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| --- | --- |
| Jihad Report Sep 12, 2020 - Sep 18, 2020 | |
| Attacks | **36** |
| Killed | **106** |
| Injured | **70** |
| Suicide Blasts | **1** |
| Countries | **11** |

**Plutonium in Space**

IN 1977, THE Voyager 1 spacecraft left Earth on a five-year mission to explore Jupiter and Saturn. Thirty-six years later, the car-size probe is still exploring, still sending its findings home. It has now put more than 19 billion kilometers between itself and the sun. Last week NASA announced that Voyager 1 had become the first man-made object to reach interstellar space.

More on Plutonium

The distance this craft has covered is almost incomprehensible. It's so far away that it takes more than 17 hours for its signals to reach Earth. Along the way, Voyager 1 gave scientists their first close-up looks at Saturn, took the first images of Jupiter's rings, discovered many of the moons circling those planets and revealed that Jupiter's moon Io has active volcanoes. Now the spacecraft is discovering what the edge of the solar system is like, piercing the heliosheath where the last vestiges of the sun’s influence are felt and traversing the heliopause where cosmic currents overcome the solar wind. Voyager 1 is expected to keep working until 2025 when it will finally run out of power.

None of this would be possible without the spacecraft's three batteries filled with plutonium-238. In fact, Most of what humanity knows about the outer planets came back to Earth on plutonium power. Cassini’s ongoing exploration of Saturn, Galileo’s trip to Jupiter, Curiosity's exploration of the surface of Mars, and the 2015 flyby of Pluto by the New Horizons spacecraft are all fueled by the stuff. The characteristics of this metal’s radioactive decay make it a super-fuel. More importantly, there is no other viable option. Solar power is too weak, chemical batteries don’t last, nuclear fission systems are too heavy. So, we depend on plutonium-238, a fuel largely acquired as by-product of making nuclear weapons.

But there’s a problem: We’ve almost run out.

"We've got enough to last to the end of this decade. That's it," said Steve Johnson, a nuclear chemist at Idaho National Laboratory. And it's not just the U.S. reserves that are in jeopardy. The entire planet's stores are nearly depleted.

**[NASA's New Mars Lander Will Give Insight Into the Planet's Make-Up](https://www.wired.com/video/watch/nasa-s-insight" \t "_blank)**

The country’s scientific stockpile has dwindled to around 36 pounds. To put that in perspective, the battery that powers NASA’s Curiosity rover, which is currently studying the surface of Mars, contains roughly 10 pounds of plutonium, and what’s left has already been spoken for and then some. The implications for space exploration are dire: No more plutonium-238 means not exploring perhaps 99 percent of the solar system. In effect, much of NASA's $1.5 billion-a-year (and [shrinking](https://www.wired.com/wiredscience/2012/02/presidents-2013-budget/)) planetary science program is running out of time. The nuclear crisis is so bad that affected researchers know it simply as "The Problem."

But it doesn’t have to be that way. The required materials, reactors, and infrastructure are all in place to create plutonium-238 (which, unlike plutonium-239, is practically impossible to use for a nuclear bomb). In fact, the U.S. government recently approved spending about [$10 million a year](http://www.popsci.com/science/article/2013-03/first-time-cold-war-us-making-plutonium-238) to reconstitute production capabilities the nation shuttered almost two decades ago. In March, the DOE even [produced a tiny amount](http://www.popsci.com/science/article/2013-03/first-time-cold-war-us-making-plutonium-238) of fresh plutonium inside a nuclear reactor in Tennessee.

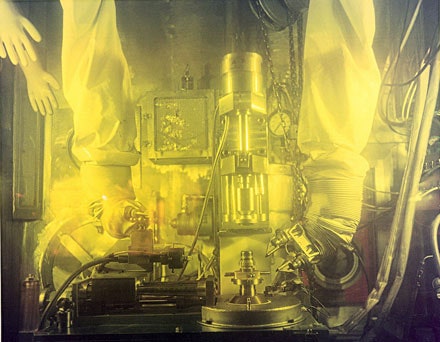
It’s a good start, but the crisis is far from solved. Political ignorance and shortsighted squabbling, along with false promises from Russia, and penny-wise management of NASA's ever-thinning budget still stand in the way of a robust plutonium-238 production system. The result: Meaningful exploration of the solar system has been pushed to a cliff’s edge. One ambitious space mission could deplete remaining plutonium stockpiles, and any hiccup in a future supply chain could undermine future missions.

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The only natural supplies of plutonium-238 vanished eons before the Earth formed some 4.6 billion years ago. Exploding stars forge the silvery metal, but its half-life, or time required for 50 percent to disappear through decay, is just under 88 years.

Fortunately, we figured out how to produce it ourselves – and to harness it to create a remarkably persistent source of energy. Like other radioactive materials, plutonium-238 decays because its atomic structure is unstable. When an atom’s nucleus spontaneously decays, it fires off a helium core at high speed while leaving behind a uranium atom. These helium bullets, called alpha radiation, collide *en masse* with nearby atoms within a lump of plutonium – a material twice as dense as lead. The energy can cook a puck of plutonium-238 to nearly 1,260 degrees Celsius. To turn that into usable power, you wrap the puck with thermoelectrics that convert heat to electricity. Voila: You've got a battery that can power a spacecraft for decades.

"It's like a magic isotope. It's just right," said [Jim Adams,](http://solarsystem.nasa.gov/people/profile.cfm?Code=AdamsJ) NASA's deputy chief technologist and former deputy director of the space agency's planetary science division.



Savannah River Site

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U.S. production came primarily from two nuclear laboratories that created plutonium-238 as a byproduct of making bomb-grade plutonium-239. The Hanford Site in Washington state left the plutonium-238 mixed into a cocktail of nuclear wastes. The Savannah River Site in South Carolina, however, extracted and refined more than 360 pounds during the Cold War to power [espionage tools](http://vimeo.com/8681589), spy satellites, and dozens of NASA's pluckiest spacecraft.

By 1988, with the Iron Curtain full of holes, the U.S. and Russia began to dismantle wartime nuclear facilities. Hanford and Savannah River no longer produced any plutonium-238. But Russia continued to harvest the material by processing nuclear reactor fuel at a [nuclear industrial complex called Mayak](http://goo.gl/maps/dQEd). The Russians sold their first batch, weighing 36 pounds, to the U.S. in 1993 for more than $45,000 per ounce. Russia had become the planet's sole supplier, but it soon fell behind on orders. In 2009, it [reneged on a deal to sell 22 pounds](http://www.spacenews.com/civil/091211-russia-withholding-plutonium-needed-nasa.html) to the U.S.

Whether or not Russia has any material left or can still create some is uncertain. "What we do know is that they're not willing to sell it anymore," said [Alan Newhouse](http://www.arnewhouse.com/), a retired nuclear space consultant who spearheaded the first purchase of Russian plutonium-238. "One story I've heard … is that they don't have anything left to sell."

By 2005, according a [Department of Energy report](https://www.wired.com/images_blogs/wiredscience/2013/09/final72005faqs.pdf) (.pdf), the U.S. government owned 87 pounds, of which roughly two-thirds was designated for national security projects, likely to power deep-sea espionage hardware. The DOE would not disclose to WIRED what is left today, but scientists close to the issue say just 36 pounds remain earmarked for NASA.

That’s enough for the space agency to launch a few [small deep-space missions](http://discovery.nasa.gov/program.cfml) before 2020. A twin of the Curiosity rover is planned to lift off for Mars in 2020 and will require nearly a third of the stockpile. After that, NASA’s interstellar exploration program is left staring into a void – especially for high-profile, plutonium-hungry missions, like the proposed [Jupiter Europa Orbiter](http://opfm.jpl.nasa.gov/europajupitersystemmissionejsm/jupitereuropaorbiterconcept/). To seek signs of life around Jupiter's icy moon Europa, such a spacecraft could require more than 47 pounds of plutonium.

"The supply situation is already impacting mission planning," said Alice Caponiti, a nuclear engineer who leads the DOE's efforts to restart plutonium-238 production. "If you're planning a mission that's going to take eight years to plan, the first thing you're going to want to know is if you have power."

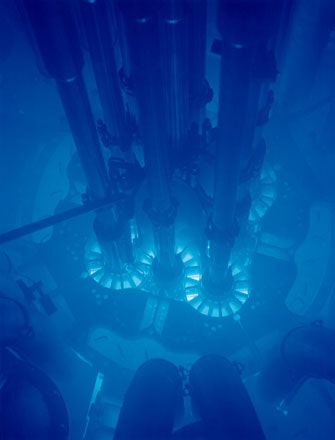
Many of the eight deep-space robotic missions that NASA had envisioned over the next 15 years have already been delayed or canceled. Even more missions – some not yet even formally proposed – are silent casualties of NASA's plutonium poverty. Since 1994, scientists have pleaded with lawmakers for the money to restart production. The DOE believes a relatively modest $10 to 20 million in funding each year through 2020 could yield an operation capable of making between 3.3 and 11 pounds of plutonium-238 annually – plenty to keep a steady stream of spacecraft in business.

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In 2012, a line item in NASA’s $17-billion budget fed $10 million in funding toward an experiment to create a tiny amount of plutonium-238. The goals: gauge how much could be made, estimate full-scale production costs, and simply prove the U.S. could pull it off again. It was half of the money requested by NASA and the DOE, the space agency's partner in the endeavor (the Atomic Energy Act forbids NASA to manufacture plutonium-238). The experiment may last seven more years and cost between $85 and $125 million.

At Oak Ridge National Laboratory in Tennessee, nuclear scientists have used the [High Flux Isotope Reactor](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/High_Flux_Isotope_Reactor) to produce a few micrograms of plutonium-238. A fully reconstituted plutonium program described in the [DOE's latest plan](http://energy.gov/nepa/downloads/eis-0310-sa-02-supplement-analysis), released this week, would also utilize a second reactor west of Idaho Falls, called the [Advanced Test Reactor](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Advanced_Test_Reactor).

That facility is located on the 890-square-mile nuclear ranch of Idaho National Laboratory. The scrub of the high desert rolls past early morning visitors as the sun crests the Teton Range. Armed guards stop and inspect vehicles at a roadside outpost, waving those with the proper credentials toward a reactor complex fringed with barbed wire and electrified fences.



Idaho National Laboratory

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Beyond the last security checkpoint is a warehouse-sized, concrete-floored room. Yellow lines painted on the floor cordon off what resembles an aboveground swimming pool capped with a metal lid. A bird’s-eye view reveals four huge, retractable metal slabs; jump through one and you'd plunge into 36 feet of water that absorbs radiation. Halfway to the bottom is the reactor's 4-foot-tall core, its four-leaf clover shape dictated by slender, wedge-shaped bars of uranium. "That's where you'd stick your neptunium," nuclear chemist Steve Johnson said, pointing to a diagram of the radioactive clover.

Neptunium, a direct neighbor to plutonium on the periodic table and a stable byproduct of Cold War-era nuclear reactors, is the material from which plutonium-238 is most easily made. In Johnson’s arrangement, engineers pack tubes with neptunium-237 and slip them into the reactor core. Every so often an atom of neptunium-237 absorbs a neutron emitted by the core’s decaying uranium, later shedding an electron to become plutonium-238. A year or two later – after harmful isotopes vanish – technicians could dissolve the tubes in acid, remove the plutonium, and recycle the neptunium into new targets.

The inescapable pace of radioactive decay and limited reactor space mean it may take five to seven years to create 3.3 pounds of battery-ready plutonium. Even if full production reaches that rate, NASA needs to squeeze every last watt out of what will inevitably always be a rather small stockpile.

The standard-issue power source, called a multi-mission thermoelectric generator – the kind that now powers the Curiosity rover – won't cut it for space exploration's future. "They're trustworthy, but they use a heck of a lot of plutonium," Johnson said.

In other words, NASA doesn't just need new plutonium. It needs a new battery.

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Is It Safe to Launch Nuclear Batteries?

Anti-nuclear activists often state that just one microscopic particle of plutonium-238 inhaled into the lungs can lead to fatal cancer. There's something to the claim, as pure plutonium-238 – ounce-for-ounce – is 270 times more radioactive than the plutonium-239 inside nuclear warheads. But the real risks to anyone of launching a nuclear battery are frequently mis-represented or misunderstood.  
Statisticians compare apples to apples by looking at a threat's severity, likelihood and affected population. An asteroid able to wipe out 1.5 billion people, for example, hits Earth about once about every 500,000 years – so the risk is high-severity, yet low-probability. Nuclear battery disasters, meanwhile, exist as low-severity and low-probability events, even near the launch pad.

Cassini, for example, left Earth with the most plutonium of any spacecraft at 72 pounds . Late in that probe’s launch there was about a 1 in 476 chance of plutonium release. If that had happened, fatalities over 50 years from that release would have numbered an estimated 1/25th of a person per the [safety design of its nuclear batteries](https://www.wired.com/wiredscience/2013/09/nuclear-battery-tests/). The overall risk of cancer to a person near the launch pad during an accident was estimated at 7 in 100,000. Beyond that zone, risk was even lower.

Statisticians also considered a second hypothetical and potentially dangerous event with Cassini. To get to Saturn, the spacecraft swung back toward and flew within 600 miles of Earth, zooming by at tens of thousands of miles per hour. The chance of releasing plutonium then was less than 1 in a million. If a release of plutonium occurred, statisticians estimated it might cause 120 cancer fatalities – for the whole planet – over 50 years. By contrast, natural background radiation likely claims a million lives a year, and lightning strikes about 10,000 lives.

A launch accident with NASA's Curiosity rover had a roughly 1 in 250 chance of releasing plutonium. But the low chance of cancer fatalities brought individual risk down to about 1 in 5.8 million. "I feel that they’re completely safe," said Ryan Bechtel, DOE’s nuclear battery safety manager. "My entire family was there at Curiosity’s launch site."

In a cluttered basement at NASA Glenn Research Center in Cleveland, metal cages and transparent plastic boxes house a menagerie of humming devices. Many look like stainless-steel barbells about a meter long and riddled with wires; others resemble white crates the size of two-drawer filing cabinets.

The unpretentious machines are prototypes of NASA's next-generation nuclear power system, called the [Advanced Stirling Radioisotope Generator](http://microgravity.grc.nasa.gov/SSPO/ASRG/). It's shaping up to be a radically different, more efficient nuclear battery than any before it.

On the outside, the machines are motionless. Inside is [a flurry of heat-powered motion](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dizf5OanlzY) driven by the Stirling cycle, developed in 1816 by the Scottish clergyman Robert Stirling. Gasoline engines burn fuel to rapidly expand air that pushes pistons, but Stirling converters need only a heat gradient. The greater the difference between a Stirling engine's hot and cold parts, the faster its pistons hum. When heat warms one end of a sealed chamber containing helium, the gas expands, pushing a magnet-laden piston through a tube of coiled wire to generate electricity. The displaced, cooling gas then moves back to the hot side, sucking the piston backward to restart the cycle.

"Nothing is touching anything. That's the whole beauty of the converter," said Lee Mason, one of several NASA engineers crowded into the basement. Their pistons float like air hockey pucks on the cycling helium gas.

For every 100 watts of heat generated, the Stirling generator converts more than 30 watts into electricity. That’s nearly five times better than the nuclear battery powering Curiosity. In effect, the generator can use one-fourth of the plutonium while boosting electrical output by at least 25 percent. Less plutonium also means these motors weigh two-thirds less than Curiosity's 99-pound battery – a big difference for spacecraft on 100 million-mile-or-more journeys. Curiosity was the biggest, heaviest spacecraft NASA could send to Mars at the time, with a vast majority of its mass dedicated to a safe landing – not science. Reducing weight expands the possibilities for advanced instruments on future missions.

But the Stirling generator’s relatively complicated technology, while crucial to the design, worries some space scientists. “There are people who are very concerned that this unit has moving parts,” said [John Hamley](http://www.nasa.gov/centers/glenn/about/bios/hamley_bio.html), manager of NASA Glenn's nuclear battery program. The concern is that the motion might interfere with spacecraft instruments that must be sensitive enough to map gravity fields, electromagnetism, and other subtle phenomena in space.

As a workaround, each generator uses two Stirling converters sitting opposite each other. An onboard computer constantly synchronizes their movements to cancel out troublesome vibrations. To detect and correct design flaws, engineers have abused their generator prototypes in vacuum chambers, assaulted them on shaking tables, and barraged them with powerful blasts of radiation and magnetism.

But NASA typically requires new technologies to be tested for one and a half expected lifetimes before flying them in space. For the Stirling generator, that would take 25 years. Earnest testing began in 2001, cutting the delay to 13 years\_\_ \_\_– but that's longer than NASA can wait: In 2008, only one of 10 nuclear-powered missions called for the device. By 2010, seven of eight deep-space missions planned through 2027 required them.

To speed things up, Hamley and his team run a dozen different units at a time. The oldest device has operated almost continuously for nearly 10 years while the newest design has churned since 2009. The combined data on the Stirling generators totals more than 50 years, enough for simulations to reliably fast-forward a model's wear-and-tear. So far, so good. "Nothing right now is a show-stopper," Hamley said. His team is currently building two flight-worthy units, plus a third for testing on the ground (Hamley expects Johnson’s team in Idaho to fuel it sometime next year).

For all of the technology's promise, however, it “won't solve this problem,” Johnson said. Even if the Stirling generator is used, plutonium-238 supplies will only stretch through 2022.



Dave Mosher/WIRED

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Any hiccups in funding for plutonium-238 production could put planetary science into a tailspin and delay, strip down, or smother nuclear-powered missions. The outlook among scientists is simultaneously optimistic and rattled.

The reason: It took countless scientists and their lobbyists more than 15 years just to get lawmakers' attention. A [dire 2009 report](http://www.nap.edu/openbook.php?record_id=12653) about "The Problem," authored by more than five dozen researchers, ultimately helped slip the first earnest funding request into the national budget in 2009. [Congressional committees](http://www.appropriations.senate.gov/sc-commerce.cfm) squabbled over if and how to spend $20 million of taxpayers' money – it took them three years to make up their minds.

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"There isn't a day that goes by that I don't think about plutonium-238," said Jim Adams, the former deputy boss of NASA's planetary science division.

At the National Air and Space Museum in Washington, D.C., Adams stares through the glass at the nuclear wonder that powered his generation's space exploration. Amid the fake moon dust sits a model of [SNAP-27](http://airandspace.si.edu/exhibitions/attm/la.s27.1.html), a plutonium-238-fueled battery that every lunar landing after Apollo 11 to power its science experiments. "My father worked on the Lunar Excursion Model, which that thing was stored on, and it's still up there making power," Adams said.

Just a few steps away is a model of the first Viking Lander, which touched down on Mars in 1976 and began digging for water and life. It found neither. "We didn't [dig deep enough](https://www.wired.com/wiredscience/2009/09/martian-ice/)," Adams said. "Just 4 centimeters below the depth that Viking dug was a layer of pristine ice."

One floor up, a model of a [Voyager spacecraft](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Voyager_program) hangs from the ceiling. The three nuclear power supplies aboard the real spacecraft are what allow Voyager 1 and its twin, Voyager 2, to contact the Earth after 36 years. Any other type of power system would have expired decades ago.

The same technology fuels the Cassini spacecraft, which continues to survey Saturn, sending a priceless stream of data and almost-too-fantastic-to believe images of that planet and its many moons. New Horizons' upcoming flyby of Pluto – nine and a half years in the making – wouldn’t be possible without a reliable source of nuclear fuel.

The Viking lander needed to dig deeper. Now we do, too.

**DragonFly on Saturn’s Moon**

As [the internet prepares to raid Area 51 for aliens](https://time.com/5629756/area-51-invasion/), NASA is using nuclear energy to go to deep space, seeking signs of extraterrestrial life on Saturn’s largest moon, Titan.

The [space agency recently announced the mission](https://www.nasa.gov/press-release/nasas-dragonfly-will-fly-around-titan-looking-for-origins-signs-of-life), which includes a rotorcraft nicknamed Dragonfly, the latest spacecraft in the New Frontiers planetary science missions. It will take eight years to get there and, upon arrival, NASA plans to tour the moon using this nuclear-powered, electric helicopter. Dragonfly is scheduled to launch in 2026 and land on Titan in 2034 where it will then spend almost three years hopping across the moon.

Like the Mars Curiosity rover, Dragonfly will use a radioisotope thermoelectric generator (RTG), that is [“designed to operate on planetary bodies with atmospheres … as well as in the vacuum of space,” according to NASA.](https://www.energy.gov/ne/articles/powering-curiosity-multi-mission-radioisotope-thermoelectric)

This is simpler than a reactor. RTGs are basically nuclear batteries that work by converting heat from the natural decay of Plutonium-238 into [electricity to power spacecrafts](https://neutronbytes.com/2018/05/05/nasa-space-missions-to-get-a-boost-from-nuclear-energy/), while using the excess heat to protect equipment and instruments. RTGs have been used in [27 different space missions](https://mars.nasa.gov/mars2020/files/mep/MMRTG_FactSheet_update_10-2-13.pdf), from the Apollo missions to the moon, to the Pluto New Horizons missions to the outer solar system.

Nuclear has been an integral part of space exploration for decades. Dragonfly will rely on nuclear energy to power the two-and-a-half-year tour, just like numerous other missions have before. Titan’s dense and hazy atmosphere, and distance from the sun, makes it impossible to harness solar power for the mission.

Dragonfly will be an autonomous drone. It has to be, because radio signals take hours to travel back from Titan. The innovative design is a [dual-quadcopter](http://dragonfly.jhuapl.edu/What-Is-Dragonfly/), set to fly in short segments that will allow it to go [farther in an hour than any Mars rovers](https://spectrum.ieee.org/automaton/robotics/space-robots/how-to-conquer-titan-with-a-quad-octocopter) could go over their lifetime. Dragonfly will conduct many tests and studies over the years, but its main goal is to explore Titan’s complex environment for signs of life, past or present.

Scientists are excited about the opportunity to examine Titan due to the similarities they see with prehistoric Earth. Specifically, as the organic molecules build up on the moon over time, eruptions from “cryovolcanoes”—which are volcanoes that create flows of water ice, not lava, and were [previously observed by the Cassini spacecraft](https://www.nytimes.com/2019/06/27/science/nasa-titan-dragonfly-caesar.html)—could cause the organic material to mix with the liquid water below Titan’s surface while the thin sunlight provides energy for what could lead to life.

[As noted by Elizabeth Turtle](https://www.nytimes.com/2019/06/27/science/nasa-titan-dragonfly-caesar.html), the principal investigator, “We have all these ingredients necessary for life as we know it, and they’re just sitting there doing chemistry experiments on the surface of Titan.”

If Dragonfly does find signs of life, it probably won’t be the little green beings that Hollywood has told us to expect. Dragonfly’s mission to Titan presents an invaluable opportunity to start getting real answers about our place in the universe. As the first space probe of its kind, Dragonfly will spend years running tests across Titan that could help us understand how life came to be on Earth.

This cutting-edge mission applies some existing technologies and points to the need for some new ones. Whether we look to [explore and settle the moon and Mars](https://www.nei.org/news/2018/packing-for-mars-and-the-moon-an-update) or [speed up space travel with the help of nuclear rockets next](https://www.universetoday.com/142689/earth-to-mars-in-100-days-the-power-of-nuclear-rockets), it is clear that nuclear energy can propel us to a deeper understanding of the universe.

**The Harris Effect**

Joe Biden’s presidential campaign minimizes Sen. Kamala Harris’s (D-CA) public exposure due to Harris’s lack of charisma, alienation of moderate voters, and exposure of the former vice president’s weak mental and physical condition, said Peter Schweizer, author of [*Profiles in Corruption: Abuse of Power by America’s Progressive Elite*](https://www.amazon.com/Profiles-Corruption-Abuse-Americas-Progressive/dp/1094149683?tag=breitbart035-20), and senior contributor at Breitbart News.

Biden’s team explain the former vice president’s rare public appearances as a function of concerns related to the coronavirus. Schweizer noted that if Harris were to be more visible than Biden, it would undermine the ostensible rationale for Biden’s limited visibility.

Schweizer said, “I think that the Biden-Harris campaign is sort of on the horns of a dilemma, because Joe Biden has been scarce on the campaign trail. There’s all kinds of speculation why. The campaign wants to officially say it’s because they’re trying to abide by some kind of COVID restriction to limit travel. I think a lot of observers believe that it has more to do with the health of Joe Biden, [and] the fact that he’s highly vulnerable, but also there are questions about his performance when he does do speeches.”

“If Joe Biden is not out there on the campaign trail and Kamala Harris is, it highlights the fact that they don’t have a policy about campaigning [regarding COVID-19],” determined Schweizer. “It’s just they don’t want Joe Biden out on the campaign trail.”

**LISTEN**:

Schweizer noted Harris’s lack of popularity in her home state of California as evidence of the senator’s lack of charisma.

“She’s not terribly popular, [and] she doesn’t poll well,” Schweizer remarked. “Recall when she [dropped out](https://www.breitbart.com/2020-election/2019/12/03/kamala-harris-quits-presidential-race/) [before] the presidential primary in her own state of California. She was polling something like [eight percent](https://www.cnn.com/2019/10/03/politics/kamala-harris-california-presidential-poll-2020/index.html). In a lot of respects, I think it is kind of a mystifying choice.”

“[Harris’s] likability factor doesn’t seem to be particularly high,” Schweizer estimated. “I think that’s one of the reasons why she is scarce in the campaign. … From the standpoint of Democrats, it’s a very poor strategy. Voters expect you to go out and earn their votes, and and if you’re not going to work for it, it’s hard to attract people.”

Marlow observed Harris’s inauthentic emotional expressions. “She is not particularly persuasive,” he stated. “When she speaks, I think she laughs and giggles at inappropriate times [and] she gets strident from time to time.”

Harris’s political positions undermine Biden’s decades of positioning as a “moderate” Democrat, Schweizer explained, further necessitating the Biden team’s lessening of Harris’s role in the Democrats’ presidential campaign.

Schweizer said, “Joe Biden has positioned himself for most of his career [as a] more centrist Democrat. He was not a George McGovern Democrat. He was not a Jimmy Carter Democrat. He was Bill Clinton-like Democrat. Along comes Kamala Harris [with] a voting record to the left of Bernie Sanders — particularly when it comes to issues that are front and center right now, [such as] race relations, the police, and issues like reparations.”

Harris’s political positions risk alienating suburban Democrats, speculated Schweizer. He said, “She is very very outspoken and vocal in a way that is probably not helpful from the standpoint of the Biden campaign in appealing to suburban voters.”

Schweizer remarked, “Part of my theory is that they’re keeping [Harris] off the campaign trail because they don’t want her out there saying the kinds of things that she has said in the past, because it will scare a lot of moderate voters.

Biden’s “physical feebleness” is exaggerated in contrast to Harris’s well-being, Schweizer noted. He suspected that Biden’s political staffers seek to minimize this exposure by limiting Harris’s public appearances.

Harris [refused](https://www.realclearpolitics.com/video/2020/09/07/watch_live_kamala_campaigns_with_black_business_owners_union_workers_in_wisconsin.html)to take questions from union workers and black business owners at a “roundtable discussion” in Milwaukee, WI, on Tuesday. While wearing a mask, Harris, said, “I think we’re all done here” when invited to a question and answer session

**Pardon Assange**

US President Donald Trump was "aware of and had approved of" [US Congressman Dana Rochbacher](https://sputniknews.com/us/202002191078355289-rohrabacher-at-no-time-did-i-offer-a-deal-to-wikileaks-julian-assange-from-trump/) and Mr Charles Johnson meeting with Julian Assange in order to secure the [source of the DNC Leaks](https://sputniknews.com/interviews/202008121080143672-we-have-absolute-proof-dnc-leaks-were-not-hacked-nsa-whistleblower-says/), in exchange for some form of "[pardon, assurance or agreement](https://sputniknews.com/us/202002191078354664-white-house-denies-offering-assange-pardon-to-say-russia-had-no-role-in-dnc-leaks/)" which would "both benefit President Trump politically" and prevent a US indictment against and extradition of Mr Assange, the Old Bailey heard on Friday.

​The assertions were read into open court on behalf of barrister Jennifer Robinson, who was present at the meeting in the Ecuadorian Embassy on 15 August 2015. This was before any indictment was issued against the WikiLeaks publisher, The US government's representative [told the court](https://sputniknews.com/uk/202002191078353723-donald-trump-offered-pardon-to-wkileaks-founder-julian-assange-uk-court-told/) that they do not dispute [the offer was made](https://sputniknews.com/analysis/202002201078356699-if-it-did-happen-it-was-not-an-offer-to-assange-to-lie---un-expert-on-alleged-pardon-offer/) during the meeting but do appear that they will contest the truthfulness of the offer itself. Ms Robinson's statement notes that Mr Rohrabacher and Mr Johnson told Ms Robinson and Mr Assange that they "wanted to resolve the ongoing speculation of Russian involvement in the Democratic National Convention" and that it was "damaging to US Russia relations and reviving old Cold War politics".

Ms Robinson has represented Mr Assange on numerous matters since 2010, both as a solicitor and a barrister.

​Ms Robinson states that the Congressman made clear that "the source of the DNC leaks would be of interest value and interest" to the President. Mr Rohrabacher apparently described what would be a "win/win solution" for Mr Assange to leave the embassy and "get on with his life".

Ms Robinson's notes that Mr Rohrabacher said he would "then return" and see what "would be done" to prevent Mr Assange's indictment and extradition. Mr Assange did not provide the identity of any source", the statement said.

Mr Assange faces up to 175 years in prison if he is convicted on all of the charges in the US. The charges almost entirely relate to his role in publishing the Iraq and Afghanistan war logs, Guantanamo Bay detainee files and the Diplomatic Cables, which revealed war crimes and other criminality and abuse committed by the US government and US-backed forces.

**Cheat by Mail Begins**

The Michigan secretary of state misprinted the Trump line on ballots intended to be mailed to troops serving overseas, the Detroit News [reported](https://www.detroitnews.com/story/news/local/michigan/2020/09/15/400-plus-michigan-overseas-ballots-list-wrong-running-mate-trump/5810829002/).

Jocelyn Benson, who has endorsed President Trump’s rival, Joe Biden, and spoke at the recent Democratic National Convention (DNC), made the apparent error. The ballot listed Jeremy Cohen as Trump’s running mate. Cohen is running for vice president on the libertarian ticket with Jo Jorgensen.

The name of the incumbent vice president, Mike Pence, was omitted altogether. Jorgensen’s line lacked a running mate, thus creating three errors on the ballot.

Over 400 incorrect ballots were downloaded from the secretary’s website by local clerks to be sent to voters. It is not clear how many were actually mailed.

The ballots were “meant to be mailed or emailed to Michigan residents living abroad under the Military and Overseas Empowerment (MOVE) Act,” the paper reported.

“Replacement” ballots will be issued to those who may have been mailed incorrect ones, according to the secretary of state’s office.

“If a voter does happen to return the incorrect ballot instead of the correct ballot, it will still count,” Benson spokeswoman Tracy Wimmer said.

“The clerk will be instructed to duplicate a vote for Trump onto a ballot for Trump/Pence.”

The secretary of state has endorsed Biden for president.

During the DNC, Benson pushed voting by mail.

“And let’s be clear: there is absolutely zero difference between voting by mail and voting absentee. Millions of Americans have been voting absentee for decades. Donald Trump, his family, his staff — they all vote by mail. In fact, in states like Colorado, Utah, and Oregon voters have been voting by mail for years. Republicans and Democrats agree: it is safe,” she said, according to [ABC News](https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/biden-accept-nomination-president-closing-day-democratic-national/story?id=72426135).

In 2018, Biden [endorsed](https://www.facebook.com/votebenson/photos/a.10151664582907799/10155805298737799/?type=1&theater) Benson to be secretary of state.

“Jocelyn is a leader who will make Michigan proud and that is why I am supporting her,” he said.

A new independent, nationwide analysis of voter rolls in 42 states found more than 349,000 dead people still on the rolls and tens of thousands more voters with duplicate registrations.The findings come from the Public Interest Legal Foundation, which has launched the "Safeguarding America's Votes and Elections" database as a tool to track voter roll problems.

Its initial review of the integrity of states' voter files come just as states are moving toward mail-in voting this fall.

"The detailed information and analysis presented in this report makes it abundantly clear that states across America, including many that will determine control of the White House and Congress, are unprepared to accommodate a surge in mail-in voting this fall," PILF President J. Christian Adams said. "After standardizing registration lists in 42 states, Public Interest Legal Foundation's SAVE database uncovered voter rolls saturated with alarming errors. Prior to publishing this report, PILF shared some findings with state election officials in hopes they would validate and act on helpful information. With only weeks to go before the start of early voting, we’re hopeful this report will help spur broader public understanding about apparent problems which call into question the integrity of our election process."

For example, there were 349,773 "apparently deceased registrants" in 41 states' voter rolls. New York, Texas, Michigan, Florida and California accounted for more than half of that total.

"During the 2018 general election, 37,889 likely duplicate registrants are apparently credited for casting two votes from the same address, and 34,000 registrants appear to have voted from non-residential addresses. Additionally, 6,718 registrants were apparently credited for voting after death. During the 2016 general election, SAVE revealed that number was higher, with a total of 7,890 registrants apparently being credited for voting after death," the organization said.

PILF said it collected information from 42 states and created a format that could be studied. Then the information was compared to commercial and governmental databases.

"Also included with the data were voter history fields, namely, data about when each registrant voted. The combination of state election data, commercial data, and federal sources such as the Social Security Death Index, provides researchers with perhaps the best platform ever constructed to analyze the health of the voter rolls and catalogue potential vulnerabilities," PILF said.

The report, "Critical Condition: American voter rolls filled with errors, dead voters, and duplicate registrations," found 43,760 likely duplicate registrants in 2016 and 5,500 registrants who were credited for voting twice in the same state from two different addresses in 2018.

Adams wrote in the report that he worked with the Presidential Advisory Commission on Election Integrity in 2018, while filed dozens of lawsuits because of "stonewalling and refusal by many state officials to provide the data, name-calling, and even some old-fashioned political grandstanding."

He said the "reactionary" response was misguided since election integrity campaigns are "intended to protect the most precious right that voters have: the value of their ballot."

The foundation filed a lawsuit in Allegheny County, Pennsylvania, which in recent years "has received national attention for admitting to registration glitches over decades that resulted in thousands of foreign nationals being registered to vote."

Records there showed 1,500 voters were born in the 1800s.

Thousands of duplicate and even triplicate registrations also triggered a legal fight in Detroit, but it was dismissed when "local officials had started hunting for death records across the state" and had cleaned up "nearly every one of the thousands of duplicates."

"You cannot hope to improve the contents of American voter registration systems unless you are first willing to digest them in their entirety," the study explains.

"In an all-mail voting scenario, hundreds of thousands of dead registrants would get ballots; many thousands more would again have opportunities to vote twice; and many thousands more would have chances to claim mailbox rental stores, warehouses, or gas" stations as residences.

**Many COVID Cases Not Contagious**

Growing body of research suggests that a significant number of confirmed COVID-19 infections in the U.S. — perhaps as many as 9 out of every 10 — may not be infectious at all, with much of the country's testing equipment possibly picking up mere fragments of the disease rather than full-blown infections.

Confirmed cases of the disease have been the focal point of public health authorities and governments worldwide for many months, with countries across the globe working frantically to shore up their testing infrastructure and ensure that most citizens who want a COVID-19 test can obtain one with relative ease.

Many politicians, meanwhile — including most state governors in the U.S. — have tied reopening policies to the number of cases detected in the local community, with regions and localities often being permitted to reopen in staggered "phases" only when they have reached successively lower benchmarks of average new daily cases in the area.

Numerous institutions, meanwhile, have adopted testing protocols in an attempt to preempt the spread of the virus. American colleges and universities, for instance, have turned to mass testing in order to closely monitor incidences of the disease among students, particularly residential students living on campus.

Yet a burgeoning line of scientific inquiry suggests that many confirmed infections of COVID-19 may actually be just residual traces of the virus itself, a contention that — if true — may suggest both that current high levels of positive viruses are clinically insignificant and that the mitigation measures used to suppress them may be excessive.

**'Cycle threshold' set very high for many tests**

At issue is the method by which many COVID-19 tests detect a patient's viral load within a given sample. Polymerase chain reaction tests, which have been widely deployed to determine if individuals are infected with the disease, function by amplifying DNA samples to the point that an antigen can be detected and classified.

The "cycle threshold" is the number of amplification cycles a PCR test goes through before a target pathogen is detected. A lower cycle threshold means that a higher amount of the virus was present in the sample; a higher threshold means the machine had to work harder to detect the virus in the sample, indicating a lower viral load and more likely a non-infectious patient.

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According to [a rundown of PCR tests compiled by the Foundation for Innovative New Diagnostics](https://www.finddx.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/FIND_SARS-COV2_molecular-assay-evaluation-results_03Jul2020.pdf), many manufacturers of PCR tests set the cycle threshold cutoff for a positive sample at up to around 40 cycles, a level numerous public health officials believe is guaranteed to return what are effectively false positive results that have detected fragments of the virus.

"I'm shocked that people would think that 40 could represent a positive," Juliet Morrison, a virology professor at the University of California, Riverside, [told the New York Times](https://www.nytimes.com/2020/08/29/health/coronavirus-testing.html) in August.

Health authorities elsewhere have indicated similar skepticism of high-threshold tests. A spokeswoman for Taiwan's Central Epidemic Command Center [said in June](https://focustaiwan.tw/society/202006250010) that the agency only assigns positive cases to samples with Cts of 35 or less, with authorities there believing that any samples with Cts of more than 32 are likely (though not definitely) non-infectious.

A team of researchers at Oxford, meanwhile, wrote in [a preprint paper last week](https://www.medrxiv.org/content/10.1101/2020.08.04.20167932v3) that, based on a review of various sample collections, swabs requiring more than 30 cycles were "associated with non-infectious samples."

Binary positive-negative test results — in which cycle thresholds are not considered — will "result in false positives with segregation of large numbers of people who are no longer infectious and hence not a threat to public health," they wrote.

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Preprint papers have not yet been through the peer review process, so their results and conclusions can be changed prior to full publication. Yet several other research projects have indicated similar results. One, [published in April](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7185831/) by public health authorities out of France, found that "patients with Ct values equal or above 34 do not excrete infectious viral particles."

Similarly, [a study out of Ireland](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7323671/) seeking to determine "the duration of infectivity" of COVID-19 patients found that, of numerous samples subject to PCR testing, scientists were unable to achieve positive culture growth in any that required more than 34.3 cycles.

Both of those thresholds are notably smaller than the maximum number of cycles instituted by many test manufacturers, suggesting that there may be many nominally positive COVID-19 cases that are innocuous far as infectiousness and illness are concerned.

Echoing those concerns, researchers at Harvard in May [argued](https://academic.oup.com/cid/advance-article/doi/10.1093/cid/ciaa619/5841456) that "the Ct value from positive test results, when interpreted in context, can help to refine clinical decision making," and that a cycle threshold of around 34 may be a useful tool for determining when a patient is truly infectious and when he or she is merely carrying remnants of the virus.

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Such a policy, if implemented, could have momentous implications for public health policy in the U.S. and elsewhere. Presently, in many industries and at many institutions, a single positive COVID-19 case can result in a complete shutdown of the affected company or university or elementary school, followed by a rush to have everyone tested out of concern that the virus may have spread.

A greater emphasis on the cycle threshold of positive tests may preempt such disruptive policies by signaling which positive test results are truly infectious and which are detecting low viral loads at much less threat of infectivity.

Early indications suggest the number of clinically trivial positive cases in the U.S. might be startlingly high**.**The New York Times said last month that a review of the cycle thresholds of positive cases in Nevada, New York and Massachusetts indicated that "up to 90 percent of people testing positive carried barely any virus."

Those numbers, if extrapolated nationwide, could suggest that a significant proportion of the mitigation and preparation measures currently in place across the U.S. might be excessive relative to the actual level of infectious cases around the country.

Ultimately it can be difficult to determine the cycle thresholds used at laboratories across the country, making that kind of extrapolation difficult. A spokeswoman for LabCorp — one of the largest clinical laboratory groups in the world — said the company "does not include the CT value in result reporting."

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"Our CT cutoff is based on extensive validation," she said, "and is within the accepted range to accurately identify individuals currently infected with SARS-CoV-2." The company [on its website](https://www.labcorp.com/coronavirus-disease-covid-19/news) says it has performed 13.5 million COVID-19 tests, about 15% of the country's total number of tests.

At the Center for Evidence-Based Medicine at Oxford University, researchers [stressed last month](https://www.cebm.net/covid-19/infectious-positive-pcr-test-result-covid-19/) that "PCR detection of viruses is helpful so long as its limitations are understood; while it detects RNA in minute quantities, caution needs to be applied to the results as it often does not detect infectious virus."

"If this is not understood, PCR results may lead to restrictions for large groups of people who do not present an infection risk," they wrote.

**The Global Syndicate Court**

You and I have discussed the dangers of the reign of the judges. Judges have destroyed many nations larger and for their day much more powerful that the United States. Rules and laws are what make a nation predictable for the markets and fair for its citizens. Ask any defense attorney about the necessity of knowing and playing the rule book in business. The rules are there for everyone.

Or are they? It appears that rules apply to you, but not to the Global Syndicate. The Syndicate’s political arm, the Marxists now controlling the Democrat party and still some of the Republican party, know one thing very well. Any war is only over when the enemy surrenders to the victor. In case you haven’t flown over the skies in the West or tried to wear a MAGA hat on an airline lately, you should know that the war rages on.

The bloody reign of the judges, facilitating the termination of more than 61 million babies in America alone, suffered what many think is a terrible blow this week when it was reported that Ruth Bader Ginsburg passed away. Without mentioning the conspiracy that claims her death was accidently leaked or discovered when she missed a hearing, let’s just for now agree that she died on Friday, September 18th.

President Trump has the right and duty to replace her. He has already provided a list of replacements we the people have reviewed and accepted a long time ago. In fact, this list may be the single greatest reason he won in 2016. We weren’t just electing a president. We were returning the supreme court to the constitution. I think it was the not-Hillary vote that made him competitive, but it was the supreme court list that made him the winner. That’s just my opinion.

Now, the Democrats find themselves in trouble. The Marxists have taken over. There is a pile of bodies stretching around the globe, including Russian ambassadors, US ambassadors, and various whistelblowers and foreign diplomats who have been murdered in cold blood over this. Many billions of US taxpayer dollars have been laundered through various Ukrainian shell corporations. Chinese money has soaked into universities, banks, campaigns, and of course thousands of US corporations to make sure that the Marxists have at least 75 thousand mercenaries on our streets burning down buildings and cars and beating and shooting Trump supporters in the streets. The body count of Americans has already surpassed that of the Iraq war. Slowly, ever so slowly, the kids are being rescued from human trafficking that is pumping billions into the cash accounts of Syndicate.

That being said, with the death of Ruth, Trump can place a conservative onto the supreme court that will bring balance to the force. There is a chance that court cases will be brought before the judges that will align the law with science. Maybe, just maybe, the bill called the Hyde Amendment will pass and make it through the court. This forbids the billion-dollar butcher known as Planned Parenthood from laundering taxpayer money for the Democrat party. Right now, the Democrats send PP $500 million a year. PP turns around and writes a check to the Democrats for $56 million a year. That, Earth explorers, is money laundering. It is illegal, but the Democrats have dirt. That is to say, they had dirt on Syndicate Republicans. Of course, many of these Establishment Republicans quit, or stopped running for office. Their day will come.

For now, we have the court to deal with. And look what is about to take place.

What will happen if the Marxists win? Are you ready? Within hours of the death of Ruth Bader Ginsburg, Democrats are planning what they should do next year if they win decisively in the election. That is a big if, but this is their plan, so listen to me.

One likely framework looks like this: It’s January 2021. Biden wins by a small margin, the Dems keep the House, and they win back the Senate. Don’t kill yourself before you hear me out. Trump has nominated and the Republican Senate has appointed and sworn in the a young, conservative female justice and locked in a powerful and durable 6-3 constitutional majority on the nation’s highest court.

Democratic partisans will be furious at Mitch McConnell’s gaming of the system. The death threats are no numerous now, I can’t keep up with them. This is the Democrat way. Now, keep in mind this only happens if Biden wins and the Democrats keep the House, and the Democrats win back the Senate. I know it sounds impossible, but trust me there are billions and billions of dollars and more than 100 thousand mercenaries inside our borders this very moment who are consecrated and dedicated and set apart to make this happen or die trying. They will be frustrated and powerless to reverse history; however, the Democrats will reach for the one weapon in their arsenal to fix this: Packing the court with new justices.

Within days, or moments, of the start of a new Senate session, Majority Leader Chuck Schumer announces his intention to move legislation that would expand the Supreme Court from nine to 13 members, to “repair the wound inflicted on our Constitution by the Republicans’ refusal to recognize the will of the electorate.” The Senate and House pass the bill, and President Joe Biden signs it on Inauguration Day.

It’s an approach Democrats are [already raising](https://twitter.com/EdMarkey/status/1307122232850870274?s=20). Simple, right?

Time for a reality check.

It’s true that Congress can shape the size of the court to its political desires. In 1866, with a Congress at permanent war with President Andrew Johnson, it passed the Judicial Circuits Act, which cut the size of the court from nine to seven, and barred Johnson from appointing any new justices. (After Ulysses Grant was elected president in 1868, the number was bumped back up to nine, where it has remained ever since.)

But when it comes to the court, there are and have been “institutional” concerns that have trumped the simple exercise of political power.

The most famous example was the effort by President Franklin Roosevelt in 1937 to deal with a court that was striking down much of his New Deal legislation. After his landslide reelection in 1936, he proposed to add one justice for every judge who’d reached the age of 70, up to a total of 15. (It was the “nine old men”, political folklore had it, who were thwarting the president.)

Despite his popularity, and the overwhelming control of Congress by Global Syndicate, the proposal became the first political defeat of FDR’s presidency—and came at the hands of his own party. His own vice president, John Nance Garner, fought it. He paid the price later when Roosevelt stole his election on the floor of the 1940 Democrat convention for an unprecedented third term; and he wasn’t even on the ballot. Garner nearly committed suicide over that one.

It was actually the Democratic leader in the Senate who rejected Roosevelt’s plot to make the supreme court a powerless third branch of government. Roosevelt tried to make the argument that the court was over-worked, and needed more justices to handle the workload. Chief Justice Charles Evans Hughes, responding to the urgings of liberal court-packing foe Montana Sen. Burton Wheeler, wrote a public letter saying that, contrary to FDR’s concerns, the court was not overworked at all, thank you very much. The proposal died in Congress before a vote was taken.

Today, one of the more significant institutional voices against expanding the court is none other than Joe Biden. In just a few Alzeimer moments, Biden has forgotten all about that. The Marxists need to get past the Constitution. In July 2019, Biden said “we’ll live to rue that day” if the court was expanded. In a debate, he said it would lead to round after round of expansion and the court would “lose all credibility.” Senator Bernie Sanders, no stranger to radical ideas, has also said he doesn’t want to pack the court. So has the more moderate Michael Bennet.

But, you see, that was before the coming war with Americans over RBG’s seat. The Marxists are the ones with the list of names of radical left-wing judges who think the Constitution is not keeping up with the times.

If a new Democratic president and Senate are taking power just after a blatant GOP power grab in the face of the electorate’s choice, any reluctance on the part of Biden or a Senate Democrat would face the full fury of the Democratic base. Steve Bannon once famously said that, in politics, “We [the Right] go for the head wound, and your side has pillow fights.” If there’s a Supreme Court seat or two to avenge, the pillow-fight approach might end. Apart from the hunger for political payback, a conservative court shaped by Mitch McConnell would mean the all but certain death of the Affordable Care Act, the potential overturn of *Roe v. Wade*, and a generation of judicial hostility to the core ideas of the Democratic left.

So, if Senate Republicans won’t stop McConnell from jamming a justice through the Senate, would Senate Democrats really be constrained by their prior doubts about expansion? One of the likeliest consequences of the confirmation of a “lame duck” justice is a battle royal within the Democratic ranks over just that question—hardly what a new President Biden needs, as he deals with multitrillion-dollar deficits, a still-deadly viral pandemic and lingering economic woes.

As FDR’s scheme showed, court-packing doesn’t have to be as simple as just elevating additional justices to the court. There are several alternatives that have been debated in legal and academic circles: They range from giving each political party five justices, who would then choose five more; to limiting the terms of judges so that every president gets two picks; to making all 180 federal appeals court judges members of the court, with panels of nine chosen at random to rule on all matters, including which cases the court would take up. (This change would require only legislation; proposals for limiting the terms of justices would require amending the Constitution.)

They all have the quality of careful thought and the nonexistent possibility that any of them becomes reality in the midst of a full-blown constitutional brawl. And if Congress pushes through a restructuring of the court on a strictly partisan vote, giving Americans a Supreme Court that looks unlike anything they grew up with, and unlike the institution we’ve had for more than 240 years, it’s hard to imagine the country as a whole would see its decisions as legitimate.

There’s a good reason that more than 80 years ago, in a time of turmoil, a Democratic president at the peak of his political power nonetheless found his plans thwarted by members of his own party, who found the cost of tinkering with constitutional machinery too high a price to pay. If McConnell calls a lame-duck session in the face of an electoral loss to lock in a conservative court majority, however, it’s hard to imagine any such concerns staying the hands of Democrats.

**The Short List**

## **Amy Coney Barrett**

A judge on the US Court of Appeals for the 7th Circuit, Barrett was on Trump’s shortlist for his second Supreme Court nomination, which ultimately went to Justice Brett Kavanaugh in 2018.

A graduate of Notre Dame University Law School, she clerked for the late conservative Justice Antonin Scalia and then spent two decades as a law professor at Notre Dame.

Barrett, 48, is a favorite of the religious right, and her deep ties to her Catholic faith earned her a grilling from Democrats during her confirmation hearings to the federal bench. California Sen. Dianne Feinstein memorably told her: “The dogma lives loudly within you, and that’s a concern.”

Barrett responded: “It’s never appropriate for a judge to impose that judge’s personal convictions, whether they arise from faith or anywhere else, on the law.”

Having previously written that Supreme Court precedents are not set in stone, the question of whether Barrett would vote to overturn Roe v. Wade would loom large over her nomination.

She and her husband, Assistant US Attorney Jesse Barrett, live in Indiana and have seven children.

## **Britt Grant**

A former justice on the Georgia Supreme Court, Grant has links to Kavanaugh, having clerked for the jurist on the US Court of Appeals for the DC Circuit.

He swore Grant, 42, in to her current post on the 11th Circuit US Court of Appeals, Atlanta, in August 2018 — amid his own high court confirmation — lauding her as a “fair and even-handed” judge.

A graduate of Stanford Law School, where she was president of the conservative Federalist Society chapter, Grant previously served a stint in George W. Bush’s administration under various roles. She is married and has three children.

## **Amul Thapar**

Thapar was a strong contender to fill the seat of Justice Antonin Scalia, which ultimately went to Justice Neil Gorsuch.

A former Kentucky judge and US attorney, Thapar, 51, was the first federal district court judge of South Asian descent, named in 2007 and would be the first Indian American to reach the Supreme Court.

He was confirmed to the US Court of Appeals for the 6th Circuit in May 2017. A graduate of the University of California-Berkeley law school, he is married with three children.

## **Allison Eid**

A former law clerk for Justice Clarence Thomas, Eid served for a decade on the Supreme Court of her home state of Colorado.

One of the names on Trump’s original 2016 list of potential high court nominees, Eid, 55, succeeded Gorsuch on the US Court of Appeals for the 10th Circuit in 2017.

She is a graduate of the University of Chicago Law School and a former professor at the University of Colorado Law School. She met her attorney hubby, Troy, when they were both undergraduates at Stanford University. They have two children.

## **Joan Larsen**

A former law clerk for Justice Antonin Scalia, Larsen spent many years of her career as a professor University of Michigan School of Law.

She served in the George W. Bush administration in the US Department of Justice Office of Legal Counsel.

Larsen, 51, was appointed to the Michigan Supreme Court in 2015 before put up by Trump for the US Court of Appeals for the 6th Circuit in 2017.

She graduated first in her class from Northwestern University School of Law.

Jonathan Turley, a law professor at George Washington University, noted that, “There is no replacing Ruth Bader Ginsburg and we all know it.

“She is the type of personality that comes few times in history,” he said.

“She was one of the most consistent and clear and courageous voices in the history of the Court.

“Her replacement by President Donald Trump could prove the most consequential and transformative nomination in the history of the modern Court. An array of legal doctrine currently dangle by 5-4 majorities.”

**The World According to Soros**

Contributor Robby Starbuck

Since 2015, George Soros has been executing a plan to reshape the country through local district attorney elections by pumping unprecedented amounts of money into races that typically only see candidates spend in the low five figures.

Here’s why he has an interest in these local races. Soros is exploiting the reality that all politics are local in some way. To transform America, you have to transform the way towns and cities operate.

A recent exchange on Fox News involving former House Speaker Newt Gingrich, Fox News host Harris Faulkner, Democrat commentator Marie Harf, and Fox commentator Melissa A. Francis made the hair on my arms stand up because I realized how many people were either unaware of what Soros is doing or have been silenced by the idea that it’s somehow antisemitic to criticize Soros’s political activity.

## **Criticizing People’s Political Actions Isn’t Racist**

Before we dive into what Soros has done, we need to put the antisemitism argument to bed. Criticizing how an enormously wealthy individual uses his money to change a nation is not in any way related to criticism of that person’s ethnicity or religious beliefs. It’s simply an exercise of civic engagement, which is essential for any self-governing people.

The left’s assumption that questioning someone’s political spending is equivalent to questioning his dignity as a person is itself a deeply bigoted assumption, designed solely to silence dissent and shut down debate.

In the segment I referred to earlier, Gingrich brought up the indisputable fact that Soros has been spending what can only be described as unprecedented amounts of money on local races in recent years, with a goal of flipping DA races to far-left “progressive” candidates who will implement soft-on-crime policies that inevitably result in skyrocketing crime rates and violent criminals walking free.

In response, Harf and Francis objected: “George Soros doesn’t need to be a part of this conversation.” Harf went so far as to deny that Soros is buying these races, and Faulkner did not step in to correct her. The segment ends in awkward silence as a disappointed Gingrich remarks that it’s apparently “verboten” to speak about Soros on Fox News now.

## **Buying Prosecutors Who Are Soft on Crime**

Since 2015, Soros has pumped tens of millions of dollars into local races in Texas, Colorado, California, Oregon, Washington, Florida, and New York, as well as swing states such as Pennsylvania, Virginia, and Arizona. In 2016, Soros spent $2,000,000 on a single sheriff race in Maricopa County, Arizona, helping the leftist candidate, Paul Penzone, win.

In Philadelphia, Soros spent an insane $1,700,000 to elect Larry Krasner DA. Soros has also given millions of dollars in grants to candidates in other states. These enormous contributions have a correspondingly enormous impact.

Although his efforts haven’t been universally successful, the vast majority of Soros-backed candidates have won with Soros donations pushing them across the finish line. Here are just a few examples:

* $2,000,000 to fund Kim Foxx in her Cook County (Chicago, Ill.) re-election bid.
* $1,400,000 to fund Aramis Ayala’s campaign to become state’s attorney of Orlando, Fla.
* $1,150,000 to fund Jake Lilly’s run to become DA of Jefferson and Gilpin County (Denver) in Colorado.
* $958,000 to fund Joe Gonzales’s run to become DA of Bexar County (San Antonio, Texas).
* $650,000 to fund Jose Garza in his Travis County (Austin, Texas) re-election bid.
* $750,000 to fund Joe Kimok in his Broward County, Fla. state’s attorney race.
* $583,000 to fund Kim Ogg’s run to become Harris County (Houston, Texas) DA.
* $583,000 to fund Parisa Dehghani-Tafti in her race to be Arlington County (Va.) commonwealth’s attorney.
* $500,000 to fund Jody Owen’s run to become Hinds County, Miss. (Jackson) DA.
* $406,000 to fund James E. Stewart’s run to become Caddo Parish, La. (Shreveport) DA.
* $392,000 to fund Steve T. Descano’s bid to become Fairfax County (Va.) commonwealth’s attorney.
* $275,000 to fund Diana Becton’s bid to remain as Contra Costa County, Calif. DA.
* $147,000 to fund Darius Pattillo in his run to become Harris County, Ga. DA.
* $116,000 to fund Kim Gardner’s re-election bid as St. Louis circuit attorney.
* $107,000 to fund Raul Torrez bid to become Benalillo County (Albuquerque, N.M.) DA.
* $89,000 to fund Scott Colom’s bid to become DA of Lowndes County, Miss.

That’s just a partial list, but it surely corroborates Gingrich’s point that Soros “paid for” the outcomes of those elections, notwithstanding Harf’s unsubstantiated denial. In 2018 The Los Angeles Times reported that Soros spent $2,700,000 on California DA races alone, and another $16 million on 17 DA races in other states.

## **Look How Crazy These DAs Are**

San Francisco’s new DA, Chesa Boudin, is a perfect example of the ideological temperament of the candidates Soros has been backing. Boudin is a former translator for the late Venezuelan socialist dictator Hugo Chavez.

He’s also the son of two Weather Underground domestic terrorists who were convicted of murder for their roles in a Brink’s armored car robbery that resulted in the killings of three people. Due to the incarceration of his parents, Boudin was raised by former Weather Underground leader Bill Ayers.

Huge contributions from the deep-pocketed Soros have made it nearly impossible for anyone to compete against his chosen candidates because DA elections rarely involve campaign war chests in excess of a few tens of thousands of dollars. Soros’s millions allow his candidates to bombard voters with propaganda, including commercials that smear Republicans as racists for fighting crime.

## **What Soros’s DAs Have Done In Office**

Now let’s talk about what happens after Election Day, when the Soros-backed candidates start wielding their newfound power. Many of the following names will likely be familiar.

Foxx is well known as the DA who let actor Jussie Smollett escape prosecution after he hoaxed the nation by pretending he was beaten up by two men who allegedly shouted “This is MAGA country” in deep-blue Chicago, Illinois. A special prosecutor assigned to examine Foxx’s conduct in the case said there was “substantial abuses of discretion and operational failures” and determined she was guilty of “making false and/or misleading statements to the public.”

A recent report from the Law Enforcement Legal Defense Fund, moreover, found a 13 percent decline in guilty pleas or verdicts in felony cases and a 39 percent increase in dropped or lost cases after Foxx took office.

If you’ve had the misfortune of hearing Kim Gardner’s name, it’s probably because she’s trying to throw Mark and Patricia McCloskey in jail for defending their home by exercising their right to bear arms when they were threatened by rioters. Philadelphia DA Larry Krasner, along with Baltimore DA Maryln Mosby, threatened in an op-ed to have federal officers arrested if these prosecutors feel they overstep their authority in his district.

Boudin is one of the DAs on this list who refuses to prosecute what he calls “quality-of-life crimes” such as camping in the streets, offering or soliciting sex, public urination, and more. He also recently questioned whether spending money on law enforcement is “the most effective” use of tax dollars. He has also said that policing and incarceration “are tremendously expensive and are failed responses to what we are trying to deal with.”

Diane Becton of Contra Costa County, Calif. filed hate crime charges against David Nelson and Nichole Anderson for painting over a Black Lives Matter mural. Suffolk County, Mass. DA Rachael Rollins, along with Krasner and Boudin, is part of the also-Soros-backed “Truth, Justice, and Reconciliation Commissions” that team up with far-left activist Shaun King’s “Grassroots Law Project” to advocate for defunding the police. Yes, that’s the same Shaun King who recently called for people to destroy statues and stained glass windows that depict Jesus as white.

Before going on his spending spree in DA races, Soros also made a $50 million donation to the American Civil Liberties Union’s “Campaign to End Mass Incarceration” through his Open Society Foundation in 2014. Much of this money trickled down to local progressive groups who back these types of radical candidates as well.

## **Without Law and Order, You Don’t Have a Country**

After watching the Fox News exchange involving Gingrich, Francis, Harf, and Faulkner, I wondered how anyone who works in the news business could be so uninformed about what Soros has been up to. The left-wing billionaire’s plan clearly operates on the understanding that all politics are local and takes advantage of small-ball local DA races to remake the American justice system — and, by extension, remake all of America into the far-left world of his dreams.

That leap from remaking our justice system to remaking America may seem like a long jump to some, but law and order is the core of America’s existence. Without law and order, you don’t have a country.

If you want to know what the next step is for Soros, it’s a continued expansion of funding for DA races, but also so much more. His recent [pledge of $1 billion](https://www.tabletmag.com/sections/news/articles/bard-college-soros-campus-week) to endow a network of universities across the nation is part and parcel with his broader effort to promote his far-left ideology among impressionable young people.

Soros calls this initiative “the most important project of my life.” That should deeply concern ordinary Americans everywhere, and perhaps even inspire a backlash of small-dollar donations to fight Soros’s pernicious influence.

I believe that maintaining our freedoms and preserving the Constitution are two pillars of keeping America great, along with upholding the rule of law and properly educating our youth. Soros has a plan to systematically tear down those pillars, and we’re not supposed to talk about it. But we must, and we will.

**The Trump Biden Debate**

Three? No way. One? Okay, partially. The physical and mental strain of high-level public speaking and debates can be arduous, even debilitating. For seniors especially, constant levels of high stress can cause dangerous and lasting effects, including high blood pressure, weakened immune system, anxiety, depression, insomnia, and an increased risk for heart disease. If the Democrats want a healthy Joe Biden in 2021 and beyond, they would be wise to have him skip the debates and all the preparation they require.

While Biden has said “he can hardly wait” to take on Trump in the debates, I don’t think his team or his proxies will let him. Even before Kenosha, Nancy Pelosi, Joe Lockhart, and others were publicly urging their candidate to pull out of the debates, ostensibly because of Trump’s alleged incorrigible dishonesty. I expect that the drumbeat to withdraw will increase steadily over the next two weeks. The usual anti-Trump “bombshells” by the media (like those in the Atlantic and in Bob Woodward’s latest book) will provide the Democrats some cover, though dodging the debates will hurt them in some circles.

While I was driving in my office—yes, I drive about 5 hours a day—I had a thought about the coming debate on the 19th of September. Gee, that is only 9 days from now. You know Chris Wallace is moderating. He won’t ask hard questions of Biden. He’ll ask Trump about the latest model, who’s career has gone stale and needed a nice check for $100 grand, and her claims that he was too liberal with his hands. He’ll ask about his tax returns, or his use of the White House as the backdrop for the GNC. But, of Biden he won’t ask much of anything.

So, Trump is going to ask the questions. And it came to me. Here is the questions I would put to Biden.

“So, Joe. If you had a sitting senator, a former secretary of State or two, and a gaggle of ambassadors who were laundering US taxpayer money through various shell corporations in the Ukraine, and the got indicted over there, what would you do? Would you turn them over to the Ukrainian department of justice, open an investigation here, or just let them go? Would you just not do anything. Turn a blind eye to the whole mess?”

I have a dozen more, but I would like to get that question on the record. Joe wouldn’t remember the question 10 seconds later, but you would. The press would record it. Millions of people would see it. That’s why Biden cannot attend this or any debate with Donald Trump.

If Biden defies my prediction and proceeds with the debates — whether out of misplaced confidence or desperation — they are far more likely to be a disaster for him than a success. Although he and Trump are roughly the same age, right now they are worlds apart in terms of their mental and physical abilities. Moreover, Biden’s former, more moderate positions on law and order, patriotism, religious liberties, business, even pro-life issues — are at loggerheads with the progressive stances he’s been forced to adopt in the new Democratic Party.

For instance, he’ll have no choice but to defend the protests, which have become associated in the minds of many Americans with rising violence and chaos in Democratic-run cities. He’ll have to praise BLM and its anti-police rhetoric, which also goes against his grain. His critique of Trump’s response to COVID will also ring hollow, since it was he and other Democrats who downplayed the seriousness of the pandemic early on, and who later instituted the most draconian lockdowns.

It won’t take much work on Trump’s part to confuse and frustrate the former vice president on these and other issues. When this happens, Biden will likely misstate his party’s positions, veer wildly off topic, make up facts, or even fly off the handle, as he did with a Detroit autoworker in March.

**The Underground War**

While the U.S. military continues to focus on traditional above-ground combat domains, defense officials have ramped up efforts to address the murky and increasingly threatening realm of subterranean warfare.

"Our adversaries have adapted their capabilities against our weaknesses by expanding their use of underground facilities," Army officials wrote in a [November publication](https://armypubs.army.mil/epubs/DR_pubs/DR_a/pdf/web/ARN19656_ATP%203-21x51%20%20FINAL%20WEB.pdf) on subterranean operations, noting that more than 10,000 "tactical tunnels" exist around the world.

The underground sites will be encountered more frequently during armed conflict, according to two modern war experts.

"With a trend toward greater urbanization, it will become even more difficult to avoid the subterranean environment," wrote two retired officers, Maj. John Spencer and Col. Liam Collins, in [an essay](https://www.ausa.org/articles/facing-our-underground-nightmares-casting-light-subterranean-fight) for the Association of the United States Army. It is "both folly and fantasy," they wrote, "to believe soldiers will be able to avoid warfare's reach into the underground."

Subterranean warfare has long been a feature of armed conflict. Throughout ancient, medieval, and modern times, tunnels were used for various purposes, such as offering passageways in and out of besieged cities and forts.

During the Vietnam War, Viet Cong guerrillas built sophisticated, wide-ranging and multilevel tunnels that included decoy sections designed to fool the enemy. During the Cold War, North Korea built a tunnel that could allow 30,000 troops per hour to swarm into South Korea. More recently, when the United States and its allies invaded Afghanistan in 2001, Taliban and al-Qaeda fighters escaped into the mountainous cave complexes that the mujahideen used when evading Soviet forces in the 1980s.

Those types of structures, one Pentagon official told Just the News, are growing more prevalent and complex. And, despite being out of sight, they do not remain out of war planners' minds.

"Fortunately, there are efforts underway by U.S. military and supporting organizations to prepare for underground warfare," Spencer and Collins wrote.

The Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) in 2018 launched a high-stakes competition, the [Subterranean Challenge,](https://www.subtchallenge.com/) pitting robotics teams against one another to seek solutions via an extensive, three-year quest that will award millions of dollars in prize money.

"The Subterranean Challenge seeks to better equip warfighters and first responders to explore human-made tunnel systems, urban underground, and natural cave networks, while decreasing risk to human lives," DARPA [officials wrote](https://www.darpa.mil/news-events/2020-07-24) in a statement.

While the robotics teams pursue the competition that ends in August 2021, the Army this year built a subterranean warfare training facility at Fort Bragg, N.C. Located at a site known as Range 68, the facility features more than a kilometer of tunnels, with pitch-black surroundings, tight spaces, and unexpected elements that soldiers might encounter in the dark domain.

"In a stressful situation, you always revert to what you know," Wolf Amacker, Fort Bragg Installation Range officer, told [an Army interviewer](https://www.dvidshub.net/news/377207/tunnel-rats-warfighters-can-now-train-subterranean-warfare) when explaining why the training was important. "If you know your training and are well trained, then in stressful situations, you will revert to that training. That's exactly what we want soldiers to do."

Hence, the new $1.34 million practice site — and its emphasis on unexpected features.

"As you go through and clear an area, what you tend to find is a tapestry hanging on a wall," Amacker said of the facility. "You move that tapestry and there's a hole in the wall and it leads somewhere. You move a bed and some planks and there is a hole in the floor that leads somewhere."

The facility includes mock enemy command posts to be captured and searched; 30-inch tall crawl spaces; and mock booby traps. It also replicates some technological conditions that will be encountered in the field.

"Radio communications don't work inside this facility," Amacker said. "So, if you're in there and try to radio out for help, just like being 100 feet under the ground, it's not going to work. You have to figure out now how to communicate back to the people on the surface."

Elsewhere, the Army is employing robots and drone scouts to pursue underground functions that could endanger soldiers.

Hazards underground include fire, unseen holes, venomous insects, human waste, and the environment itself.

"Every action a friendly force takes underground may make the environment worse," Army officials wrote in the publication about subterranean operations. "Everything from weapons fire and explosions to the carbon dioxide from soldiers breathing can contribute to an increasingly dangerous environment."

In such cases, officials warned, soldiers could be seriously injured or die before making contact with the enemy.

"If you go deep underground and there's not good air flow you'll die of suffocation," Amacker said while describing one scenario.

The Army plans to begin sending soldiers through the new Fort Bragg facility in late September, while other Defense Department elements host additional training and research.

"You can look at a contested landscape and never know it's there, lurking below the surface," the Pentagon official told Just the News. "An enemy underground site can turn the tide of battle. We're making sure it doesn't happen to us."