/articles/2017/10/interview-with-two-neighbors-of-stephen-paddock-th.html) and [fellow travelers](http://theantimedia.org/paddock-middle-east-europe/) were absolutely astounded he had committed this horrific massacre.

Then some stuff arose that has been pooh-poohed by investigators as unrelated.

* Paddock doesn’t fit the psychological profile of a mass shooter. He had a girlfriend, was wealthy, had no known tactical background, and was described as “kind and caring.”
* He [made numerous trips to the Middle East and Europe](http://theantimedia.org/paddock-middle-east-europe/).
* No one really knows how he got so rich. [Gambling](https://www.cnbc.com/2017/10/06/las-vegas-gunman-earned-millions-as-a-gambler-nbc.html)? [Real estate](http://www.latimes.com/nation/la-na-vegas-shooter-what-we-know-20171002-story.html)? Or something more insidious? Unproven rumors suggest he could have been an arms dealer or a child trafficker.
* [The Islamic State has repeatedly claimed](http://www.breitbart.com/national-security/2017/10/05/islamic-state-claims-vegas-shooter-solider-caliphate/) he converted in the past 6 months and did this in the name of ISIS, but the media says this is not true. No one in the investigation even seems to be considering the possibility. As well, a former Trump campaign official said that [Paddock made an ISIS video](http://www.zerohedge.com/news/2017-10-06/las-vegas-shooter-made-isis-tape-according-former-trump-campaign-official), but nothing else has been heard about this.

Couldn’t you wrap your head around this better if you knew why?

**The Government Playbook for Eliminating the Middle Class**

When people are dependent on the government they are much easier to control.  We are often told that we are not “compassionate” when we object to the endless expansion of government social programs, but that is not how the debate should be framed.  In America today, well over 100 million people receive money from the federal government each month, and the number of Americans that are truly financially independent is continually shrinking.  In fact, [only 25 percent](http://theeconomiccollapseblog.com/archives/the-middle-class-is-being-destroyed-now-only-25-percent-of-all-americans-have-10000-or-more-in-savings) of all Americans have more than $10,000 in savings right now according to one survey.  If we eventually get to the point where virtually all of us are dependent on the government for our continued existence, that would give the globalists a very powerful tool of control.  In the end, they want as many of us dependent on the government as possible, because those that are dependent on the government are a lot less likely to fight against their agenda.

Back in 1992, the bottom 90 percent of American income earners brought in [more than 60 percent](http://money.cnn.com/2017/09/27/news/economy/inequality-record-top-1-percent-wealth/index.html) of the country’s income.  But last year that figure slipped to just 49.7 percent.  The wealth of our society is increasingly being concentrated at the very top, and the middle class is steadily being eroded.  Surveys have found that somewhere around [two-thirds of the country](http://theeconomiccollapseblog.com/archives/the-tens-of-millions-of-forgotten-americans-that-the-u-s-economy-has-left-behind) is living paycheck to paycheck at least part of the time, and so living on the edge has become a way of life for most Americans.

Earlier today, I came across a [Business Insider article](http://www.businessinsider.com/there-is-no-plan-for-americas-economy-2017-9) that was bemoaning the fact that the U.S. economy seems to be rather directionless at this point…

* We do not have a real plan for health care, and costs continue to gobble up American wages.
* We do not have a plan for dealing with globalization and economic change, but that change continues to shape our economy.
* We don’t have a plan to update our decrepit infrastructure.
* The one plan we did have — the Federal Reserve’s post-financial crisis program — is about to be unwound, marking the end of the last clear, executable plan to bolster America’s economy.

Ultimately, the truth is that we don’t actually need some sort of “central plan” for our economy.  We are supposed to be a free market system that is not guided and directed by central planners, but many Americans don’t even understand the benefits of free market capitalism anymore.

However, that Business Insider article did make a great point about globalization.   Most people don’t realize that our economy is slowly but surely being integrated into a global economic system.   This is really bad for American workers, because now they are being merged into a global labor pool in which they must compete directly for jobs with workers in other countries where it is legal to pay slave labor wages.

Even down in Mexico, many autoworkers are only making [$2.25 an hour](https://wolfstreet.com/2017/09/29/repression-of-wages-in-auto-manufacturing-in-mexico/)…

Most of the workers at the new Audi factory in the state of Puebla, inaugurated in 2016 and assembling the Audi Q4 SUV, which carries a sticker price in the US of over $40,000 for base versions, make $2.25 an hour, according to the Union.

Volkswagen, which owns Audi, started building Beetles in Puebla in 1967 and has since created a vast manufacturing empire in Mexico, with vehicles built for consumers in Mexico, the US, Canada, and Latin American markets.

Volkswagen, Ford, GM, or any of the global automakers, which can manufacture just about anywhere in the world, always search for cheap labor to maximize the bottom line.

Would you want to work for $2.25 an hour?

Over time, millions of good paying jobs have been leaving high wage countries and have been going to low wage countries.  The United States has lost more than 70,000 manufacturing facilities since China joined the WTO, and this is one of the biggest factors that has [eroded the middle class](http://theeconomiccollapseblog.com/archives/the-middle-class-is-being-destroyed-now-only-25-percent-of-all-americans-have-10000-or-more-in-savings).

In a desperate attempt to maintain our standard of living, we have gone into increasing amounts of debt.  Of course our federal government is now [20 trillion dollars in debt](http://theeconomiccollapseblog.com/archives/debt-nightmare-does-anyone-actually-care-about-our-exploding-national-debt-these-days), but on an individual level we are doing the same thing.  Today, American consumers are [over 12 trillion dollars in debt](http://theeconomiccollapseblog.com/archives/the-tens-of-millions-of-forgotten-americans-that-the-u-s-economy-has-left-behind), and it gets worse with each passing day.

The borrower is the servant of the lender, and most Americans have become debt slaves at this point.  This is something that Paul Craig Roberts [commented on recently](http://www.paulcraigroberts.org/2017/09/29/us-economy-failing-paul-craig-roberts/)…

Americans carry on by accumulating debt and becoming debt slaves. Many can only make the minimum payment on their credit card and thus accumulate debt. The Federal Reserve’s policy has exploded the prices of financial assets. The result is that the bulk of the population lacks discretionary income, and those with financial assets are wealthy until values adjust to reality.

As an economist I cannot identify in history any economy whose affairs have been so badly managed and prospects so severely damaged as the economy of the United States of America. In the short/intermediate run policies that damage the prospects for the American work force benefit what is called the One Percent as jobs offshoring reduces corporate costs and financialization transfers remaining discretionary income in interest and fees to the financial sector. But as consumer discretionary incomes disappear and debt burdens rise, aggregate demand falters, and there is nothing left to drive the economy.

This debt-based system continuously funnels wealth toward the very top of the pyramid, because it is the people at the very top that hold all of the debts.

Each year it gets worse, and most Americans would be absolutely stunned to hear that the top one percent now control [38.6 percent](http://money.cnn.com/2017/09/27/news/economy/inequality-record-top-1-percent-wealth/index.html) of all wealth in the United States…

The richest 1% of families controlled a record-high 38.6% of the country’s wealth in 2016, according to a Federal Reserve report published on Wednesday.

That’s nearly twice as much as the bottom 90%, which has seen its slice of the pie continue to shrink.

The bottom 90% of families now hold just 22.8% of the wealth, down from about one-third in 1989 when the Fed started tracking this measure.

So how do we fix this?

Well, the truth is that we need to go back to a non-debt based system that does not funnel all of the wealth to the very top of the pyramid.  Unfortunately, most Americans don’t even realize that our current debt-based system is fundamentally flawed, and it will probably take an unprecedented crisis in order to wake people up enough to take action.

The truth is that the term Middle Class is kind of elusive. A person earning $40k a year can actually have a better life than someone earning $110k a year. I had a friend tell me one time that all people are broke at different levels. The person earning $40k a year has an $800 a month house payment. The person earning $110k has a $1,500 a month house payment. The same goes for cars, furniture, vacations, etc. What it boils down to is a portion of income that is disposable; discretionary.

If the person earning $40k is debt free, after rent, food, fuel, prescriptions, has about $200 a week in free money. He can save up and buy something with $10k in a year and pay cash. The person who earns $110k has credit cards, a time share, dry cleaning, private school, ballet, tennis club, and has about $200 a week in disposable money. Who actually is in the middle class?

If the household can get their income up to $75k with the same debt-free structure, that would give them $700-$800 a week in disposable income. Now, who is in the middle class?

The key is, don’t be broke. Pay off or terminate all those $20 a month bills. Then, use that money to pay off the $50 a month bills. Keep going until you own everything, except your home.

**The Cannae Motor Update**

You always wondered how the ion drives of Star Trek worked. Why do they look like blue lights shining out the back in the darkness of space?

A thruster that's being developed for a [future NASA mission to Mars](https://www.space.com/21199-space-electric-propulsion-engines.html) broke several records during recent tests, suggesting that the technology is on track to take humans to the Red Planet within the next 20 years, project team members said.

The X3 thruster, which was designed by researchers at the University of Michigan in cooperation with NASA and the U.S. Air Force, is a Hall thruster — a system that propels spacecraft by accelerating a stream of electrically charged atoms, known as ions. In the recent demonstration conducted at [NASA's Glenn Research Center](https://www.nasa.gov/multimedia/imagegallery/image_feature_2416.html) in Ohio, the X3 broke records for the maximum power output, thrust and operating current achieved by a Hall thruster to date, according to the research team at the University of Michigan and representatives from NASA.

"We have shown that X3 can operate at over 100 kW of power," said Alec Gallimore, who is leading the project, in an interview with Space.com. "It operated at a huge range of power from 5 kW to 102 kW, with electrical current of up to 260 amperes. It generated 5.4 Newtons of thrust, which is the highest level of thrust achieved by any plasma thruster to date," added Gallimore, who is dean of engineering at the University of Michigan. The previous record was 3.3 Newtons, according to the school.

Hall thrusters and other types of ion engines use electricity (usually generated by solar panels) to expel plasma — a gas-like cloud of charged particles — out a nozzle, thus generating thrust. This technique can propel spacecraft to much greater speeds than chemical propulsion rockets can, [according to NASA](https://www.nasa.gov/centers/glenn/technology/Ion_Propulsion1.html).

That's why researchers are so interested in ion propulsion's potential application for long-distance space travel. Whereas the maximum velocity that can be achieved by a chemical rocket is about 5 kilometers per second, a Hall thruster could get a craft up to 40 kilometers per second, Gallimore said.

Ion engines are also [known to be more efficient](https://www.nasa.gov/multimedia/imagegallery/image_feature_2416.html) than chemical-powered rockets, featuring what Gallimore described as a better "miles per gallon" ratio. A Hall-thruster-powered spacecraft would get cargo and [astronauts to Mars](https://www.space.com/34411-nasa-human-mars-mission-living-off-land.html) using much less propellant than a chemical rocket, he said. (A common propellant for ion thrusters is xenon; indeed, [NASA's Dawn spacecraft](https://www.space.com/28732-nasa-dawn-spacecraft-ion-propulsion.html), which is currently orbiting the dwarf planet Ceres, uses this gas.)





A head-on shot of the X3 ion thruster firing at 50 kilowatts, viewed through a warped mirror in the vacuum chamber.

Credit: NASA

"You can think of electric propulsion as having 10 times the miles per gallon compared to chemical propulsion," Gallimore told Space.com.

The trade-off with ion thrusters, however, is that they are very low thrust and therefore must operate for a long time to accelerate a spacecraft to high speeds, according to NASA. (In addition, ion thrusters aren't powerful enough to overcome Earth's gravitational pull, so they cannot be used to launch spacecraft.)

"Chemical propulsion systems can generate millions of kilowatts of power, while the existing electrical systems only achieve 3 to 4 kilowatts," Gallimore said.

Commercially available Hall thrusters are not nearly powerful enough to propel a crewed Mars spacecraft, he added.

"What we would need for human exploration is a system that can process something like 500,000 watts (500 kW), or even a million watts or more," Gallimore said. "That's something like 20, 30 or even 40 times the power of conventional [electric propulsion systems](https://www.space.com/17209-mars-sample-return-electric-power.html)."

That's where the X3 comes in. Gallimore and his team are addressing the power problem by making the thruster bigger than these other systems and by developing a design that addresses one of the technology's shortcomings.

"We figured out that instead of having one channel of plasma, where the plasma generated is exhausted from the thruster and produces thrust, we would have multiple channels in the same thruster," Gallimore said. "We call it a nested channel."

According to Gallimore, using three channels allowed the engineers to make X3 much smaller and more compact than an equivalent single channel Hall thruster would have to be.





A side shot of the X3 ion thruster firing at 50 kilowatts.

Credit: NASA

The University of Michigan team has been working on the technology in cooperation with the Air Force since 2009. First, the researchers developed a two-channel thruster, the X2, before moving on to the more powerful X3, which has three channels.

In February 2016, the team partnered with California-based rocket-maker Aerojet Rocketdyne, which is [developing a new electrical propulsion system](https://www.space.com/32692-solar-electric-propulsion-asteroid-mars.html), called XR-100, for NASA's Next Space Technologies for Exploration Partnerships, or [NextSTEP program](https://www.space.com/28999-nasa-deep-space-tech-grants.html). The X3 thruster is a central part of the XR-100 system.

Scott Hall, a Ph.D. student at the University of Michigan who has worked on the X3 project for the past five years, said the work has been rather challenging because of the thruster's size.

"It's heavy — 500 pounds [227 kilograms]. It's almost a meter in diameter," Hall said. "Most Hall thrusters are the kind of thing that one or two people can pick up and carry around the lab. We need a crane to move X3 around."

Next year, the team will run an even bigger test, which aims to prove that the thruster can operate at full power for 100 hours. Gallimore said the engineers are also designing a special magnetic shielding system that would keep the plasma away from the walls of the thruster to prevent damage and enable the thruster to operate reliably for even longer periods of time. Gallimore said that without the shielding a flight version X3 would probably start experiencing problems after several thousand hours of operations. A magnetically-shielded version could run for several years at full power, according to Gallimore

**The Trump Train Goes Global**

The front runner in Austria’s Sunday election ended his campaign with a familiar message : **Sebastian Kurz pledged to make Austria great again.** He is set to become the world’s youngest leader, ahead of France’s Emmanuel Macron, who is 39... oh and North Korea's 34-year-old Kim Jong-un, of course.

“I want to put Austria back on top,” he told an adoring crowd in Wiener Neustadt [according to the Telegraph](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2017/10/13/austrian-course-elect-worlds-youngest-leader-31-taking-party/). “I want to provide security and order, because the Austrian people deserve it.”



Sebastian Kurz

Austrians are voting Sunday in the country's National Council elections, where according to recent polls the country's 6.4 million voters are likely to ditch the current coalition in favor of a new government backed by anti-immigration nationalists and headed by a 31-year-old Millennial.

Ahead of today's election results, the conservative candidate of the Austrian People's Party (OVP), 31-year-old Sebastian Kurz, is leading the polls with Social Democratic Party (SPO) and the right-wing anti-immigrant Freedom Party (FPO) battling to secure second place. Polls suggest Kurz will lead his conservative People’s Party to victory in Sunday’s election: a victory by the millennial could lead to the unwind of a decade of Social Democratic-led administrations "that revived the economy but struggled with issues over immigration and welfare" and result in the anti-immigrant Freedom Party becoming a part of the coalition government for the first time in history.

To his supporters, Kurz is Austria’s Macron: a one-man political phenomenon who is the only thing standing between the country’s resurgent nationalists and power. **But to his detractors he is the Austrian Trump, who has hijacked one of the country’s two main parties and refashioned it in his own image. His critics say he is only holding the populists back by adopting their anti-immigrant rhetoric and policies.**

After a surge of support for populist candidates in elections this year in the Netherlands, France and Germany, Austria looks like it will go one further and elect an anti-immigration alliance. The biggest winner will be the aspiring 31-year-old Kurz, who has been Austria’s Minister for Foreign Affairs and Integration since 2013, and who is leading his political campaign along the center-right principles which seem to exploit the refugee issue.



Sebastian Kurz, 31, Austria's foreign minister and leader of the People's Party,
greets supporters during his final campaign event in Vienna on Oct. 13

A recent survey by Meinungsraum conducted for GMX.at shows that FPO might secure around 28.5% of the vote, followed by OVP with 26.5%. SPO is expected to attract roughly 20% of the vote. Another poll by Research Affairs/Österreich predicts OVP to secure around 33% of the vote. FPO is predicted to come in second with around 27% , followed by SPO with 23% of the vote.



**“People are worried about the future and that is the currency that matters in this election,”** said Christoph Hofinger, head of the SORA polling institute in Vienna. “The debate is revolving around the issue of fairness, and a lot is also linked to migration.”

Back in May, Kurz called for a snap election amid tensions with coalition partner, the Social Democrats. The young politician **previously backed plans to block refugee routes into Europe and supported a ban on full-face veils**. He also supports cracking down on radical Islam, echoing FPO sentiments and luring in nationalist voters.

For the past two years, the issue of how to deal with the influx of migrants has been among the most sensitive in Austrian society. The swell of anxiety over immigration to Austria began building 2015, when almost 70,000 mostly-Muslim refugees sought asylum from war-torn countries such as Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq. Schools and hospitals in the nation of 8.7 million struggled to accommodate the newcomers, and disagreements over whether it was fair to give immigrants generous welfare support dominate the media.

As a result, **voters have gravitated toward promises by both the People’s Party and Freedom to limit the number of immigrants Austria receives and force newcomers to adopt local customs more quickly.**

Leading FPO candidate Heinz-Christian Strache gained massive support ahead of the election by focusing on the country’s immigration policies and on issues such as unemployment, minimum wage and pensions. The party, founded by a former Nazi SS member after the end of the World War II, stuck the nerve of the electorate by proposing to stop immigration and by speaking out against Islam. The FPO support grew to unprecedented levels following EU-wide 'Open Door' migrant policy championed by Germany in wake of 2015 refugee crisis.

While the biggest number of migrants was welcomed by Berlin, Austria received nearly 150,000 asylum requests since 2015. Comprising just over 1 percent of the population, **their presence in the country became the number one debated issue in the election**.

Meanwhile, the incumbent chancellor of Austria and chairman of the Social Democratic Party, Christian Kern, is virtually assured to lose his place as the head of the government. Unlike his rivals, Kern advocates a much softer stand on migration, instead placing emphasis on employment and the economy. Kern, 51, a [former business executive plucked](https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2017-10-14/austrians-lean-toward-nationalist-government-led-by-a-millennial) from the national railroad by the Social Democrats in May 2016, has been dogged by sloppy campaign management. Despite overseeing faster growth in the export-oriented economy, Kern has struggled to connect with voters. His No. 1 goal is achieving full employment, since “modernizing the country with investment in education, security, health care and pensions” depends on it, Kern said late Thursday in the campaign’s final debate.

“Austria deserves someone who is ready to take on real responsibility for the population,” Strache said in a parliamentary speech this week, in which he chided Kern for letting thousands of refugees enter Austria, transported on the national railroad he ran before becoming chancellor.

Regardless of performance in Sunday's election, the three main parties must work together to form a new coalition government. Neither the OVP nor the SPO has ruled out a coalition with the FPO, which may play the role of the kingmaker at the end of the day since as the revival of OVP/ SPO coalition seems unlikely. Other parties such as the liberal NEOS (The New Austria and Liberal Forum) and the Greens are expected to secure single digits.

Compared with 10 years ago, more Austrians say they feel like they’re not being heard and are in search of law-and-order leadership, a SORA institute study showed. More than two-fifths of voters declared their desire for a “strongman” leader, according to the research, periodically commissioned by the federal government to gauge public attitudes and consciousness about the country’s Nazi history.

Step forward Kurz, the foreign minister who’s distanced himself from the People’s Party’s leadership and forged similar views with Freedom’s Strache on immigration. Both men want to restrict immigrant access to Austria’s social-security system and impose tighter policing on the country’s borders. The Freedom Party came within 30,000 votes of winning the presidency, a mostly ceremonial post, in a run-off vote last year.

In Austria, anyone over the age of 16 is eligible to vote in roughly 13,000 voting locations throughout the Alpine nation. There are about 6.4 million voters, and those who cast their ballots will decide 183 contested seats at the National Council.

**The Senate Fired Obama**

As you know by now, the Obamas have cost the American taxpayer already $1 million in expenses and salary, since the inauguration. The Senate has decided to end the flow of brown gravy for the Obamas. On Wednesday, the Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs unanimously approved a bill that would cut presidential pensions, saving the taxpayers millions. The update to the Former Presidents Act as the bill is called would cut the pensions of former presidents if they are raking it in as Obama did recently when he scored $400,000 for a single speech to Wall Street.

The bill, which was introduced by the sponsor of the Senate legislation, Sen. Joni Ernst, would cap the pensions at $200,000, with adjustments made for the increase in the cost of living each year.

In a statement, Iowa Republican Sen. Joni Ernst said: “Our national debt now exceeds $20 trillion; this bipartisan effort is another important step toward reining in Washington’s out-of-control spending.”

He added: “It is ridiculous to continue asking taxpayers to help foot the bill for former presidents’ perks at a time when they already rake in millions of dollars from book deals, speaking engagements, and more.”

I am most assuredly in favor of this bill and would very pleased to see that entitlement completely abolished as stated. It is not a lifetime employment. It is an elected position. The same should hold true for congressmen. Lifetime pension for minimal service is WRONG. IT was never supposed to be that way. Public office was supposed to be a service to the country, not a career with lifetime benefits. After they change the pensions for past presidents, they should then focus on pensions for Congress.

**The Reign of the Judges**

Contributed by Bill Federer

On Oct. 15, 1788, James Madison warned: “As the courts are generally the last in making the decision, it results to them, by refusing or not refusing to execute a law, to stamp it with its final character. This makes the Judiciary department paramount in fact to the Legislature, which was never intended and can never be proper.”

On Oct. 15, 1991, the U.S. Senate confirmed Clarence Thomas as a Justice on the Supreme Court. When questioned during the hearings by Senator Thurmond regarding judicial activism, Clarence Thomas replied: “The role of a judge is a limited one. It is to … interpret the Constitution, where called upon, but at no point to impose his or her will or … opinion in that process.”

Thomas Jefferson wrote to Abigail Adams, Sept. 11, 1804: “Nothing in the Constitution has given them (judges) a right to decide for the Executive, more than to the Executive to decide for them. … The opinion which gives to the judges the right to decide what laws are constitutional … not only for themselves in their own sphere of action, but for the legislature and executive … would make the judiciary a despotic branch.”

Webster’s 1828 Dictionary included in it definition of “Despotic”: “Despotic: Absolute and arbitrary authority. … Absolute in power. … Arbitrary in the exercise of power. … Unlimited and uncontrolled by men, constitution or laws, and depending alone on the will of the despot.”

Thomas Jefferson to William Jarvis, Sept. 28, 1820: “You seem … to consider the judges as the ultimate arbiters of all constitutional questions; a very dangerous doctrine indeed, and one which would place us under the despotism of an oligarchy. …”

Jefferson continued: “Our judges are as honest as other men, and not more so … and their power (is) the more dangerous, as they are in office for life and not responsible, as the other functionaries are, to the elective control. The Constitution has erected no such single tribunal, knowing that to whatever hands confided, with corruptions of time and party, its members would become despots.”

In his 1841 inaugural address, President William Henry Harrison warned: “The great danger to our institutions does … appear to me to be … the accumulation in one of the departments of that which was assigned to others. Limited as are the powers which have been granted, still enough have been granted to constitute a despotism if concentrated in one of the departments.”

Alexis de Tocqueville, author of “Democracy in America,” 1835, warned: “The president, who exercises a limited power, may err without causing great mischief in the state. Congress may decide amiss without destroying the Union, because the electoral body in which Congress originates may cause it to retract its decision by changing its members. But if the Supreme Court is ever composed of imprudent men or bad citizens, the Union may be plunged into anarchy or civil war.”

The Union was plunged into a Civil War by Democrat-appointed Justice Roger Taney, who gave the Supreme Court’s infamous Dred Scott decision in 1857 that slaves were not citizens, but property.

President Abraham Lincoln alluded to this decision in his first inaugural address, March 4, 1861: “I do not forget the position assumed by some that constitutional questions are to be decided by the Supreme Court. … The candid citizen must confess that if the policy of the government upon vital questions affecting the whole people is to be irrevocably fixed by decisions of the Supreme Court, the instant they are made … the people will have ceased to be their own rulers, having to that extent practically resigned their government into the hands of the eminent tribunal.”

Jefferson warned Mr. Hammond in 1821: “The germ of dissolution of our federal government is in … the federal judiciary; an irresponsible body … working like gravity by night and by day, gaining a little today and a little tomorrow, and advancing its noiseless step like a thief, over the field of jurisdiction, until all shall be usurped from the states.”

Thomas Jefferson wrote Sept. 6, 1819: “The Constitution is a mere thing of wax in the hands of the judiciary, which they may twist and shape into any form they please.”

Jefferson explained to Supreme Court Justice William Johnson, June 12, 1823: “On every question of construction, carry ourselves back to the time when the Constitution was adopted, recollect the spirit manifested in the debates, and instead of trying what meaning may be squeezed out out of the text, or invented against it, conform to the probable one in which it was passed. … But the Chief Justice says, ‘There must be an ultimate arbiter somewhere.’ True, there must. … The ultimate arbiter is the people.”

The Tennessee Supreme Court stated in Carden v. Bland, March 9, 1956: “Great stress is laid upon the need of maintaining the doctrine of ‘Separation of Church and State.’ … But it should not be tortured into a meaning that was never intended by the Founders of this Republic, with the result that the public school system of the several states is to be made a godless institution.”

Baron Montesquieu, the most quoted writer by the Framers of the Constitution, warned of the dangers of uncontrolled judicial power in his “Spirit of the Laws,” 1748: “Nor is there liberty if the power of judging is not separated from legislative power and from executive power. If it were joined to legislative power, the power over life and liberty of the citizens would be arbitrary, for the judge would be the legislator. If it were joined to executive power, the judge could have the force of an oppressor. All would be lost if the same … body of principal men … exercised these three powers.”

Regarding the danger of concentrated power, Colonial leader John Cotton stated: “For whatever transcendent power is given, will certainly be over-run those that give it. … It is necessary therefore, that all power that is on earth be limited.”

James Madison stated at the Constitutional Convention, 1787: “All men having power ought to be distrusted.”

John Adams wrote in his “Notes” from an oration at Braintree, Massachusetts, Spring 1772: “There is danger from all men. The only maxim of a free government ought to be to trust no man living with the power to endanger the public liberty.”

President George Washington stated in his farewell address, Sept. 17, 1796: “And of fatal tendency … to put, in the place of the delegated will of the Nation, the will of a party – often a small but artful and enterprising minority. … They are likely, in the course of time and things, to become potent engines, by which cunning, ambitious, and unprincipled men will be enabled to subvert the power of the people and to usurp for themselves the reins of government; destroying afterwards the very engines which have lifted them to unjust dominion.”

President Andrew Jackson, July 10, 1832, stated in his Bank Renewal Bill Veto: “It is easy to conceive that great evils to our country and its institutions might flow from such a concentration of power in the hands of a few men irresponsible to the people. Mere precedent is a dangerous source of authority, and should not be regarded as deciding questions of constitutional power.”

James Madison summed up the dilemma in Federalist Paper #51: “In framing a government which is to be administered by men over men, the great difficulty lies in this: you must first enable the government to control the governed; and in the next place oblige it to control itself.”

President Andrew Jackson stated in his seventh annual message, Dec. 7, 1835: “All history tells us that a free people should be watchful of delegated power, and should never acquiesce in a practice which will diminish their control over it.”

Lord Acton, April 5, 1887, wrote in a letter to Bishop Mandell Creighton: “All power tends to corrupt and absolute power corrupts absolutely.”

President Woodrow Wilson stated in 1912: “Concentration of power always precedes the destruction of human liberties.”

Boasting of concentrated power, King James I told Parliament in 1609: “Kings are not only God’s lieutenants upon earth and sit upon God’s throne, but even by God himself they are called gods. … Kings are compared to the head … of the body of man. … It sedition in subjects to dispute what a king may do in the height of his power. … The king is overlord of the whole land, so is he master over every person that inhabiteth the same, having power over the life and death of every one of them…so the power flows always from himself.”

France’s Louis XIV, the “Sun King,” reportedly stated: “I am the State” (“L’État, c’est moi”); and “It is legal because I wish it.”

President Franklin D. Roosevelt stated in 1939 of America’s founding: “Rulers … increase(d) their power over the common men. The seamen they sent to find gold found instead the way of escape for the common man from those rulers.”

President Franklin D. Roosevelt stated Feb. 10, 1940: “The Soviet Union … is run by a dictatorship as absolute as any other dictatorship in the world.”

Yale President Ezra Stiles stated in 1783: “All the forms of civil polity have been tried by mankind, except one: and that seems to have been reserved in Providence to be realized in America. … Most states of all ages … have been founded in rapacity, usurpation and injustice. … The Nimrods … (were) the first invading tyrants of the ancient ages. … The spirit of conquest had changed the first governments. … All succeeding ones have in general proved one continued series of injustice, which has reigned in all countries for almost 4,000 years.”

President Millard Fillmore, Dec. 6, 1852, discussed America’s freedoms: “They were planted in the free charters of self-government under which the English colonies grew up. … European nations have had no such training for self-government, and every effort to establish it by bloody revolutions has been, and must without that preparation continue to be, a failure.”

President Franklin Pierce stated in his inaugural address, March 4, 1853: “The dangers of a concentration of all power in the general government of a confederacy so vast as ours are too obvious to be disregarded. … Liberty rests upon a proper distribution of power between the state and federal authorities.”

President William Henry Harrison stated in his inaugural, March 4, 1841: “The tendency of power to increase itself, particularly when exercised by a single individual … would terminate in virtual monarchy.”

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President Harry S. Truman stated April 3, 1951: “Without a firm moral foundation, freedom degenerates quickly into selfishness and … anarchy. Then there will be freedom only for the rapacious and … more unscrupulous than the rank and file of the people.”

President James Monroe stated in his inaugural 1817: “When the people become ignorant and corrupt, when they degenerate … they are incapable of exercising the sovereignty. Usurpation is then an easy attainment, and an usurper soon found.”

President George Washington stated in his farewell address, 1796: “Usurpation … though … in one instance, may be the instrument of good, it is the customary weapon by which free governments are destroyed.”

Daniel Webster stated in 1852: “Are we of this generation so derelict, have we so little of the blood of our revolutionary fathers coursing through our veins, that we cannot preserve, what they achieved? The world will cry out ‘shame’ upon us, if we show ourselves unworthy, to be the descendants of those great and illustrious … men, who fought for their liberty, and secured it to their posterity, by the Constitution of the United States. …”

Daniel Webster concluded: “The Constitution has enemies, secret and professed. … Friends of the Constitution must rally and unite. … I hardly know … the manner of our political death. … We shall die no lingering death. … An earthquake would shake the foundations of the globe, pull down the pillars of heaven, and bury us at once in endless darkness. May I never live, to see that day! May I not survive to hear any apocalyptic angel, crying through the heavens, with such a voice as announced the fall of Babylon.”

**Jesus Loved Mary**

When the Beatles were at the very peak of their popularity, John Lennon made a very controversial statement in an interview with the Evening Standard, a British publication. Picked up by the American press, it caused a lot of people to get very angry at this band from England. Lennon said, “Christianity will go. It will vanish and shrink. I needn’t argue with that; I’m right and I will be proved right. We’re more popular than Jesus now: I don’t know which will go first—rock ‘n’ roll or Christianity.”

Who’s more popular now? The Beatles have long since broken up, but Jesus is more popular than ever. When a 2013 Time magazine article listed the 100 most significant figures in world history, Jesus was in the No. 1 spot.

Jesus was popular in the first century as well, especially after he raised Lazarus from the dead. The name of Jesus was on everyone’s lips. Wherever he went, crowds of people thronged him.

Matthew 12 says that large crowds gathered to him, so he got into a boat and sat down because the crowd was standing on the beach. In effect, he needed a floating pulpit to get a little distance from the crowd. We read in Luke 12 that so many thousands of people gathered to hear Jesus that they were stepping on each other.

Jesus was very popular. But the same people who were singing his praises later shouted for his crucifixion. That is because they never really understood his real mission.

Even his own hand-picked disciples didn’t fully get it until he died and rose from the dead. But there was one exception. I would like to say it was Peter, James and John, the three Christ would take with him on certain occasions. But it wasn’t. Nor was it any other of the disciples that Jesus handpicked. In fact, it wasn’t a man at all. It was a woman with greater spiritual insight than those who effectively spent every waking hour of their lives with Jesus for some three extended years.

Who was the woman that seemed to get what all the guys missed? Her name was Mary, and she was the sister of Martha and Lazarus. It’s worth noting that every time we read of her, she is at the feet of Jesus. Maybe that’s why she had such great insight.

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On one occasion when Jesus showed up at her house with the disciples, Martha was getting a little frustrated because she needed some help in the kitchen. She was frantically making the meal while Mary was sitting at the feet of Jesus. Martha came out and demanded that her sister come help her. But Jesus said to Martha, “You are worried and upset about many things, but few things are needed – or indeed only one. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her” (Luke 10:41–42 NIV). Jesus was saying. “Martha, listen. I appreciate the awesome food. But actually Mary is right in being here. She has chosen the one thing that really matters, which actually is better.”

Mary seemed to grasp an essential truth that was largely missed by the others. It was that Jesus had come to die. She had a unique understanding as to who he was and why he came. And because of this, she went on to bring the most incredible, valuable gift she could. Jesus was so moved by her sacrificial act that he commended her and said it would be a memorial that never would be forgotten.

So what did Mary do that so impressed Jesus? Did she deliver an amazing sermon? No. Did she pray an incredible prayer of faith? Actually, no. What she did was not very practical at all, really. You could even say it was somewhat impractical. But it was very heartfelt.

We read about it in John’s gospel: “Six days before the Passover, Jesus came to Bethany, where Lazarus lived, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. … Then Mary took about a pint of pure nard, an expensive perfume; she poured it on Jesus’ feet and wiped his feet with her hair” (John 12: 1, 3 NIV).

There’s a good possibility that this bottle of perfume was a family heirloom. It was valued at $25,000–$30,000. Now, it would make sense if she had put a few drops on his feet. A little goes a long way. But Mary took the whole bottle and poured it on his feet. It was an act of complete devotion and adoration.

Judas Iscariot, a man who knew the price of everything and the value of nothing, instantly calculated how much of a waste it was. But it wasn’t about perfume at all; it was about sacrifice. Mary brought the most valuable possession she owned and gave it to Jesus.

We are living in a time and nation in which a lot of monuments are being torn down. But this is one monument that never will be torn down. It’s memorialized in time by Jesus himself. Jesus said that wherever the gospel is preached, the story of what this woman did would be told. This was a big deal to Jesus, and therefore it should be a big deal to us.

Maybe one of the reasons we don’t see the work of God on quite the same scale as the early church saw it is because these first-century believers had a sense of abandon about them. God would tell Philip go to the desert and wait for further direction, and he would do it. God would tell Peter to take a disabled man by the hand and pull him to his feet, and Peter would go for it. They took risks. They bet the farm on stuff. And God blessed them as a result. They simply were in love with Jesus.

I would rather try and fail in my attempt to bring glory to God than to never try anything at all – and even worse, to criticize others who try.

In Mark’s account of the same story, Jesus said, “She did what she could. She poured perfume on my body beforehand to prepare for my burial” (Mark 14:8 NIV). Mary did what she could. And the more we know of what Jesus did for us, the more we will want to do for him.

Nothing is ever wasted when it is done with the right motive for the glory of God. You can’t do everything. But we all can do something. We all need to do what we can, when we can do it