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| **Jihad Report** **Apr 11, 2020 -** **Apr 17, 2020** | |
| Attacks | **27** |
| Killed | **84** |
| Injured | **44** |
| Suicide Blasts | **1** |
| Countries | **12** |

**The China Plate**

We often ascribe a basic level of humanity to even the cruelest leaders, but People’s Republic of China leader Xi Jinping’s actions have forced us to rethink this assumption. Although the emergence of the novel coronavirus now known as SARS-CoV-2 was [probably not due to China’s actions](https://thebulletin.org/2020/03/experts-know-the-new-coronavirus-is-not-a-bioweapon-they-disagree-on-whether-it-could-have-leaked-from-a-research-lab/?utm_source=Newsletter&utm_medium=Email&utm_campaign=ThursdayNewsletter03262020&utm_content=DisruptiveTechnology_CoronavirusLab_03232020&fbclid=IwAR2HC3AFTsR2XNVP7eMTkfDrZOQkDZr-DtdD6lfuj9SXJpWGu2vfv1VlYTk), the emphasis that its authoritarian system places on [hiding bad news](https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/29/world/asia/coronavirus-china.html) likely gave the disease a sizable head start [infecting the world](https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/10/us/coronavirus-testing-delays.html). But most ominously, China’s obsession with image and Machtpolitik raises serious questions about its lack of moral limits.

At some point the Chinese Communist Party learned of the epidemic and made a decision to hide its existence, hoping it went away. Exposés in Hong Kong’s [South China Morning Post](https://www.scmp.com/news/china/society/article/3076323/third-coronavirus-cases-may-be-silent-carriers-classified?fbclid=IwAR2GQabwKeY26bWsSrL9d7joIlFaiEc2uR7Q0eUk6nqvsIg1acSwU_M_lOo) and the Chinese mainland’s [Caixin](https://www.straitstimes.com/asia/east-asia/how-early-signs-of-the-coronavirus-were-spotted-spread-and-throttled-in-china) show that the information that did flow out of China early in the crisis did so only because of the courage of individual Chinese people in the face of government repression. People in the Wuhan epicenter, however, began to get wise — and scared ([here](https://www.nytimes.com/2020/01/06/world/asia/china-SARS-pneumonialike.html) and [here](https://tw.appledaily.com/international/20200106/2ZXVNMPIDGZSQ2BC6ZQ5GCFFTQ/)) — by the end of December 2019, forcing their government to say something. The authorities gave the impression of a [nontransmissible disease already under containment](https://www.nytimes.com/2020/01/08/health/china-pneumonia-outbreak-virus.html). We know now this was entirely false, likely designed more to ease civil unrest than protect the people.

The mayor of Wuhan even suggested that the central government [prevented him from revealing details](http://finance.eastmoney.com/a/202001271368110820.html) about the epidemic until January 20. Considering the first public announcements came out of Wuhan on January 1, we can assume that Xi had a sense of the danger prior to that.

Clearly, downplaying the disease wasn’t working and it was time for the Party to get serious. But how serious? Would it provide full cooperation to the international community? Would being seen as the source of this virus hurt its international image? Beyond these, there was a darker dimension: the more Beijing cooperated, the less the disease stood to affect other countries. This includes countries China sees as a threat to its existence, like the United States. Why should China suffer the effects of a pandemic while others stayed safe — and increased their strength relative to China — based on China’s own costly experience?

Such a question is of course inimical to human decency. And yet we must consider that Xi Jinping has produced the greatest [program of ethnic cleansing](https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/chinas-repression-uighurs-xinjiang) in the world today. He has [curtailed freedoms in China](https://www.chinafile.com/document-9-chinafile-translation) severely and is the father of the [panopticon state](https://www.reuters.com/article/us-china-health-surveillance/coronavirus-brings-chinas-surveillance-state-out-of-the-shadows-idUSKBN2011HO). His incessant [military buildup](https://dod.defense.gov/Portals/1/Documents/pubs/2017_China_Military_Power_Report.PDF) threatens neighbors while using [economic](https://thediplomat.com/2019/03/chinas-debt-diplomacy-is-a-misnomer-call-it-crony-diplomacy/) and other [subversive](https://www.wilsoncenter.org/article/magic-weapons-chinas-political-influence-activities-under-xi-jinping) means to [erode the sovereignty](https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/31/world/asia/Indonesia-south-china-sea-fishing.html) of countries around the world. We should not assume it was beyond his imagining to withhold a degree of support from the international community to ensure that China would not suffer alone.

Strong evidence supports this idea. Hearing the World Health Organization (WHO) [repeat and praise](https://www.cfr.org/blog/who-and-china-dereliction-duty) the Party line while giving short shrift to health advice [until quite recently](https://www.who.int/dg/speeches/detail/who-director-general-s-opening-remarks-at-the-media-briefing-on-covid-19---25-march-2020) has alarmed many. Seeing Beijing sell [defective wares](https://www.latimes.com/world-nation/story/2020-04-10/china-beijing-supply-world-coronavirus-fight-quality-control) and claim it as [humanitarian aid](https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/18/world/asia/coronavirus-china-aid.html) has angered many more. [Spreading disinformation](https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/13/world/asia/coronavirus-china-conspiracy-theory.html) during the crisis and hinting at using life-saving goods [for leverage](https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/11/business/economy/coronavirus-china-trump-drugs.html) (original [here](http://www.xinhuanet.com/2020-03/04/c_1125660473.htm)) — while denying even the faintest hint of wrongdoing — I suspect have ruined China’s reputation for some time to come. In short, China’s good offices have been reserved almost entirely for burnishing its image at the world’s expense, while calling it “[the greatest kindness and good deeds](http://en.people.cn/n3/2020/0402/c90000-9675448.html).”

Although this does not prove whether or when Mr. Xi made a deliberate decision to withhold information in order to imperil others. However, there is evidence that he knew about the disease last year. There is evidence of high-level battle planning ever since he declared himself president for life.

What do I mean by this?

What is the first thing a military commander does? He clearly defines the problem. This is vital to the entire military campaign. What was the problem for the Communist Chinese leadership? First and foremost, you must understand who the regime works for. Oh, believe me, they do not work for themselves. They are the military muscle for the Global Syndicate. That is the ultimate commander.

So, you may think that the Chinese population is the first concern of the Chinese leadership. No. It is not. They are merely flesh to fill factories and uniforms. Now, let’s state the problem. In mid-2019, the main problem for the Global Syndicate was the widespread rebellion against their effort to economically take over the world. France, Iran, Africa, Venezuela, and especially Hong Kong were fully involved in a massive rebellion by the public. The Syndicate was losing the war in the press.

The global media empire, run by basically six men, did everything in their power to stop the rebellion. They refused to film it. They deleted videos off social media. They ran green new deal propaganda, one world currency, and global leadership themes on all channels in all languages. The enforcement soldiers for the Syndicate arrested protesters, gassed them, beat them, and even shot them, but nothing could stop them. The carefully groomed actors holding elected office were nothing compared to the masses of bureaucrats who wrote laws, assessed taxes, fines, fees, and enforcement action against the people. And the people had figured it out, and wanted it to change, one way or the other.

The other problem took them by surprise. In fact, it took everyone by surprise. In 2016, Donald Trump was a TV joke of a candidate. He had nearly a zero chance of winning against Hillary Clinton. Ever since the Reagan presidency, the Global Syndicate worked their plan. The Clintons muscled their way into the CIA’s drug for weapons operation. Addicts in America finance quiet wars, yes, but the main objective was for the Clintons to compromise George Bush and the whole of Congress with billions in drug profits. It worked. In 1992, they bought the super-delegates in the DNC and divided the Republican party in two by running Ross Perot.

Bill Clinton removed Glass-Steagall and allowed the global banks to extract all the liquidity from Americans. Syndicate think tanks crafted the Patriot Act and attacked and killed more than 3 thousand innocent people in the greatest military false flag in history. They blamed a mythical enemy called terror and took our rights away. Obama and Hillary robbed more than $12 trillion from the working American, while rewarding the donor class of the Global Syndicate. They were made powerful and wealthy in one of the boldest frauds ever perpetrated.

The setup was nearly complete. All it required was for Hillary Clinton to win the 2016 election. The objective was to destroy America, and allow the Global Syndicate to resume control over the world. They did not know that Trump would win. They did not see us coming. Why? Because the darkness cannot comprehend the light.

The commanders tried everything to remove him from office and failed. We can only guess how many times they tried to kill him and members of his family. They tried blackmail, subterfuge, using the intelligence community to spy and plant evidence, and they even tried impeachment.

Let us return to the objectives of the Global Syndicate’s battle plan.

1. They needed to end the rebellion against their return to global control.
2. They needed to crush the Trump economy.

**Thousands of businesses have been either crippled or destroyed, and**[**tens of millions of jobs**](http://theeconomiccollapseblog.com/archives/this-is-the-worst-employment-collapse-in-u-s-history-by-a-very-wide-margin)**have been lost in the United States alone.**

Needless to say, business owners and workers all over the nation are sick and tired of not being able to make a living, and President Trump added fuel to their frustration when he called for several states to be “liberated” [on Friday](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-8230031/Trump-tells-Dem-governors-LIBERATE-Michigan-Virginia-Minnesota.html)…

*I told you since April 2nd that the soft rebellion had begun. I told you that people would openly defy the lockdown orders, slowly at first and then in masses walking away from Operation Corona-Scare.*

*President Trump became the star of the ‘lockdown rebellion’ on Friday by tweeting ‘LIBERATE Minnesota’ and then adding Michigan and Virginia to the list of states that should be freed.*

*The tweets came one day after the president’s coronavirus taskforce rolled out guidelines that would give governors broad power to decide when states’ economies would open back up amid the coronavirus pandemic.*

And instead of waiting for permission, some business owners across the country have decided [that they are going to reopen anyway](https://www.cnn.com/2020/04/17/us/coronavirus-ohio-racetrack-trnd/index.html)…

*Summit Motorsports Park owner Bill Bader Jr. vowed to start holding events with or without government permission,*[*in a Facebook live post earlier this week*](https://www.facebook.com/SummitMotorsportsPark/videos/605405393657117/)*.*

*“I’m not asking, I’m opening,” he said in the video and said that he thought that business closures were an overreaction. “If in Huron County, for example, we are able to save every life and limit and ultimately mitigate any outbreaks of Covid-19, but in the process of that we all starve to death, what have we accomplished.”*

Is there any doubt among any of you that this [biological attack accomplished both of these objects in less than one month without firing a single shot?](https://www.icrc.org/en/document/1972-convention-prohibition-bacteriological-weapons-and-their-destruction-factsheet) Even if it doesn’t fully succeed, Xi should be brought to account for his other [crimes against humanity](https://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/crimes-against-humanity.shtml). Of course, he never will be. There is a strong possibility that he is just the face of the Syndicate. The mind of the Global Syndicate is a very old and very evil force hiding in the blackness below. The greed and lust of men and women like Hillary, Nancy, Brennan, Gates, and others is the tool used by this evil to capture the souls of mankind.

The only thing standing in their way is the armed American.

**Bioweapon**

Professor Luc Montagnier, a central member of the team that identified HIV during the early days of the AIDS epidemic, is now bucking the media consensus on the novel coronavirus by claiming the pathogen was at least partially edited in a laboratory.

Montagnier revealed his reasoning on a French medical podcast Thursday, according to the French newspaper Le Parisien.

According to research performed by Montagnier, a Nobel Prize winner, and his mathematician partner Jean-Claude Perez, SARS-CoV-2 contains sequences of the human immunodeficiency virus -- HIV.

The medical legend took his claims a step further and asserted his confidence that the virus was pieced together in a Wuhan, China, biolab.

Montagnier said researchers from India published their findings after stumbling over the HIV link, but were forced to retract after "enormous pressure," according to a translated version of the Le Parisien story.

Anne Goffard, a professor at France's Faculty of Pharmacy in Lille, disputes the link exists at all.

"The study of Indian biomathematicians was quickly invalidated by other work which, by looking at the computer study of the genome, proved that there was no HIV sequence," Goffard told the paper.

While Goffard maintains the Indian researchers withdrew their publication due to errors and pressure from the scientific community, Montagnier's team is not convinced.

"This is the work of a watchmaker's precision," mathematician Perez told Le Parisien. "The presence of pieces of HIV cannot be natural."

American media has been swift to condemn anyone seen as even remotely linking the novel coronavirus to biological engineering.

Republican Sen. Tom Cotton of Arkansas found himself at the center of negative media attention and faulty fact checks after simply suggesting the Wuhan Institute of Virology needed a thorough investigation.

China claimed—for almost two months—that coronavirus had originated in a Wuhan seafood market. That is not the case. @TheLancet published a study demonstrating that of the original 40 cases, 14 of them had no contact with the seafood market, including Patient Zero.

While the overwhelming scientific consensus points to COVID-19 being natural in origin instead of man-made, that expert agreement in no way absolves the Wuhan biolab. It's already been proven that the lab worked with coronaviruses likely taken from the most exotic and remote bat populations in China.

Although the specific details are unknown thanks to China's secrecy, it's assumed that scientists were working to compete against the United States in the field of virology. To do so, the researchers would likely isolate and study some of the nastiest pathogens available to them. One unwashed hand or sloppy decontamination procedure is all it would take for a virus like SARS-CoV-2 to escape.

If Nobel Prize winner Montagnier is wrong about the virus being a human creation, it doesn't mean there's nothing to worry about. Natural selection is insidious in its efficiency and has given humanity the Black Death, the Spanish Flu and now, possibly, the novel coronavirus.

While China may not have been editing the biological code of viruses in the Wuhan lab, the country's shocking lies have already cost the world dearly.

**Health Surveillance Legislation**

An organization that fights for health-care privacy warns that the emergency-relief bill in response to the coronavirus pandemic establishes a nationwide system of surveillance of health care. Who gets what medical care, when and for what reason could be under the eye of the government.

Twila Brase, the president of [Citizens' Council for Health Freedom](https://www.cchfreedom.org/cchf.php/1616), said Congress just approved $500 million for the creation of a nationwide health-surveillance system.

"While it is not clear exactly how this will look, this system is not a last-minute decision based on the current emergency," she said. "This system has long been supported by the data-hungry health care industry, data corporations and state, local and federal government agencies. As the Health Information Management Systems Society (HIMSS) just announced on their website."

The organization says the CARES Act includes $500 million "that solidifies congressional and Trump administration support for Data: Elemental to Health, a multi-year campaign to modernize the public health infrastructure in the United States."

"HIMSS and our partners have been advocating for greater funding for more than [a] year," she said. "Working together, HIMSS along with the APHL, CSTE, NAPHSIS, NACCHO, and ASTHO have focused on bringing the public health infrastructure, surveillance system and workforce into the 21st Century."

Brase said that for far too long, "these industry groups and government organizations have been working together to create a nationwide system of health surveillance."

"Their combined efforts gave us the permissive HIPAA data-sharing rule in 2000 and the electronic health record mandate in 2009, forcing every doctor to digitize their patient’s data into centralized systems and not allowing patients to control how it’s used or shared."

She that with Google mining medical records, and Congress approving surveillance, "it’s time for Americans to insist that their medical privacy rights be restored."

"Health surveillance is unethical, unconstitutional and un-American. No American patient should face the choice between protecting their privacy and securing access to the care they need. And no doctor or nurse should be required to feed their patient’s private information into the government’s new surveillance system."

In emergencies such as the coronavirus, she said, it is "easy to expand government powers long-term."

"They make it easy to enact controversial proposals that would not pass in ordinary times. But once implemented, these surveillance and analytic technologies won’t be easy to unplug."

**WHO and the UN**

It is magnificent to see President Trump call for a complete and total shutdown of U.S. funding of the World Health Organization until we can figure out what the hell is going on. Now he must do the same for the whole United Nations behemoth.

The "Chinese Health Organization," as Japanese Deputy Prime Minister Taro Aso calls WHO, has a long track record of being political and corruptible.

In 2017, WHO's director general, Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, made murderous Zimbabwean dictator Robert Mugabe a goodwill ambassador before rescinding the appointment under backlash.

It's no surprise, then, that Tedros reacted with fearmongering to Trump's Tuesday announcement that he would halt funding of the United Nations agency.

"If you don't want many more body bags, then you refrain from politicizing it," Tedros said.

The arrogance is almost too much to stomach.

The American taxpayer is responsible for 22% of the WHO 2020-21 fiscal year [budget,](https://www.who.int/about/finances-accountability/funding/2020-21_AC_Summary.pdf?ua=1) an astounding $236.9 million. For comparison, China volunteered about half of that, just $129 million. According to [Forbes,](https://www.forbes.com/sites/adamandrzejewski/2020/04/14/35-billion-has-flowed-from-us-taxpayers-to-the-world-health-organization-since-2010/#5b9b27877241) $3.5 billion in U.S. taxes have gone to the WHO in the last decade alone. The U.S. also funds about 22% of the U.N.'s budget.

Before Trump's defunding decision, the whole world witnessed undeniable evidence of the politicization of the World Health Organization. The shocking moment took place when WHO's COVID-19 response leader, Canadian epidemiologist Bruce Aylward, appeared to disconnect his Skype connection with Hong Kong reporter Yvonne Tong.

In the viral [news clip,](https://youtu.be/UlCYFh8U2xM) Tong persists in asking whether WHO might consider granting Taiwan membership status. It doesn't take a body-language expert to notice Aylward's discomfort at the question, one the Chinese prefer to go unaddressed.

Aylward goes silent for nearly 10 seconds before Tong asks, "Hello?"

"I'm sorry, I can't hear you. I couldn't hear your question, Yvonne," Aylward stutters before interrupting Tong to say, "No, that's OK, let's move to another one then."

Trump is not alone in his criticism of the WHO; he's just the only one willing to actually do something about it. In 2017, the London School of Economics and Political Science [noted](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5394645/) many "structural concerns that need to be addressed if the WHO is to continue in the role the global health community expects it to play."

Now, all patriots should ask Trump not to treat the U.N. with kid gloves any longer. It is, after all, the creator of the WHO and is abdicating its authority in properly regulating it.

Some Trump supporters may not want too much more to be asked of the president at this time of economic calamity and, oh yeah, a presidential election.

However, Trump only needs to finish what his administration started its first week in power. In January 2017, two executive orders were drafted for "at least a 40 percent overall" cut in U.N. funding, the New York Times [reported.](https://www.nytimes.com/2017/01/28/world/americas/trump-un-funding-order.html?_r=0) They were never finalized or signed.

In April 2017, Trump spoke at a luncheon of the U.N. Security Council ambassadors.

"I have long felt the United Nations is an underperformer but has tremendous potential. There are those people that think it's an underperformer and will never perform," he said.

If any potential remains, it is declining as long as the status quo is secured. The anxiety surrounding the U.N. and other international bodies prior to Trump's election and inauguration has subsided.

Remember that the U.S. pays 22% of the U.N.'s budget. But that's just its regular budget, not including other agencies the US supports, including the International Atomic Energy Agency and the Food and Agriculture Organization.

The IAEA [receives](https://fas.org/sgp/crs/nuke/R44384.pdf) $200 million annually from the U.S., about 25 percent of its budget. China, the next largest provider, gives less than half that.

The FAO takes in some $290 million yearly from the United States, over 29% of its annual budget. It produces silly hashtag activism articles like this: ["6 ways indigenous peoples are helping the world achieve #Zero Hunger."](http://www.fao.org/zhc/detail-events/en/c/1028010/)

Additionally, the U.S. covers some 30% of the U.N.'s "peacekeeping" missions. How'd that work out in Rwanda, Sri Lanka and Sudan?

In his unprecedented 2016 campaign, Trump keenly observed exactly what Americans have long known, that the United Nations is a boondoggle. It forces this country into a position diametrically opposed to putting America first.

Necessary action has yet to be taken to secure America's independence from these globalist bureaucracies. What better time than now, amid a crisis of foreign origin, for Trump to knock his naysayers back on their heels?

**Anonymous**

**By Paul Sperry**  
Real Clear Investigations

Ever since a “senior official in the Trump administration” penned an anonymous 2018 New York Times column attacking President Trump as unfit for office, Washington has been engrossed in a high-stakes whodunit. After an exhaustive investigation, the White House believes it’s cracked the case, identifying Trump's turncoat as his former deputy national security adviser, Victoria Coates, according to people familiar with the internal probe.

Rather than fire Coates, the White House has quietly transferred her to the Department of Energy, where she awaits special assignment in Saudi Arabia -- far from the president.

Trump effectively demoted Coates just four months after promoting her last fall to the No. 2 spot on his National Security Council. The move was made amid a whisper campaign, started in January, that identified Coates as “Anonymous,” the person who wrote the Times Op-Ed and a subsequent book, “A Warning,” claiming to be part of a cabal of “fellow Republicans" resisting Trump and his policies from inside the administration.

The Washington press corps has for the most part been uninterested in learning the author’s identity. But the sources said the identification of Coates was based on circumstantial evidence generated from a months-long White House investigation led by sleuths within the NSC. Top White House adviser Peter Navarro, who works with the NSC on trade and other issues, also was heavily involved in the probe of Coates.

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She declined to discuss the matter on the record with RealClearInvestigations and has retained an attorney, friends say, although several colleagues have rushed to her defense, insisting the White House has the wrong person. But a source involved in the NSC probe who asked not to be identified said there was little doubt. “It’s her,” the source said of Coates. “That’s why she was shown the door.”

The multiple sources interviewed by RealClearInvestigations either participated in the investigation of Coates or have direct knowledge of it. They spoke only on condition of anonymity to discuss a sensitive matter. They say their evidence exposing Coates includes the following:

* Computer textual analyses revealing strikingly similar language, turns of phrase and historical references by both Coates and Anonymous.
* Firsthand accounts by Anonymous of events witnessed only by Coates and a small number of others, the latter of whom were ruled out as suspects.
* Hawkish foreign policy views held by ”Anonymous,” many of which have been rejected by Trump.
* The fact that Coates and Anonymous share a high-profile Washington literary agent with an author roster of disaffected ex-Trump officials.
* Her long history of writing anonymously, and
* Personal details revealed by Anonymous that are consistent with Coates’ biography.

For political reasons, the White House decided against officially unmasking Coates and firing her, at least not before the Nov. 3 election, the sources said. Publicly outing her would merely create an unwelcome distraction ahead of the election. Coates is a well-connected conservative, who has a staunch ally in Republican Sen. Ted Cruz of Texas. White House political operatives want to avoid the divisions that marked the 2016 race, and are focused on unifying the party ahead of this summer's GOP presidential convention.

Illustrating the sensitivity of the internecine GOP affair is the insistence of some ex-Trump White House officials that Coates is wrongly accused. “The suggestion that Victoria is ‘Anonymous’ is preposterous,” said K.T. McFarland, Trump’s first deputy national security adviser, who helped recruit Coates to the NSC and then supervised her for much of 2017. She said Coates was a committed member of the Trump team.

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McFarland added that Coates denied being the author not only to her, but also to White House security officials, who include FBI agents.

“Victoria herself has denied being ‘Anonymous' during her routine security clearance review,” she told RCI. “Anyone familiar with the security clearance process knows that it would have been a criminal offense, punishable by jail time, for her to lie about this.”

Although “A Warning” opens with a preemptive denial that it discloses any classified information, the Justice Department has been looking into a potential violation by the author of a federal regulation requiring officials with access to classified information to get prior approval before publishing books about their roles in the government.

The probe has exposed a less prominent faction secretly undermining Trump inside the White House, sources say: not just Democratic holdovers from the Obama White House, but disloyal “Never-Trump” Republicans, who, as Anonymous complained in the book, don’t believe the president can be trusted to uphold "conservative principles.” The author admitted conspiring with several other “like-minded” officials to obstruct Trump and his policies and directives from the inside.

White House investigators say they are looking into at least four other White House staffers whom they suspect were part of the “resistance" with Coates. The behind-the-scenes story of how the White House fixed on Coates as the anti-Trump mole is told here for the first time.

**The Hunt for ‘Anonymous’**

In September 2018, the New York Times agreed to hide the identity of a senior administration official bashing Trump in an opinion piece headlined “I Am Part of the Resistance Inside the Trump Administration.” The author claimed to be one of several “like-minded” officials “thwarting" the president’s agenda and even plotting to try to remove him from office.

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Incensed, Trump declared the screed an act of “treason” and ordered an investigation to unmask the “gutless” official. The White House drew up a short list of suspects, but the search soon fizzled out for lack of leads. The mystery went unsolved for more than a year, as the White House continued to spring leaks compromising the president, mostly from within the NSC, including some that led to his impeachment.

The major break came in November 2019, when the same anonymous official doubled down on anti-Trump grievances with the release of “A Warning.” The best-selling expose leaked details of the president’s private conversations and trashed him as "unjust” and a "nasty man,” as well as a “misogynist” and "grifter in chief.”

“He should be fired,” wrote the disgruntled insider in the book’s final chapter. “The Trump administration is an unmitigated catastrophe.”

The book dared the president to try to unmask the nameless author, boasting the text had been “carefully written to prevent any inadvertent disclosure.” But to White House sleuths, the 260-page book offered a wealth of clues, and the author’s challenge only intensified the desire to track down and unmask the rogue aide.

At first, the 51-year-old Coates was not an obvious suspect because she was not known to clash with the president and seemed to go along with his policies, even though she was a longtime and loyal operative of Cruz, once a leading critic of Trump. Over the course of the months-long investigation, more than 30 other suspects were considered and abandoned before the focus settled on Coates. Unlike other widely rumored suspects who eventually were ruled out -- including former NSC official Fiona Hill and former Pentagon speechwriter Guy Snodgrass -- Coates checked virtually all the boxes.

After a careful deconstruction of details in the book, the White House investigators found that Coates’s profile, as well as her persona as a highly opinionated moralist, matched up with that of the clandestine Trump official.

Anonymous is a woman, the investigators deduced, noting the author’s disapproving remarks alleging a Trump habit of addressing accomplished female professionals as “sweetie” and “honey.” The official’s area of responsibility was, like Coates’, national security and foreign policy -- with expertise on Syria, Iraq, Iran, Israel and other Mideast hot spots. The book’s author claims to have been present, as Coates was, at many White House meetings, including with the president. The author shows an insider's understanding of the workings of the NSC and, most telling, started work during Trump’s presidential transition, as Coates did.

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“That gave her away,” another source involved in the investigation said. “She was in those early meetings and briefings. That put her high on the suspect list.”  
By January, Coates was the prime suspect.

**Authorship Recognition Tools**

The sources said that to crack the identity of the rogue Trump official, investigators ran previously published works authored by Coates through forensic author identification programs, and they matched the prose style of Anonymous.

Investigators were able to profile the author of the op-ed and book by sentence structure, grammar, punctuation and syntax. They then compared that writing profile to Coates'. The stylistic traits synced up, sources said.

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Researchers have found that authorship recognition tools can identify an author with a high level of accuracy when there are several thousand words of available content to analyze, as was the case with the sample size the White House analyzed. Coates’ own body of written work spans two decades and includes several books and dozens of columns, as well as policy papers, speeches and a doctoral thesis.

In short, the authors share the same punchy but at times breezy writing style, with pithy sentences punctuating a fluid narrative.

What’s more, the same manners of expression and phrases, such as “like-minded” and “clear-eyed,” kept turning up in the writings of both Coates and the secret Trump betrayer. The two also shared distinct vocabulary -- such as the uncommon “sextant” -- another linguistic fingerprint that pointed to the same authorship.

Deepening suspicions, both Anonymous and Coates boast of being “students of history,” and tend to cite the same historical periods. With a Ph.D.in art history, Coates has written extensively about the rise and fall of Athens. She did so in her book “David’s Sling: A History of Democracy in Ten Works of Art,” and a 2012 column for the conservative blog RedState.com about how the U.S. has “claimed classical Athens as an ideological ancestor."

Anonymous spends no fewer than five pages of the book lecturing readers about the fall of Athens, calling it a “cautionary tale of how self-government could go wrong” and descend into mob rule, even in America. “Like Athens, we also have a Cleon in our midst, a foul-mouthed populist politician who uses rhetoric as a loaded gun,” the author writes, comparing Trump to the boorish Athenian representative.

Anonymous and Coates are obsessed with the same political figure from ancient Rome: Cicero. They also share an affection for Alexis de Tocqueville. As in “David’s Sling,” the anonymous author invokes the French historian, writing that Americans have a duty as citizens to get involved to preserve democracy. They can start, Anonymous says, “by firing Donald Trump” this November.

Other figures whom both write or talk about admiringly: British-Austrian free market economist F.A. Hayek, the late British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, former President Ronald Reagan, and Sen. Mitt Romney of Utah. In 2012, FEC records reveal, Coates personally donated at least $1,500 to Romney’s campaign for president. “Those who know Mitt believed he would have been a capable leader,” Anonymous wrote on page 114.

**‘First Principles’**

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Coates previously wrote speeches for Cruz about the importance of reestablishing the “first principles” advanced by America’s founders. Anonymous also cares deeply about these “first principles.” In the Times piece, the author complained, “Anyone who works with [Trump] knows he is not moored to any discernible first principles that guide his decision making.” Anonymous hits that concept in the book, warning against straying from “first principles” while citing the “Founding Fathers."

In addition, whoever wrote “A Warning” evidently worked with Trump’s son-in-law Jared Kushner in the White House. Kushner is the president’s point man on the Middle East. Coates was promoted in 2017 to work directly with Kushner on Israel and has met with him to help hammer out a Middle East peace plan.

Ideologically, Coates and Anonymous are cut from the same cloth. Both are committed to stopping Iran from developing nuclear weapons in order to protect Israel. Both champion free trade and oppose Trump’s “America First” brand of “protectionism” and “isolationism,” as Coates made plain during the Cruz campaign.

Like Coates, Anonymous supported the Iraq War and still defends George W. Bush and his administration for acting on what proved to be flawed intelligence on weapons of mass destruction. The 2003 invasion was justified because, Anonymous writes, it was “at least based on real information collected at the time, backed by intelligence community analysts, and accepted by bipartisan majorities in Congress.”

A protégé of Bush administration Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, Coates embedded with the U.S. military to cover the Iraq War for RedState.com, a blog run by Erick Erickson, an early critic of Trump but who has since modulated his opposition. She filed positive reports from Baghdad, while knocking down criticism that the war was a debacle.

NSC investigators put stock in the fact that Coates has a history of concealing her identity in her writings. For years she blogged anonymously for RedState.com. The site eventually revealed that Coates was the blogger writing under the pseudonym “Academic Elephant.” In February 2018, several months before the anonymous Times opinion piece appeared, a Reddit user posted an unusual question using the same “Academic Elephant” pseudonym Coates employed. “Could I be sued by the company I work for if I write an anonymous opinion piece for the local newspaper, if everything I say is true?” the poster asked, adding that “I’m reasonably certain that I’ll have support from my coworkers." Anonymous expressed a similar concern in the opening pages of “A Warning,” noting that Trump has a habit of suing critics “to intimidate and silence them.” Fear of such a lawsuit is one of the reasons offered by the author for choosing to remain anonymous.

Anonymous also used Reddit to promote the book, hosting a Q&A on Nov. 26, 2019.

Further, both share an affinity for Philadelphia. In more than one passage in her book, Anonymous makes a point to remind readers that Philadelphia was the birthplace of American liberty. When she’s not in Washington, Coates lives with her family in a renovated Victorian mansion in a tony neighborhood of Philadelphia called Chestnut Hill. In her blog bio, moreover, she proudly described herself as a “Philadelphian.” Her family has deep roots in the area dating back to 1709. Coates is descended from Andrew Curtin, Pennsylvania’s governor during the Civil War.

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There’s another Pennsylvania connection: On page 230, Anonymous quotes from a lesser-known Founding Father -- John Dickinson -- to further support her preoccupation with following “first principles.” Dickinson is well-known within Coates’ home state as the author of “Letters From a Farmer in Pennsylvania."

Anonymous quotes another figure who’s not exactly a household name: American historian Bernard Bailyn. But Coates would know him from her days earning her masters in art history from Williams College – Bailyn’s alma mater. His writings are required reading there for early American history courses.

Anonymous and Coates also share a passion for Thomas Paine, whose pamphlet “Common Sense” was required reading at their prep school. Anonymous waxed nostalgically about a war veteran teaching her about Paine. Coates has counted among her “mentors” a war veteran who taught history at her Pennsylvania boarding school.

Another clue, sources said, was the fact that Coates shares with Anonymous the same book agent — the Washington-based Javelin Literary Agency. One of Javelin's founding partners, Keith Urbahn, has been a close friend of hers since 2006, when Rumsfeld asked them to conduct research for his 2011 memoir. Emails previously obtained under the Freedom of Information Act in an unrelated case show Coates and Urbahn worked side-by-side on the book project for several years, reporting to an office on M Street in downtown D.C. that Rumsfeld opened under the name, DHR Holdings LLC.

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In 2016, Urbahn helped Coates secure a three-book deal with Encounter Books focusing on political culture. Coates knocked out the first manuscript, “David’s Sling,” while still working on the Cruz campaign that year. The second book, tentatively titled “Seeing the Light: A History of Christianity in Twelve Works of Art,” was due for release last year, but was delayed for undisclosed reasons. Industry sources confirmed that Coates is late delivering the manuscript. Investigators believe she was tied up writing “A Warning,” published in November. Urbahn happened to help broker that book deal, too.

But Javelin denied in a statement that Coates is the author in question, brushing aside the fact it counts Coates as a client as just a “bizarre” coincidence.

“To be very clear, so there is no chance of any misunderstanding: Dr. Coates is not Anonymous,” Javelin said. “She did not write it, edit it, see it in advance, know anything about it, or as far [as] we know ever read it."

That’s an utterly unambiguous denial. But here’s the problem: That’s exactly what Anonymous said would be the response to any such attempt to out her in the book's Introduction: “If asked, I will strenuously deny I am the author of this book.”

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Javelin maintains a full stable of anti-Trump authors, including former National Security Adviser John Bolton and fired FBI Director James Comey. The agency just signed Marie Yovanovitch, the ousted State Department official who testified against Trump during his impeachment. Since landing a $3 million advance for Comey, Javelin has become "a popular destination for Trump administration officials, especially those contemplating an exit,” The New York Times recently reported in a lengthy profile of Urbahn and his partner, Matt Latimer, who also worked for Rumsfeld and is chummy with Coates.

Yet other Coates defenders insist that she is a loyal member of Team Trump and that they never heard her say anything disparaging about the president. “The rumors are absolutely false and I’m ashamed of those pushing this B.S.,” said Fred Fleitz, who worked closely with Coates while serving as chief of staff to Bolton.

Former NSC spokesman Michael Anton, who worked alongside Coates in the early days of the Trump administration, said he doubts she was involved in any skullduggery. “I don’t believe it,” he said.

Added K.T. McFarland: “‘Anonymous’ sanctimonious, elitist tone, and [the writer’s] implication that Trump is an immoral idiot doesn’t match up with the Victoria Coates I have known for years.”

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“She went out on a limb to support Trump when few in the Republican foreign policy community did,” she added.

**‘Very Anti-Trump in Private’**

While Coates’ supporters are adamant that she is not Anonymous, some co-workers said she was careful to hide her opposition to Trump and his agenda during meetings with principals.

“She was very anti-Trump in private,” said a former NSC official who worked with Coates on the Mideast desk. “She even defended Obama holdovers to me. They’re all fighting Trump."

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If Coates supports Trump, she has not been vocal about it. There are no examples of her publicly praising the president, based on a search of the Lexis-Nexis database of her speeches, articles and interviews, though she has expressed support for some of his policies.

A review of Coates’ Twitter feed going back to the November 2016 election turns up no tweets in which she supports Trump directly, though she remarked in a March 2017 tweet that she was “proud" to have joined the NSC team.

On the other hand, Coates reportedly was furious that Cruz decided several weeks before the election to throw his support behind Trump, after famously snubbing him at the GOP convention.

“She was livid when the Texas Republican endorsed Trump and cited national security as one of his reasons for supporting the Republican nominee,” according to a Politico.com article citing people familiar with her alleged meltdown over her boss’ about-face.

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Supporters struggled, moreover, to explain why Coates would accept what effectively was a demotion -- just four months after being promoted to deputy national security -- if she were innocent of the accusations.

Fleitz, who says he has not read "A Warning," speculated that Coates was ready to move on from the NSC after serving three years there, and that her reassignment to the Energy Department had been in the works for a while. But her failure to appear at the Hudson Institute for a recent speech on the White House's “plan for peace in the Middle East” made it look more like a shake-up.

The event’s moderator was clearly taken off guard. “I feel a little bit like Clint Eastwood talking to the empty chair,” the moderator nervously quipped, motioning to a seat the think tank had reserved for Coates on the stage with an unopened bottle of water beside it.

Just two days before Coates was officially reassigned on Feb. 20, Trump told reporters he knew the identity of the anonymous official, but he would not divulge the person’s identity.

**Human Lander Awards**

NASA is expected to announce awards for human lunar lander development later this month as two senators press NASA to stay the course on the use of commercial partnerships for those landers.

NASA [requested proposals last fall for its Human Landing System (HLS) program](https://spacenews.com/nasa-issues-call-for-proposals-for-human-lunar-landers/), where companies will develop human lunar landers for the Artemis program through public-private partnerships. Proposals were due to NASA in early November 2019, with the agency planning to then select up to four companies for initial design and development studies, lasting 10 months. NASA would then choose one or two of them to proceed with full-scale lander development.

At the time NASA released the call for proposals, formally known as a broad agency announcement that is part of its Next Space Technologies for Exploration Partnerships (NextSTEP) program, NASA said is expected to make those initial awards in January 2020.

However, NASA has yet to announce any selections, and the most recent procurement update, published Feb. 10, stated that it expected to make awards in late March or early April. A NASA spokesperson said April 16 that NASA expects to announce the HLS awards this month, but has not set a specific date yet.

NASA hasn’t explained why the HLS awards have slipped. However, NASA has been revising its overall lunar exploration architecture in order to meet the goal of returning humans to the surface of the moon by the end of 2024, the goal set by the White House a little more than a year ago.

At a March 13 meeting of the NASA Advisory Council’s science committee, Doug Loverro, NASA associate administrator for human exploration and operations, said [he had been working to “de-risk” the program](https://spacenews.com/nasa-takes-gateway-off-the-critical-path-for-2024-lunar-return/) since taking the position in December. That included taking the lunar Gateway off the critical path for that 2024 return, while retaining it for the long-term, sustainable lunar presence sought by NASA.

Loverro also hinted at that meeting that NASA was backing away from its original architecture for a lunar lander that involved an ascent module, descent module, and transfer stage. Each element could be launched individually and aggregated at the Gateway.

“Program risk is driven by which things haven’t you done in space before that you would now have to do in this mission,” he said then, referring to plans “to launch a lander in three individual pieces that have to meet up at the moon,” the approach NASA has previously discussed. “We’ve never done that before, so we’d like to try to avoid doing things we’ve never done before.”

In an April 14 letter to NASA Administrator Jim Bridenstine, Sens. Marco Rubio (R-Fla.) and Richard Blumenthal (D-Conn.) said the agency should stick to its original approach to the HLS program.

“NASA’s competitive, industry-led acquisition strategy for the HLS program recognizes that when industry and government work together, they produce the best results for the nation,” they wrote in the letter, publicly released April 15. “We urge you to proceed with the HLS acquisition as currently planned.”

The senators also called on NASA to use a similar approach for future large cargo lunar landers, which may be needed for delivering infrastructure needed for the sustainable phase of lunar exploration. “Given the significant investment by both NASA and the private sector, and the important progress already being made, we encourage you to expeditiously partner with industry for the development of one or more large cargo landers and follow-on services,” they wrote.

Three industry teams have announced they submitted HLS proposals. One is [a team led by Blue Origin](https://spacenews.com/blue-origin-lockheed-northrop-join-forces-for-artemis-lunar-lander/) with partners Draper, Lockheed Martin and Northrop Grumman. Boeing said [it was offering a lunar lander](https://spacenews.com/boeing-offers-sls-launched-lunar-lander-to-nasa/) that could be launched as a single unit on a Space Launch System rocket. [Dynetics confirmed in January it submitted a proposal](https://spacenews.com/dynetics-sierra-nevada-bidding-on-artemis-lunar-lander/), leading a team that includes Sierra Nevada Corporation.

Other companies may have submitted HLS proposals but have not disclosed them. For example, there is widespread speculation SpaceX submitted a proposal, but the company has declined to confirm it.

While the coronavirus pandemic has slowed many NASA activities, it doesn’t appear to have had a major impact on the HLS program. In an online town hall meeting April 2, officials with the Marshall Space Flight Center, which hosts the HLS program, said that program was among those that was continuing uninterrupted through telework.

At the time of the town hall meeting, Marshall officials expected HLS awards to be announced soon. “We should hear something fairly soon from Washington on that,” Paul McConnaughey, deputy center director, said.

The awards are part of NASA’s Next Space Technologies for Exploration Partnerships (NextSTEP) series of broad agency announcements that support public-private partnerships to develop technologies needed for NASA’s exploration plans. Companies receiving these awards are required to make their own contributions in addition to NASA’s combined funding of $45.5 million.

The 11 companies selected represent a broad cross-section of the commercial space industry, from established aerospace companies to emerging startups:

* Aerojet Rocketdyne
* Blue Origin
* Boeing
* Dynetics
* Lockheed Martin
* Masten Space Systems
* Maxar Technologies (formerly SSL)
* Northrop Grumman Innovation Systems
* OrbitBeyond
* Sierra Nevada Corporation
* SpaceX

The awards are for human lander studies formally known as NextSTEP Appendix E. Those studies are limited to descent stages, transfer vehicles and refueling elements. At the time NASA released the NextSTEP solicitation Feb. 7, the agency was planning to conduct studies on lander ascent modules within the agency.

The NextSTEP Appendix E proposals were due at NASA March 25. The next day, Vice President Mike Pence announced in a speech that the White House was directing NASA to accelerate the timeline for a human lunar landing from 2028 to 2024. Subsequently, NASA said [it will solicit proposals for integrated lander systems under a separate NextSTEP procurement](https://spacenews.com/nasa-tweaks-call-for-lunar-lander-concepts/), Appendix H, while continuing the Appendix E lunar lander work.

The awards require companies to pay at least 20 percent of the overall cost of each study or prototype project, with the work to be completed in six months. To allow the companies to start work immediately, NASA said it’s using an approach called “undefinitized contract actions” so that companies can start work while the contract terms are still being negotiated.

It should be noted there are a dozen more companies who make subassemblies for these projects who are also benefitting from these awards. The gold rush is ramping up, which means that many of these suppliers will merge, amalgamate, and even sell out as the speed picks up. There are some risks created by this process. The biggest risk is the exposure in cyber-security. Many of the platforms are public domain developments using zigbee boards, Arduino circuits, and linux software that have little to no cyber-security developed. These vulnerabilities are cumulative, as the lander system grows in complexity and functionality.

“We’re keen to collect early industry feedback about our human landing system requirements, and the undefinitized contract action will help us do that,” said Greg Chavers, human landing system formulation manager at NASA’s Marshall Space Flight Center, in an agency statement about the awards.

The small value of the awards and the short timeline will limit the scope of the work. “In this first study phase we’re actually going to build some prototype hardware. We’re going to build some pumps, some cooling systems and other pieces,” Bill Gerstenmaier, NASA associate administrator for human exploration and operations, said at a NASA town hall meeting May 14. He said NASA engineers may be embedded in some of those companies as part of the prototype development.

The announcement of the NextSTEP Appendix E awards didn’t discuss the details of each company’s work beyond whether they were doing studies or prototype development, and for what part of the lunar lander architecture. However, some companies have disclosed their plans for lunar lander systems, like Blue Origin’s Blue Moon lander; company officials previously said they submitted a NextSTEP proposal.

NASA plans to release the solicitation for the NextSTEP Appendix H integrated lunar lander studies this summer. Gerstenmaier, at the town hall meeting, said that he hopes that when the new fiscal year begins Oct. 1 “we can start laying in place the contracts that actually start building hardware that gives us a lander.”

That schedule will be contingent on the success NASA has in winning additional funding for its 2024 lunar plans. In an amendment to its fiscal year 2020 budget released May 13, [the agency sought an additional $1.6 billion](https://spacenews.com/nasa-seeks-additional-1-6-billion-for-2024-moon-plan/), including $1 billion for lunar lander studies.

However, [a House version of a spending bill that funds the agency released May 16](https://spacenews.com/house-appropriators-pass-on-nasa-budget-amendment/) provides little in the way of that additional funding. Instead it cuts funding for exploration research and development, which includes both the lunar Gateway and lunar lander efforts, by $618 million from the agency’s original request.

**Trump Donates Foreign Profits Back to US Treasury**

President Trump’s company said it donated $105,465 to the U.S. Treasury last month, an amount that it said reflects its profits from foreign-government bookings at its hotels last year.

The number is down sharply from its 2019 [donation](https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/economy/trump-organization-reports-small-bump-in-foreign-government-profits-in-2018/2019/02/24/b49f3b6c-3872-11e9-a2cd-307b06d0257b_story.html?tid=lk_inline_manual_3&itid=lk_inline_manual_3) of about $191,000, showing a drop in spending by foreign governments at [Trump hotels](https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2017/politics/trump-hotel-business/?tid=lk_inline_manual_3&itid=lk_inline_manual_3). This is the third year that the company, which Trump still owns, has made such a donation, part of an effort to avoid violating the foreign emoluments clause of the Constitution, which bars a president from accepting gifts or payments from foreign governments.

Trump’s son Eric Trump, who is running the company with his brother Donald Trump Jr., [announced](https://www.facebook.com/EricTrump/posts/3549736508431729) the donation last month on social media.

“While not legally required, for the third year in a row, we are honored to fulfill my father’s generous pledge to donate profits from foreign government patronage at our properties, back to the United States Government,” he wrote.

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[*Newly obtained documents show $157,000 in additional payments by the Secret Service to Trump properties*](https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/newly-obtained-documents-show-157000-in-additional-payments-by-the-secret-service-to-trump-properties/2020/03/05/7da2a610-5cbd-11ea-b014-4fafa866bb81_story.html?tid=lk_interstitial_manual_8&itid=lk_interstitial_manual_8)

The Trump Organization does not disclose the foreign clients that booked business at the company’s hotels but says it does not seek that business and tries to avoid it because the company donates the profits. The company donated $191,538 last year, reflecting 2018 profits, and $151,470 the year prior, reflecting 2017 profits.

Eric Trump issued a statement Monday saying that income from foreign governments makes up a very small portion of the company’s hotel business, despite Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Kuwait and other countries footing the bills for large events at Trump’s properties since he became president.

“Of our hotels that had foreign government patronage in 2019, this business represented less than half of one percent (<.0048%) of those properties aggregate revenue,” Trump said in the statement. “We work very hard to discourage this business and have done a phenomenal job doing so.”

**The Global Syndicate Manual for Military Campaigns**

You recall that I told you the Global Syndicate has a overall object? The removal of America as a geopolitical power. It would be preferred to keep its social-economic power, but its sacrifice is acceptable. The OE calls for not destroying the planet itself, and hopefully not too many of the desired folks. That means that a somewhat selective weapon must be crafted. It must be effective. It must be terrifying. It must be perceived to be real, even if it is not.

. There are four major components [i.e. frames] to operational design. The components have characteristics that exist outside of each other and are not necessarily sequential. An understanding of the OE and problem must be established prior to developing operational approaches.

* Understanding Strategic Guidance
* Frame the Environment
* Define the Problem
* Frame the Operational Approach

The real power of operational design comes from the synthesis of all four frames.

They really are not separate activities, but four areas of thinking in the same

methodology. They are totally iterative and a better understanding of one frame will lead

to a deeper understanding of the other frames. To frame the environment, you cannot

help but see the competing trends emerge which will help to better define the problem.

As you see a potential operational approach emerging, you may discover new problems

or need to modify existing ones and ask more questions about the environment. As you

analyze the operational approach and look for ways to avoid or mitigate undesired

effects, you will likely redefine the problem and see aspects of the environment that you

had not previously understood.

As you work with operational design, you will get more

comfortable working the frames iteratively, so it will feel less and less like four separate

frames and more like a single, synthetic, cognitive approach.

Operational design is iterative, and the operational planning team should revisit each frame. Go back to the environment frame to analyze the potential impacts of the approach on the environment. While the first order effects should be as expected (since the operational approach was developed to achieve those effects), the team must look carefully for potential undesired effects. Note any undesired second and third order effects and either modify the operational approach to mitigate those effects, or transmit those risks to the operational approach to planners and other interested parties in the effort. Strategic guidance may have shifted, with new options or constraints. Perhaps you need to reframe the problem (for instance, an insurgency has morphed into a civil war). Iterative examinations may yield a significantly different operational approach.

**William Barr: Things are About to get Ugly**

“Travesty” is not a nice word. It usually is applied to gross perversions of justice, and that apparently is the context Attorney General [William Barr](https://thehill.com/people/william-barr) desired when he dropped it into an interview answer the other day in the breezy courtyard of the Department of Justice (DOJ).

His composed, understated delivery almost disguised the weighty magnitude of that disturbing word and the loaded adjective that preceded it. “I think what happened to him,” [he said](https://www.realclearpolitics.com/video/2020/04/10/barr_russian_collusion_probe_into_trump_one_of_the_greatest_travesties_in_american_history.html), referring to the president and the FBI’s counterintelligence investigation into his campaign, “was one of the greatest travesties in American history.”

Okay, it’s important to pause for a moment and absorb what the AG said. He just called an FBI investigation not just a travesty but one of the “greatest” travesties in the nation’s history. It was an unprecedented statement by an attorney general about his own department’s premier agency.

The FBI has made plenty of mistakes, but never in its 112-year history has an FBI investigation been characterized as a travesty, let alone one that equates to other hall-of-fame travesties in American history.

Is the AG’s assessment fair? The answer is entwined in his next statement: “Without any basis [the FBI] started this investigation into [[Donald Trump](https://thehill.com/people/donald-trump)’s] campaign ... .”

Oops, stop again right there. Mr. Barr is making a definitive statement about that which many of us have speculated all along, namely that the weirdly unprecedented investigative team put together by former FBI Director [James Comey](https://thehill.com/people/james-comey) and Deputy Director [Andrew McCabe](https://thehill.com/people/andrew-mccabe) did not have adequate legal reasons to open a case into the Trump campaign in the first place. The attorney general just confirmed that.

But wait a minute, doesn’t that directly contradict DOJ Inspector General Michael Horowitz’s assertion that the FBI’s counterintelligence investigation was justified?

Two things to keep in mind regarding that inconsistency.

First, remember that IG Horowitz reached two primary and controversial conclusions: 1) that there was adequate justification for starting the investigation, and 2) that there was no “evidence” of political bias as a motivating factor for the investigation. He based his conclusions, according to [his report](https://www.justice.gov/storage/120919-examination.pdf), solely on his interviews of the FBI individuals who started and ran the case — from Mr. Comey on down. That’s our story, they all said, and we’re stickin’ to it.

This would be like an FBI agent interviewing four subjects suspected of robbing a bank and, after hearing their denials, concluding there was no evidence they committed the crime.

In fairness, the IG is not a criminal investigator and certainly not steeped in counterintelligence matters. The attorney general, on the other hand, owns the [Attorney General Guidelines](https://www.justice.gov/archive/opa/docs/guidelines.pdf) that dictate what it takes to initiate an FBI investigation, particularly of an American citizen. He is the ultimate arbiter.

Which leads to the second point: The AG is logically being briefed on the progress and findings of U.S. Attorney [John Durham](https://thehill.com/people/john-durham)’s investigation, which he commissioned to examine how the empty Russia collusion case got started in the first place and if it involved any wrongdoing on the part of the government. It is a safe bet that Mr. Durham is collecting evidence beyond the self-serving statements of the FBI principals involved. It also is now a safe bet that his findings will respectfully disagree with Mr. Horowitz’s.

Attorney General Barr communicates in a clear, understandable, calm-as-a-summer-evening manner uncommon in Washington. He undoubtedly did not get to his current position without being a skilled litigator, whose first rule is never make a statement to the court that you can’t back up. His newsworthy claim that there was zero basis for the FBI’s investigation stands, in all probability, on a mound of — in his words — “troubling” evidence now in his possession.

Many in the media immediately sputtered that the FBI was certainly justified because Trump campaign third-stringer [George Papadopoulos](https://thehill.com/people/george-papadopoulos) [told an Australian](https://www.nytimes.com/2017/12/30/us/politics/how-fbi-russia-investigation-began-george-papadopoulos.html) official, in a bar, that the Russians had email dirt on [Hillary Clinton](https://thehill.com/people/hillary-clinton).

The media may wish that Papadopoulos’s comment is sufficient justification to investigate a candidate for president, but it is not. An experienced Russia counterintelligence FBI agent would have recognized immediately that the Australian’s assertion, while moderately interesting for existing investigations of Russians, was not nearly enough to open an invasive investigation of American citizens.

The biased, overeager Comey and McCabe, however, opened an unprecedented full-blown investigation into a presidential campaign. Worse, Durham possibly will show that the Comey team started involving itself in questionable intelligence community activities that improperly ran confidential sources against Papadopoulos well before they officially opened a case — a potentially big no-no that, if proven, will not go well for all involved.

That is especially true in light of what the AG went on to say during his interview. He likened the Comey team’s inappropriate investigation and subsequent fallout to sabotage, or the effects of sabotage. “Sabotage” is another powerful word, technically a wartime crime, but a useful metaphor in its ramifications, since it implicates a range of supporting crimes such as conspiracy, fraud, perjury and false statements.

The AG then ominously stated that he is not interested in simply receiving a “report” from Durham. He expects him to focus on possible criminal violations: “And if people broke the law, and we can establish that with the evidence, they will be prosecuted.”

These are incredibly hopeful words to many Americans who have come to believe — after the 2008 Wall Street-driven financial collapse, after the numerous Clinton family schemes and scandals, and after the wasteful Mueller “[investigation](https://www.justice.gov/storage/report.pdf)” — that the powerful are never held accountable.

This is an attorney general projecting an air of confidence, not afraid to speak truth to slippery politicians even though the pushback will be fierce and personal. In light of that, it’s hard to imagine his confidence isn’t buttressed with mounting evidence of abusive government actions.

This is what the Durham investigation could well conclude: A group of people aligned with or sympathetic to one political party conspired to illicitly use the authorities of the FBI to besmirch the opposing party’s presidential candidate — and that every effort should be made to indict those who can be charged as a result.

If true, such a thing has never happened before. It would represent a direct, unprecedented attack on our democracy, to fraudulently influence the voting public with lies ostensibly emanating as facts from a noble, traditionally trusted FBI. And that, indeed, would be a travesty of historical significance. One never to be repeated, we can hope, against any future president of either party.

**The Lyrid Meteor Shower 2020**

One of the "Old Faithful" of the annual meteor showers will be reaching its peak this week: the April Lyrids.

The 2020 Lyrid meteor shower this week coincides with the new moon, meaning that there will be absolutely no lunar interference with getting a good view of these celestial streakers. Lyrid meteors may be seen any night through April 25; they are above a quarter of their maximum in numbers for about 2.5 days of this time.

On their peak night, which occurs overnight on Tuesday (April 21) and into the early hours of Wednesday (April 22), as many as 10 to 20 meteors per hour may be visible under dark, clear skies. The peak usually lasts for just a few hours. In 2020, according to the Observer's Handbook of the Royal Astronomical Society of Canada, predicts this year's maximum occurring at 2 a.m. EDT (0600 GMT), which is considered to be good-to-excellent timing for observers across much of North America.

Of course, fewer meteors will be seen from locations hindered by bright lights or obstructions that block parts of the sky. In their book "Observe Meteors" published by the Astronomical League, authors David Levy and Stephen Edberg note of the Lyrids that, "... of the annual meteor showers, this is the first one that really commands attention, one for which you can organize a shower observing party with significant chance of success."

The paths of these meteors, if extended backward, seem to diverge from a spot in the sky about 7 degrees southwest (to the lower right) of the brilliant blue-white star Vega in the little constellation Lyra (hence the name "Lyrids"). Your clenched fist held at arm's length covers roughly 10 degrees of the sky. The radiant point is actually on the border between Lyra and the adjacent dim, sprawling constellation Hercules. Vega appears to rise from the northeast around 9 p.m. your local time, but by 4 a.m., it has climbed to a point in the sky nearly overhead. You might want to lie down on a long lounge chair where you can get a good view of the sky.

Bundle up too, for while it won't be a cold as on a midwinter's night, nights in April can still be quite chilly. In fact, the current national weather forecast is indicating predawn temperatures on Wednesday at or below freezing across the Northeast US and Great Lakes states, as well as parts of the northern and central Rockies. While seldom a rich display like the August Perseids or December Geminids, the April Lyrids have been described as "brilliant and fairly fast."

About 20 to 25 percent of them tend to leave a lingering incandescent trail behind it for a few moments. Their orbit strongly resembles that of Comet Thatcher which swung past us during the spring of 1861. There is no chance that anyone living today will see this comet when it returns to the inner solar system, as it isn't expected to swing by Earth again until the year 2276. However, the dusty material left behind by this "cosmic litterbug" along its orbit, produces an annual display of meteors in late April.

In the year 1867, Professor Edmond Weiss in Vienna noticed that the orbit of Comet Thatcher seemed to nearly coincide with the Earth around April 20 and later that same year, astronomer Johann Gottfried Galle confirmed the link between this comet and the Lyrids. Thus, the Lyrids are this comet's legacy: The meteors that we see from this display are the tiny particles that were shed by the comet on previous visits through the inner solar system.

There are a number of historic records of meteor displays believed to be Lyrids, notably in 687 B.C. and 15 B.C. in China, and in 1136 in Korea when "many stars flew from the northeast," according to one account.

On April 20, 1803, many townspeople in Richmond, Virginia were roused from bed by a fire alarm and were able to observe a very rich display between 1 and 3 o'clock. The meteors "seemed to fall from every point in the heavens, in such numbers as to resemble a shower of skyrockets."

In 1922, an unexpected Lyrid hourly rate of 96 was recorded and in 1982 several observers in Florida and Colorado noted rates of 90 to 100 on April 22 of that year. Lyrids give no clues as to when another such outburst might happen, hence the shower is always one to watch. Here's something to look forward to: Peter Jenniskens in his tome "Meteor Showers and Their Parent Comets" predicts the next Lyrid outbursts might happen in 2040 and 2041.

Meanwhile, if your sky is clear early Wednesday before sunrise and if you’re in a sporting mood, why not head outside and try to catch a few “shooting stars?” Good luck!

**Comet Atlas Already Falling Apart**

Comet ATLAS, which a month ago looked like it might evolve into the first really bright naked-eye comet in a decade, is now falling apart. In the last few days, the boiling and jetting of the head of this comet has fragmented into several pieces, quickly dispersing and not leaving behind enough material to produce any kind of significant display. Earth will pass through its gaseous tail in December.

Soon after this comet was discovered near the end of 2019, it [brightened at an almost furious pace](https://www.space.com/comet-atlas-may-be-brightenting.html). That combined with the fact that it was traveling in the same orbit as the "Great Comet" of 1844 suggested that it might be a fragment of that famously spectacular comet, and that by the spring it might evolve into a beautiful celestial showpiece that could possibly excite the world as well as inject some new interest and exposure to the science of astronomy.  Sadly, those expectations will not be met.

Once again, the fickle, unpredictable nature of [comets](https://www.space.com/53-comets-formation-discovery-and-exploration.html) comes into play as we watch what many were saying was a harbinger of doom, evaporate into the cold blackness of space.

**New Beach in San Clemente**

## [mayhemsurfboards\_mattbiolos](https://www.instagram.com/mayhemsurfboards_mattbiolos/)

We’d like to thank [@cityofsanclemente](https://www.instagram.com/cityofsanclemente/), who after over-reacting and irrationally shuttering all our beaches and trails, came to the brilliant conclusion to use tax payers dwindling dollars to at least create for us a new beach, up in the Ralph’s Skatepark. Now we have an all new beautiful beach to kick back and enjoy a few [#Coronas](https://www.instagram.com/explore/tags/coronas/) on, while we wait out the [#WuhanFlu](https://www.instagram.com/explore/tags/wuhanflu/). Then, when it’s over, we can use even more tax payer dollars to clean all the sand out and carry it back to [#NorthBeach](https://www.instagram.com/explore/tags/northbeach/), where it’s so badly needed.

A popular skate park in Southern California has been filled with 37 tons of sand after skateboarders ignored "no trespassing" signs posted as part of the state's coronavirus stay-at-home order, according to reports.

The signs went up at Ralphs Skate Court in San Clemente after the city closed all parks April 1 to contain the spread of the virus.

“On April 1, we kind of let it play out to see if users would abide by the closure,” Samantha Wylie, the city’s parks manager, told the San Clemente Times.

“During that (two-week period), we saw people continue to skate the park, groups would gather, kids with their parents," she said. "It appeared the closure was not being abided by.”

On Monday, skateboarders could only watch as city workers turned the concrete playground into a 4-inch-deep sand pit.

“The sand was what other agencies were doing,” Wylie told the paper. “We’re doing what other parks have done to enforce that message of social distancing.”

She said the sand didn't cost the city any money and removing it won’t either.

Stephanie Aguilar, president of the San Clemente Skatepark Coalition, said it feels like the city vandalized its own park.

“Social distancing hasn’t been followed in a lot of different areas, whether it’s on our trails, tennis courts, the basketball courts, the walking paths; we didn’t see the city dump sand on the walking trail,” Aguilar complained to the Times.

“We didn’t see them dump sand onto any other sport area that’s being used. It just plays into, kind of feeds into that double standard the skate community has been treated with.”

One Instagram user thanked the city for creating a new beach.

**Don’t Like Corona-Lockdown? You Must be Crazy**

In the Soviet Union, activists were sent to state psychiatric wards. According to the state, any and all opposition to government policy was considered a form of mental illness.   
  
[Stephanie Buck](http://timeline.com/sluggish-schizophrenia-russia-1e12cec4f6e9) writes about the treatment of the “social parasite” Joseph Brodsky.   
  
In 1963, Russian poet Joseph Brodsky was seized and sent to a mental institution… Hospital workers pumped him with tranquilizers and repeatedly woke him during the night. He was given cold baths and wrapped in wet canvas that shrank and cut his skin while drying.  
  
It is not likely German lawyer Beate Bahner will be tortured like Brodsky. However, that does not make her arrest and forced confinement in a mental institution any less egregious. “Bahner had become known in the past few days with a call for nationwide demonstrations and an urgent application for the abolition of all corona protective measures,” reports [Welt](http://www.welt.de/vermischtes/article207246011/Heidelberg-Anwaeltin-Beate-Bahner-in-Psychiatrie-eingewiesen.html). “The [medical specialist] lawyer from Heidelberg considers the corona rules to be excessive and advocates for them to be abolished.”

Prior to her arrest, which she resisted, Bahner’s website was shut down at the request of the Mannheim police, according to the newspaper. In America, the state has yet to lock dissidents up in mental institutions, although police have threatened people for attending church services and disobeying social distancing mandates.

In Mississippi, parishioners were [fined $500](http://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/dominicholden/coronavirus-drive-in-church-mississippi-lawsuit-trump) for attending a drive-in church service. In Massachusetts, the governor and local government control freaks ordered citizens to wear masks. The city of Lynn imposed a [mandatory curfew](http://www.masslive.com/coronavirus/2020/04/coronavirus-response-curfews-fines-and-mask-requirements-as-some-mass-communities-enact-their-own-measures-to-flatten-the-curve.html). Authorities in Minneapolis charged twenty-three people with [violating stay-at-home orders](http://minnesota.cbslocal.com/2020/04/14/coronavirus-in-minnesota-23-people-charged-for-violating-stay-at-home-order/).

In Australia and Britain, police are fining citizens for daring to go outside (doing so in Queensland will result in [a $100k fine](http://thewest.com.au/news/coronavirus/police-hand-out-100k-in-covid-19-fines-to-queenslanders-ignoring-public-health-directions-ng-fe502e847e65cd21adde6fa4d7ef6357)). The dictator president of the Philippines, Rodrigo Duterte, has ordered police and the military to shoot and kill all in violation of an iron-fisted lockdown.

As a nation-wide lockdown and draconian measures destroy business, jobs, and lives, people are beginning to resist.

In Michigan, protesters gathered outside the state capitol to denounce Gov. Gretchen Whitmer’s lockdown. “We do not agree with or consent to our unalienable rights being restricted or rescinded for any reason, including the COVID-19 pandemic,” said [Michigan United for Liberty](http://www.detroitnews.com/story/news/politics/2020/04/07/govt-non-essential-protesters-hit-covid-19-restrictions/2960476001/) on its Facebook page. Officialdom has warned lockdowns may be in place until a vaccine is manufactured, possibly 18 months from now. This is a sure recipe for civil unrest and violence. It is not feasible for millions of people—and billions around the world—to endure lockdown and other authoritarian measures, possibly indefinitely.   
  
In Germany, the state has moved to declare opposition to the destruction of civilization a mental illness. As more people resist mass house arrest and enforced privation, the state will undoubtedly resort to measures above and beyond locking activists up in mental institutions.   
  
NORAD and the Pentagon have planned for civil unrest for some time. The military is now engaged in a PR campaign to “reassure the public” that it will use the appropriate protective equipment as it prepares to put down inevitable uprisings.

**New China Jersey**

It is now apparently a crime for citizens in the state of New Jersey to peaceably assemble and petition the government for a redress of grievances

New Jersey Attorney General **Gurbir Grewal** and State Police Supt. **Patrick J. Callahan** announced that dozens of residents had either been arrested or issued citations for violating the mandatory “stay at home order.”

“Staying home and maintaining social distance isn’t just the best advice to stay healthy, it’s the law. Make no mistake, we will do everything in our power to keep our residents and officers safe, and that means we won’t hesitate to file charges against violators,” the attorney general warned.

**Kim Pagan,** of Toms River, was charged with organizing a “prohibited event” outside the State House in Trenton. Her crime was to organize a demonstration against the governor’s executive orders.

A video posted to Facebook by Central Jersey Libertarians shows police writing summonses to honking and shouting protesters in parked cars. One woman can be heard to yell “we have the right to peacefully protest.”

The Newark Police Dept. issued 90 summonses for violating emergency orders. Seven law-abiding business owners were ordered to shut down.

Violations of the emergency orders constitute a disorderly persons offense carrying a potential sentence of up to six months in jail and a fine of up to $1,000. However, the attorney general said violators can potentially face criminal charges including second, third, and fourth degree indictable offenses.

**Jeffrey Hernandez,** the owner of a car wash in Paterson, was charged with a crime after officers “found employees washing cars by hand.”

“Our police officers are working bravely and tirelessly every day to protect us during this health crisis. Regrettably, they are being called upon far too often to deal with people violating the emergency orders— or what is more egregious, people using the virus to spread fear or impede officers in their vital work,” the attorney general said.

**Gov. Phil Murphy,** Attorney General Grewal and their jackbooted state police enforcers are becoming more like the Chinese government every day.

We must resist these infringements on our freedoms, ladies and gentlemen. We must rise up in defiance and reclaim America. Live free or die!

**South Dakota Gets it Right**

Republican South Dakota Gov. Kristi Noem hit back at critics who accused her of being too lax with her coronavirus response after there was an outbreak at a processing plant in the state. She said the liberal media “have not been telling all the facts behind this.”

Noem responded to the criticism Thursday on “The Ingraham Angle.”

“I had a real honest conversation with the people in our state. I told them I took an oath to uphold the Constitution of our state, of South Dakota," said Noem, who has not issued a stay-at-home order amid the coronavirus outbreak.

"I took an oath when I was in Congress obviously to uphold the Constitution of the United States," she continued. "I believe in our freedoms and liberties. What I’ve seen across the country is so many people give up their liberties for just a little bit of security and they don’t have to do that."

She went on to explain that "if a leader will take too much power in a time of crisis, that is how we lose our country. So, I felt like I’ve had to use every single opportunity to talk about why we slow things down, we make decisions based on science and facts, and make sure that we are not letting emotion grab a hold of the situation."

On MSNBC’s “The Rachel Maddow” show, Maddow noted that “Kristi Noem has insisted that she still will not issue a stay-at-home order in her state.” Sen. Elizabeth Warren, D-Mass., who was a guest on Maddow’s show, said: “The governor just lets this problem get bigger and bigger and bigger.”

Speaking on “The Ingraham Angle” Noem responded to the blowback, saying: “What they are neglecting to tell folks is that this processing plant is critical infrastructure.”

“Regardless of a shelter-in-place order or not, it would have been up and running because it’s an important part of our nation’s food supply,” she continued. “So that’s what’s been happening on the national level. They have not been telling all the facts behind this.”

She went on to say that “the people of South Dakota can be trusted to make good decisions. We have common sense. That’s why people want to live here and that’s why I love living here.”

South Dakota has more than 1,300 positive coronavirus cases reported and seven deaths, according to data compiled by Fox News.

At least 438 employees at the Sioux Falls Smithfield Foods plant tested positive for COVID-19. Another 107 people tested positive after coming into close contact with Smithfield workers. The plant accounts for between 4 to 5 percent of U.S.' pork production, according to the company.

A major pork manufacturing plant in South Dakota has indefinitely shut down after more than 200 of its employees contracted Covid-19.

According to Smithfield, who runs the plant, the facility’s output represents up to 5% of US pork production, supplying 130m servings of food a week and employing 3,700 people. Over 550 independent farmers supplied the plant.

The company that runs the plant, Smithfield Foods, announced the closure of its plant in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, on Sunday, a day after the state’s governor, Kristi Noem, asked the company to suspend the plant’s operation for at least 14 days.

The number of employees who worked at the plant and contracted the virus makes up over half of the state’s positive cases. About 240 employees from the plant have contracted the virus. What most people do not know, is that Smithfield is a Chinese-owned company. The workers there contracted the disease from Chinese workers who were sent there from Wuhan before the president’s travel ban. The Chinese knew these people ere sick before they left Wuhan.

Noem also defended her decision not to enact a stay-at-home order.

“We should be tracking who is in the hospital, what the death rate is, and South Dakotans are doing a fantastic job following my recommendations and we’ve been able to keep our businesses open and allow people to take on some personal responsibility,” she told Ingraham.

She went on to say that she “gave our folks the guidelines in South Dakota about what we needed to do to flatten our curve, they followed, they took that seriously and we’ve bent our curve by 75 percent in South Dakota.”

“We’ve had a dramatic impact on the slowing down of the spread and we’ll be able to handle it with a capacity in our health care systems and it’s all because of decisions that the people made and the fact that we worked together to do that," she said. "And I think that’s what’s been unique in South Dakota.”