

(Image: Adobe Stock)

New IRS Revenue Will Come From Businesses Earning Less Than \$200K: Tax Experts

According to the Joint Committee on Taxation, a nonpartisan tax watchdog, a key provision in the recently passed Inflation Reduction Act, which earmarks \$80 billion in new funding for the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) — reportedly to improve the agency’s collection of under-reported income — is likely to focus most of its efforts on small business owners as a way to fund the new legislation.

By **Todd Crawford**
Vision Times

The group is estimating that between 70 and 90 percent of the estimated \$200 billion the IRS expects to collect will come from businesses earning less than \$200,000 and just four to nine percent will come from businesses earning above \$500,000.

This stands in stark contrast to the Biden administration’s repeated messaging that it would not raise taxes on anyone earning less than \$400,000.

Speaking with the New York Post, Joe Hinchman, the executive vice president at National Taxpayers Union Foundation, believes small and medium sized businesses are being targeted because they lack the resources to fight back.

“The IRS will have to target small and medium businesses because they won’t fight back. We’ve seen this play out before ... the IRS says ‘We’re going after the rich’ but when you’re trying to raise that much money, Hinchman believes that targeting the lower and middle class is much more lucrative for the IRS than targeting the wealthy. He said, “The rich have their lawyers and

“Large companies have constant reviews and lawyers going through everything .. small business doesn’t have the resources to fight back.”

Daniel Bunn, the executive vice president at the Tax Foundation

fight it — that’s why the poor are easier to go after.”

Experts are saying that the looming IRS audits will be both painful and costly for small business owners, even those who think they have filed their taxes correctly.

Daniel Bunn, the executive vice president at the Tax Foundation, told the Post that most small businesses aren’t doing anything wrong and that the United States does not “make the tax code simple and the complicated tax code makes it difficult for small business owners to comply with all the requirements.”

According to Bunn, the painful truth is that even if small and medium sized businesses do everything right they will still have to

contend with the IRS expansion that will most likely involve sending out more notices and inquiries to businesses stating they owe money, a scenario that will put many businesses in the red.

“Anytime you get an IRS letter, it could take months or years to get it settled — we’re talking many thousands of dollars to address,” Bunn told the NY Post. He added that “Large companies have constant reviews and lawyers going through everything ... small business doesn’t have the resources to fight back.”

The Biden administration has dismissed claims that the new legislation will hurt small and medium sized businesses, saying that the Joint Committee on Taxation’s estimates don’t take into account how much the bill will offset other costs for average Americans, citing an expected decrease in the cost of prescription drugs as an example.

However, tax experts argue that giving the IRS more resources and a mandate to find more money will inevitably have a negative financial impact on small businesses. “The approach here is to double the IRS workforce, take the leash off, and see how much they can collect. I think they’ll collect it but it will be quite painful,” Hinchman said.

‘It’s Got to Stop’: Robert Speranza Wants to Tackle Surging Crime as Rep for NY’s 26th Congressional District

By **Todd Crawford**
Vision Times

On Aug. 4, Robert Speranza, who is running in this fall’s mid-term elections to represent New York’s 26th congressional district in Queens, met exclusively with Vision Times to discuss his platform.

Speranza is a life-long resident of Bayside, where he attended Holy Cross High School and went on to graduate with a B.S. in Criminal Justice from St. John’s University. Having begun his career in law enforcement as a NYC probation officer, he eventually moved on to join the ranks of the NYPD, where he worked to keep New York City streets safe. It’s his experiences in law enforcement that inspired him to run to represent New York’s 26th congressional district.

Speranza is rallying against the sweeping bail reform laws that were adopted throughout the state three years ago that ended the assessment of cash bail in most cases involving misdemeanors and non-violent felonies.



Officials are stepping up security in New York and Washington D.C. a day after U.S. officials received a credible but unconfirmed terror threat to utilize car bombs on bridges or tunnels in New York or Washington. (Image: Justin Sullivan/Getty Images)

Continued on A10



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A member of the Secret Service is seen in front of the home of former President Donald Trump at Mar-A-Lago in Palm Beach, Florida on Aug. 9, 2022. The FBI executed a search warrant looking for classified documents Trump is alleged to have taken during his time in office. (Image: GIORGIO VIERA/ Getty Images)



(Image: GIORGIO VIERA/ Getty Images)

FBI Raid on Trump Home Stirs US Political Pot Ahead of October Primaries

By Neil Campbell
Vision Times

An FBI home raid conducted against former U.S. President Donald Trump has stirred both sides of the political aisle as the October Primary Elections loom large.

News of the raid broke when Trump issued a statement on his website on Aug. 8, “My beautiful home, Mar-A-Lago in Palm Beach, Florida, is currently under siege, raided, and occupied by a large group of FBI agents.”

The circumstances surrounding the event, however, have remained somewhat unclear. Same day reporting by federally funded messaging outlet NPR paraphrased one of Trump’s attorneys, Christina Bobb, as stating that the operation, “Concerned presidential records that Trump removed from the White House when he left office in January 2021.”

Bobb’s comments were given during a podcast with Trump ally Dinesh D’Souza the same day, where she noted that the FBI’s search warrant contained instructions to seize “Presidential records or any possibly classified material.”

Trump’s statement also alluded to such a scenario: “After working and cooperating with the relevant Government agencies, this unannounced raid on my home was not necessary or appropriate.”

Reporting on the event by the New York Post stated that The National Archives and Records Administration claimed to have discovered 15 boxes of classified material earlier in the year and had reported the finding to the Bureau.

The Miami Herald, based on an unidentified source “close to the investigation,” added that the FBI generated cause to raid Trump’s home because “Trump and his lawyers had already turned over some classified documents that had been sought by” the agency.

The raid appears to come on the heels of an acceleration by the Department of Justice in late July of its investigation into Trump’s dispute over the legitimacy of the

2020 presidential election, which has been conflated by the Biden administration and establishment media to the level of sedition.

In response to the news, the White House claimed to have no knowledge of the developments.

Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre told reporters that Biden “was not briefed, was not aware of it. No one from the White House was given a head’s up,” according to Breitbart.

When Jean-Pierre was pressed for more details from the gallery on issues such as whether Attorney General Merrick Garland had signed off on the raid, she simply refused to comment further.

“No former President of the United States has ever been subject to a raid of their personal residence in American history.”

Mike Pence, Former Vice President



‘Weaponization of the Justice System’

Criticizing the raid of his residence, Trump characterized the action as “prosecutorial misconduct, the weaponization of the Justice System, and an attack by Radical Left Democrats who desperately don’t want me to run for President in 2024.”

The raid has, naturally, stirred American political circles. Former Vice President Mike Pence took to Twitter to openly state his objections.

“I share the deep concern of millions of Americans over the unprecedented search of the personal residence of President Trump,” he wrote.

“No former President of the United States has ever been subject to a raid of their personal residence in American history.”

Notably, Pence was not finished with a lone comment.

In a follow-up, he added, “After years where FBI agents were found to be acting on political motivation during our administration,

the appearance of continued partisanship by the Justice Department must be addressed.”

And although segments of the GOP have sought distance from Trump since the 2020 election, most of its key players made their voices heard in response to the raid.

In a statement from House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy (R-CA) on Twitter, the narrative was fierce, “When Republicans take back the House, we will conduct immediate oversight of this department, follow the facts, and leave no stone unturned.”

By comparison, Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY) refused to give his stance on the matter when pressed while attending a public relations event surrounding flooding.

On the left, messaging outlets that broadcast the Democrat’s official narrative were all too happy to frame the raid as a victory for democracy.

One article by The Atlantic entitled The Mar-a-Lago Raid Proves

the U.S. Isn’t a Banana Republic claimed, “A bedrock principle is that no one—not even the president, much less the former president—is above the law, and if they commit crimes, they must answer for them.”

The statement is bold, considering the perilous and long standing conflicts of interest between Hunter and Joe Biden and individuals associated with Communist China and Ukraine.

Author David Graham utilized thick rhetorical diatribe to preach to his choir, describing Trump as “more banana republican than Reagan or Lincoln Republican.”

“Unlike his presidential predecessors, and despite his open disdain for Latin America and Latin Americans, he often styled himself as a sort of caudillo, trying to rule with an iron fist, circumvent the Constitution and legislature, enlist the military into his schemes, and use the power of the state to further his own electoral and personal fortunes,” Graham claimed.

Supporters of former President Donald Trump rally near the home of former President Donald Trump at Mar-A-Lago on August 8, 2022 in Palm Beach, Florida.



(Image: Adobe Stock)



Atlanta Stadium Trials Biometric Facial Recognition Systems

By Neil Campbell
Vision Times

Biometric facial recognition systems, a crucial component of Chinese Communist Party-style social credit and digital identification systems, have already made landfall in mainstream America over the last several months.

One such venue is the Mercedes-Benz Stadium in Atlanta, Georgia, which trialed the technology with up to 100 season ticket holders during an Aug. 6 Atlanta United FC soccer match, reported the Atlanta Journal Constitution on Aug. 2.

Chief Technology Officer for AMB Sports & Entertainment — the company that owns both Atlanta United and the NFL's Falcons — Karl Pierburg, showed his delight with the development in comments to the Constitution.

Pierburg said that facial recognition would enable computers to tell the VIPs how many tickets they have simply by scanning their face, adding, "We'll be able to [greet them by name] and say, 'Welcome, go on in.'"

The article framed the technol-

"Facial recognition would enable computers to tell the VIPs how many tickets they have simply by scanning their face."

Karl Pierburg, Chief Technology Officer for AMB Sports & Entertainment

"The same technology someday may allow fans to be recognized and automatically billed for purchases at the stadium's bars, restaurants and concession stands."

ogy in an amicable light because it would, in theory, enable punters to access the stadium without having to deal with cumbersome paper tickets or their mobile phones.

"The same technology someday may allow fans to be recognized and automatically billed for purchases at the stadium's bars, restaurants and concession stands," the Constitution added.

Whether the systems will be deployed long-term at the stadium entirely relied on whether attendees responded positively or negatively in surveys following their interactions, the article noted.

Additionally, the club states it's open to not deploying only or just facial recognition, but also palm scanning or Bluetooth array technology that would automatically detect a person's phone.

Biometrics industry website Biometric Update reported that the Atlanta stadium is not the first to deploy the technology in America. Mile High Stadium in Colorado, where the Denver Broncos play, already utilizes a system called "TendedBar" at concession stands to verify age and identity via facial recognition.

"Enrolling for TendedBar involves QR code and driver's

license scans and a two-minute process on the fan's mobile device," they state, adding that the system logs what drinks each face has purchased and can market the same on future visits.

Similar systems are deployed at the homes of the New York Mets and Jacksonville Jaguars.

New Industrial Revolution

Although biometrics are popping up in mainstream America quietly and without much fanfare, the development is not spontaneous.

In May, Mastercard issued a Press Release trumpeting a new "Biometric Checkout Program" that is set to utilize facial recognition to replace the current systems of card and cash payments.

"No more fumbling for your phone or hunting for your wallet when you have your hands full — the next generation of in-person payments will only need a quick smile or wave of your hand," the Release stated.

In April, the Dallas Love Field Airport installed a pair of AI-operated panopticon facial recognition surveillance towers, dubbed Security Control Observation Tower

(SCOT), which serve the joint purposes of serving as information kiosks and monitoring for Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) mask mandate compliance.

In the United Kingdom, in October of 2021, some schools started to deploy facial recognition systems in cafeterias in the name of enabling children to pay for meals faster and more easily.

A developing police state

And while biometrics may appear to be mankind's scientific development bringing new conveniences to human society, the systems share clear parallels to the state of affairs in mainland China under the ruling Communist Party.

These systems, complete with their law enforcement implications, have already been deployed in multiple regions across the western world.

In September of 2021, the UK's vaccine passport app, which relied on biometric facial recognition for identity verification, was found to share data with law enforcement by admission of the NHS.

Meanwhile in Canada, in June of 2021, the Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) opened bidding to recruit a specialized biometrics contractor to create an "Office of Biometrics and Identity Management" to aid in the "COVID 19 situation and other operational priorities."

The CCP's society has been the erstwhile manifestation of technocracy for years. Citizens live and breathe via the graces of their mobile phones, which have been tightly wed to an individual's national identity, bank account, and in current times, their COVID-19 health passport.

The reality of technocratic governance has been fully endured by mainlanders. In November of 2021, in but one of countless instances reported on Chinese social media, residents of Xining City in Qinghai Province were forced to line up outside in freezing temperatures and in heavy snow for hours in order to receive their daily COVID PCR swab test.

For Chinese citizens who fail to take their daily test, their social credit score turns red, causing them to be arrested and sent to quarantine camps the next time they attempt to purchase something or pass through a freedom of movement-restricting checkpoint in a city.

'It's almost inexplicable': Fauci Confused as to Why Many Americans Oppose Forced Masking and Vaccination

By Todd Crawford
Vision Times

President Biden's chief medical adviser and the director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, Anothony Fauci, during an appearance on Aug. 9 at the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Center campus in Seattle, expressed confusion about why some Americans are opposed to both forced masking and inoculation against COVID-19.

During the event Fauci remarked, "When you tell people they need to mask in an indoor congregate setting when you're in a zone that has a high dynamic of infection — that



(Image: Alex Wong/Getty Images)

is looked upon by a lot of people, not everybody, as an encroachment on your freedom," he said

adding that, "We've never had that before. It's almost inexplicable."

The comments come as Florida and other states begin to target mask requirements.

Earlier this week, Florida State Attorney General Ashley Moody, and a slew of other Republican politicians, asked an appeals court to uphold a Florida federal judge's ruling that blocked a mask requirement on airplanes, and other transportation, due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

In a brief, filed by officials from 23 states, mask requirements were described by the officials as government "overreach" by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, CBS News reported.

In April this year, Tampa-based U.S. District Judge Kathryn Kimball Mizelle struck down a controversial mask mandate for passengers of planes, trains and buses which prompted federal officials to stop enforcing the requirement. The CDC appealed the ruling to the 11th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals.

In addition, 17 members of the U.S. House and U.S. Senate, including Brian Mast and Bill Posey, both Florida Congressmen, asked for approval on Aug. 8 to file

a brief in support of Mizelle's ruling also alleging that the CDC had overstepped its authority in instituting a mask mandate.

"In particular, (the members of Congress) take the position that the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention lacked congressional authority to enact and implement the mandate via the statutes it cites as granting it authority to do so," lawyers for the U.S. House and Senate members wrote according to CBS News.

During his appearance, Fauci expressed confusion over the low uptake of the COVID-19 booster shots saying "We have 67% of our population vaccinated. Of those, one half are boosted. That means a third of the people in the coun-

try are vaccinated and properly boosted. How could that possibly be when you have a disease that's killed one million Americans and you have a hesitancy to use life-saving intervention which is a vaccine and a booster?"

"It seems like — what world are we living in?" Fauci exclaimed.

Currently, cases of COVID-19 across the U.S. have remained relatively steady over the last several months with between 300-400 cases per million people compared to mid-January when the U.S. was recording 2,396 cases per million, according to Johns Hopkins University data. Deaths due to the disease have stayed below 1.70 deaths per million since April of this year.

Bulk of Funding Slated for 'Small Businesses' Actually Went to Big Corporations and Other Countries: Watchdog Report

By Alina Wang
Vision Times

According to a July report by government watchdog Open The Books, over 75 percent of funding from the U.S. Export-Import Bank (EX-IM) meant for small businesses were actually sent to larger corporations and organizations with ties to China and Russia.

Although small businesses seeking to expand their international markets are supposed to be the main recipients of government funding and loan guarantees, the majority of the cash is not going to them, the agency's report said.

"Small businesses, supposedly the intended beneficiary of the Export-Import Bank, received only \$54.8 billion of the over \$234 billion in total assistance since 2007, or about 23 percent" Open The Books (OTB), the Chicago-based nonprofit agency that monitors and tracks government funding, said.

By filing over 45,000 federal Freedom of Information Act requests totaling more than \$6 trillion in public spending, and posting the checkbooks of 49 state governments, the watchdog aims to "post every dime in real-time."

According to OTB's findings, established corporations such as Boeing, Bechtel Corp., and General Electric Co., have been receiving the largest cash influxes when it comes to domestic funding — with the aerospace and aircraft manufacturing industry leading the pack — cashing in over \$67 billion.

"Boeing subsidiary Boeing Satellite Systems International reaped \$1.4 billion in assistance

(Image: PAUL J. RICHARDS/ Getty Images)



A generic photo of the building that houses the Export-Import Bank, Veterans Affairs Office of Construction, Board of Veterans Appeals, and the Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts in Washington D.C.

Boeing was by far the biggest beneficiary — receiving over 33 percent of Ex-Im's funding — totaling over \$66.4 billion.

- Open The Books, government watchdog

from 2007 to 2001. Major international airline companies like Ryanair, Emirates Airlines, and Air Canada have all received assistance for Boeing purchases. Boeing employs a small army of 18 lobbyists to advocate for the Export-Import Bank," according to the report.

American industry winning big

Viewed as one of the most successful aerospace companies in the world, Boeing was by far the biggest beneficiary — receiving over 33 percent of Ex-Im's funding — totaling over \$66.4 billion.

Based out of Reston, Virginia, Bechtel Corp. is the second largest aviation and engineering corporation behind Boeing. The company, which also oversees government-backed

construction projects, received over \$5 billion in funding for "petroleum engineering in wealthy countries like the United States, Australia, and India, as well as with governments like Serbia and Kenya," the report noted.

Coming in third place was electronics and commercial aircraft manufacturer General Electric Co., (GEC) receiving over \$4.7 billion in assistance through 265 transactions since 2007. The report added that GEC's funding was split between its subsidiaries: General Electric International Operations Co. and General Electric Energy Parts.

International funding

Internationally, enterprises in Turkey, China, Russia and Nigeria were also big recipients of U.S. funding. "While the United States sent billions of aid to some of the most corrupt countries and repressive regimes in the world, equally disturbing is the amount that went to wealthy countries that don't need our aid," the report said.

According to the report, the largest beneficiary of Ex-Im loans went to Nigeria — ranked in 149th place on a scale from least to most corrupt by Transparency International in 2020. "Importers in Nigeria received over \$570 million from the Export-Import Bank. It would be a miracle if any of those dollars actually reached their intended recipient," the report said.

The world's second largest economy, China, was also a top beneficiary of Ex-Im resources — racking over \$6.4 billion in funding since 2007. The report noted that Russian oligarchs, who control the majority of the country's commerce, were also top contenders — receiving over \$1.9 billion.

Xiong Yan Endorsed to Represent New York's 10th Congressional District by Key Member of Brooklyn Democrats

By Todd Crawford

On August 4, at the Marine Park Golf Course in Brooklyn, the Democratic Party of Brooklyn held a nomination meeting for Brooklyn High Court judges. Among the attendees was Xiong Yan, candidate to represent New York's 10th congressional district and Frank Seddio, a former Kings County Surrogate Court judge.

Seddio is considered a political strongman in the Brooklyn Democratic Party. He served as a state representative in southeastern Brooklyn from 1999 to 2005 and as an acting Brooklyn court judge from 2006 to 2007. Seddio served as the chairman of the Brooklyn Democratic Party from 2012 until 2020 and currently is a district leader for the 59th Assembly District, a volunteer position he has served in since 2010.

Speaking with Vision Times, Seddio provided a glowing endorsement for Xiong Yan.

"I think that he is one of the finest men that are in this race, one of the most genuine ... and probably someone whose enthusiasm represents all of the people in that district." He added that, "He will be fabulous and we only need to remember that when we start voting, looking at all the other candidates, this is the candidate that makes the difference to all of our communities, and he's a Brooklyn guy, and that's what matters."

From 'freedom fighter' to 'freedom defender'

Xiong Yan, a veteran of the Iraq War, and human rights activist was a student leader during the 1989 Tiananmen Square protests in China, and has drawn the ire of the Chinese Communist Party.

In May, Xiong told the NY Post, "In China, I was a freedom fighter. I joined the Army when I came to America because I wanted to be a freedom defender."

Xiong studied law at the prestigious Peking University in China from 1986 to 1989. He immigrated to the United States as a polit-

ical refugee in 1992 and later served as a chaplain in the U.S. Army. He is running for Congress on Aug. 23 to represent New York's 10th congressional district.

One of the pair's first encounters was at a birthday party in November 2020, when Seddio first learned of Xiong's ambitions. "At the birthday party, they were very happy when they learned that I was running for Congress. Everyone exchanged business cards and took pictures," Xiong said, as reported by the Epoch Times.

Another prominent New York political figure, Erik Frankel, has openly backed Xiong's bid for Congress said, "I like his political views ..., I think he can represent our community. We don't need politicians, I hope Xiong Yan can represent us," The Epoch Times reported.

According to The Epoch Times, Frankel believes that the 10th congressional district needs politicians with traditional ideas, not radicals, asserting that extreme views hurt the community. He wants the right people to be elected who will keep small businesses in mind, "You know, when we vote, we tend to choose not for the people, but for the people against the people ... people need to be elected to support small business, not to fight against small business," Frankel told the Epoch Times.

On June 28, Frankel, running as a conservative candidate, lost to Democrat incumbent Marcela Mitaynes in the Democratic primary for New York State Assembly District 51.

Xiong, a pastor, says he is sympathetic to the weak, and is full of love and justice, who firmly defends human rights and the U.S. Constitution. His personal philosophy favors tradition, safeguarding the interests of small businesses, supporting the police, fighting crime and maintaining law and order.

The 10th congressional district covers two major Chinese communities, Chinatown and Sunset Park in Brooklyn. Xiong hopes that Chinese voters will come out to vote for him and elect a legislator who speaks for the Chinese.

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10,000 Millionaires Expected to Leave China This Year And Take \$48 Billion With Them: Report

By Alina Wang
Vision Times

According to a consulting firm specializing in foreign investments, over 10,000 of China's wealthiest are looking to immigrate to other countries this year.

A report by London-based firm Henley & Partners, found that the average millionaire looking to leave China has a net worth of about \$4.8 million — which would result in a total of \$48 billion in approximate withdrawals. Experts have warned that the growing exodus of people and money leaving the country will only serve to accelerate and compound China's worsening social and economic crisis.

The agency also found that approximately 3,000 millionaires in Hong Kong are also looking to leave the city this year. After being returned to the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) rule in 1997, the previous British colony has experienced an increased erosion of civil rights and censorship of its media outlets at the hands of Chinese police.

The report added that with the growing number of Hong Kong's elite opting to leave, China would become the second country in the world to experience the largest numbers of capital flight — second only to Russia.

Systemic roots

Tang Jingyuan, an expert on China's economy based in the U.S., told The Epoch Times that a major driving force behind the exodus has been the Chinese regime's efforts to strengthen its economic power at the expense of private enterprises.

This has also been coupled with

greater regulatory scrutiny of Chinese tech companies — leading to hefty fines in many cases.

"In order to strengthen the security of the regime, the CCP began to implement a robbery-style supervision storm on self-operated giants, such as Alibaba and Didi. In fact, it completely destroyed [that] market's economy."

Tang also emphasized that the CCP's "wolf warrior diplomacy" has led to the country's increased isolation; politically, it has become like North Korea. Economically, it has returned to the planned economy model — which has resulted in its wealthiest groups deciding to cut their losses and move their businesses away from China.

"The CCP also promotes this concept of 'shared prosperity,' which means manipulating laws and other financial methods to help the rich find tax breaks — but that results in a panicked middle and lower class — who feel like their financial futures are not guaranteed," he said, adding that China's capital exodus was caused by an archaic institutional system.

"Unless China's societal system changes dramatically as a whole, many of these issues cannot be resolved at all."

Rippling effects of 'Zero-COVID'

Tang added that the CCP's heavy-handed COVID measures that have resulted in widespread lockdowns, mass testing, censorship, and forced quarantine, has also sped up the desire of many people wanting to leave.

"There is serious anxiety and distrust of the CCP's future governance. In order to find better living conditions and basic rights, many have decided to emigrate overseas," he said.

Professor Xie Tian, who works at the Aiken School of Business affiliated with the University of South Carolina, told The Epoch Times that netizens in mainland China have estimated that at least 3 to 5,000 people have fled Shanghai during the city's unrelenting lockdowns that lasted from March to mid-June.

"As soon as Shanghai's 'zero-policy' ended, the airport was filled with people trying to leave the city," Xie said. Shanghai, known as China's most pivotal commercial and financial hub, is home to nearly 26 million, and endured some of the toughest lockdowns ever seen in the world.

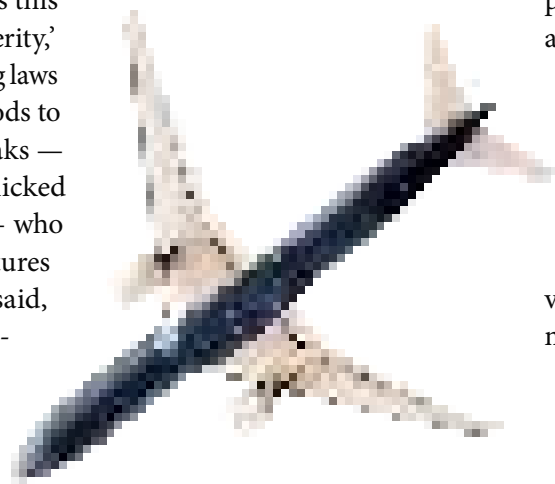
"Because people now realize how fragile their assets are in the face of power, the CCP can deprive them of their personal freedom, basic livelihood and human rights with

a simple epidemic prevention policy. Many people will indeed flee China because of these controls alone," he said.

Xie added that the Chinese regime's "zero-COVID" policies have also caused many companies to close down — halting industrial output, and severely cutting consumer spending.

"When companies found out that they could restart production, they were elated. But they soon discovered, to much dismay, that many of the orders could no longer be filled as customers found other manufacturers with faster turnaround times."

"Some factory owners left China because of this," Xie added.



"If a society's intellectual and wealthy elite decide to leave, it means that there must be a serious crisis in that society."

Tang Jingyuan, expert on China's economy based in the U.S.

Making off with the loot

As more of China's wealthiest opt to leave the country in search of better professional and social opportunities, the number of professionals transferring their assets to offshore accounts through investments, real estate, or offshore trusts, has also increased exponentially, the report noted.

Furthermore, according to an annual report by China's National Association of Realtors, buyers from mainland China held the No. 1 spot when it came to purchased properties in other countries. In the U.S. alone, Chinese buyers accounted for \$6.1 billion in residential sales — with nearly 60 percent of them making all-cash purchases for homes worth at least \$1 million.

The report also noted that the majority of the properties were located in California and New York state, and that the trend was holding steady since 2013.

According to Xie, the source of

income for many of China's elite stem from "gray earnings" such as kickbacks, bribes or embezzlement from corrupt officials. "The disappearance of deposits from rural and small-town banks in Henan Province is actually a conspiracy between senior managers and the local government," he said.

"They are taking advantage of weak banking supervision, and absconding with the money," Xie added.

Citing insider knowledge, Xie described how a village bank holding deposits of up to 40 billion yuan (around US\$5.93 billion) used 20 billion yuan to bribe high-ranking CCP officials, all of whom were members of the Politburo Standing Committee or their families, and more than 10 billion yuan was used to bribe local government officials.

In the end, there were only a few billion left in the bank's coffers, with absolutely no way to repay the depositors to whom the 40 billion yuan belonged.

Another situation in Shenzhen involved a bank run in the sprawling southern Chinese metropolis. That institution's "deposits were stolen or turned into wealth management products. The depositors are from central government-owned enterprises, and can't take out the money now," Xie said. The money is likely "no longer in China," as is the case with much of the funds acquired through dubious or fraudulent investment schemes.

Social repercussions

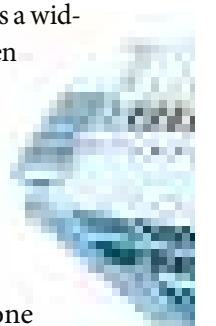
According to the experts, the concentrated migration of wealthy groups leaving China will take sizable amounts of capital away in a "very short period of time." However, the rapid transfer of assets into offshore accounts will directly impact the CCP's foreign exchange system in the short term — threatening "the very foundation on which the system was built on," Tang said.

Tang also added that as the "outflow of living water" (liquid assets) continues pouring out, the base of social wealth that people rely on will also continue to drop.

"With the massive transfer of assets, investment and employment opportunities for enterprises in mainland China will also decrease rapidly, and the inevitable result of that is a widening gap between the country's rich and poor," he warned.

In the long run, Tang predicts that as China's backbone continues evaporating, more educated people and young professionals will be forced to find labor-intensive jobs just to get by — resulting in a society that will "lack innovation and intellectual resources."

"If a society's intellectual and wealthy elite decide to leave, it means that there must be a serious crisis in that society. The departure of China's backbone will only accelerate its social demise," he said.



India, 40% of Global Rice Exports, has Lost 13% of 2022's Crops to Drought

By Neil Campbell
Vision Times

As the global food crisis continues to accelerate, India, the world's largest trader of rice, has lost 13 percent of its plantable area this year due to extensive droughts.

Mukesh Jain, Director of an India-based rice shipping company, told Bloomberg that the cost to export the crucial staple may climb by more than 10 percent per ton as early as September.

The Aug. 2 article adds that domestic prices have also risen by 10 percent in locales most affected by the drought, such as West Odessa and Bengal.

The quandary is significant, as India accounts for 40 percent of global rice exports at 22 million tons. Second place is Thailand and Vietnam, both tied at 7 million. The U.S. trails the pack at only 3 million.

“I expect that by early August, area under rice will be close to last year's levels.”

While Krishna Rao, President of the Rice Exporters Association

Aug. 5 coverage on the topic by Reuters stated that Asia is responsible for 90 percent of global rice production.



Workers on a rice paddy in India on Aug. 2, 2022. Drought has caused India, which is responsible for 40 percent of global rice exports, to lose 13 percent of its plantable area this year. The factor may lead to significant global famine in the future.

One 54-year-old farmer from Uttar Pradesh described the situation as “really precarious” because he was only able to plant rice on half of his seven acre plot, Bloomberg said.

Kaushik Das, a Deutsche Bank Economist, told the outlet that increased demand from Bangladesh and the Middle East had added fuel to the problem, causing the cost of some rice varieties to increase by 30 percent.

Meanwhile in North America, the U.S. rice futures market has risen almost 8 percent since the start of July, and while this figure still remains slightly back of May's high, futures contracts are nonetheless trading at prices not seen since 2011.

In an April article on the subject, Bloomberg cited data from the International Rice Research Institute positing that a drop in fertilizer output due to skyrocketing costs at the time would result in a 10 percent lower global crop yield.

And while at face value, that figure may sound bearable, the Institute explains that this amounts to a loss of 36 million tons of rice, enough to feed a half billion people.

Moreover, Humnath Bhandari, a Senior Economist at the Institute, called the prospect merely a “very conservative estimate.”

One Vietnamese farmer told Bloomberg that the cost of fertilizer had tripled year over year,

leading to them having to use less. The drawback of using less is crop yields plummet.

Notably, the article found, based on data compiled from its own analysis, that while the price of food commodities, such as wheat, palm oil, corn, and soybeans had risen by as much as 78 percent, Thai-variety rice was actually 15 percent cheaper.

India's drought is severe. Reuters stated in its article that monsoon rainfall in key growing regions was down an astonishing 45 percent.

Production shortages in India may have significant global ramifications. One unnamed trader in Mumbai said, “A production drop is certain, but the big question is how the government will react.”

They explained the significance, “But the government is hypersensitive about prices. A small rise could prompt it to impose export curbs.”

In April, after Indonesia, far and away the world's largest producer of palm oil, a significant ingredient in everyday U.S. household items such as toothpaste and processed foods, banned exports for similar reasons.

The result was a sudden 9 percent rise in futures prices. However, the pump was only temporary, as palm oil is down almost 50 percent, trading near its July 2021 low.

And while drought is a problem for India, too much rain is a problem for Vietnam.

“In just ten days, the total measured rain is somewhat equal to the whole of previous month,” one farmer told Reuters.

“Never before have I seen it rain that much during harvest. It's just abnormal,” they added.

In July, BNN Bloomberg reported that India's rice farmers were making haste to get sewing started after delaying in hopes of rain being delivered.

Secretary of the Department of Agricultural Research and Education, Trilochan Mohapatra, was optimistic in comments at the time, “Even if there is a little reduction in area, that should not make much difference and it should not be a cause for concern.”

While Krishna Rao, President of the Rice Exporters Association, likewise saw optimism, “I expect that by early August, area under rice will be close to last year's levels.”

Dutch Farmers Flex Their Muscle, But Can't Make a Fist After Government Talks

By Victor Westerkamp
Vision Times

Dutch farmer organizations held talks with the government called “constructive” as they looked to seek a way out of the nitrogen emissions crisis, but some growers were not convinced and have announced tougher actions.

It already took a lot of effort to get the warring parties to the negotiations table as Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte chose to only engage with the farmers through his pick as a mediator, former Deputy Prime Minister, and fellow Liberal Party (VVD) comrade Johan Remkes.

However, multiple agriculturalist protest organizations, especially the most militant group, the Farmers Defence Force (FDF), opted out of talks with Remkes as a mediator, given his reputation as a ruthless crusher of Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) mandate protests in his former capacity as Mayor of The Hague.

Horse trade

The breakthrough came when Sjaak van der Tak, Chairman of

the largest agricultural umbrella organization, LTO, announced he would sit in with Rutte and Remkes after the Prime Minister personally called him.

Not surprisingly, Remes called the atmosphere during the discussions “constructive.”

“There was, and there still is a crisis of confidence, which ran deeper than the nitrogen discussion,” Remkes said after the talks,

“That is because of the accumulation of regulations, the misguided policy on nitrogen, and the failure to recognize that farmers have already done a lot to reduce emissions.”

Johan Remkes, fellow Liberal Party (VVD) comrade

according to Dutch newspaper Algemeen Dagblad (AD)

“That is because of the accumulation of regulations, the misguided policy on nitrogen, and the failure to recognize that farmers have already done a lot to reduce emissions,” Remkes added.

“The atmosphere was extremely constructive, the discussion was good,” he added.

“There is movement, but for our gardeners and ranchers, it is too little at the moment,” van der Tak said sternly, according to AD. “The ball is really in the cabinet's court, and we expect that the cabinet will pick up that ball and do everything they can to come to a solution.”

But many Dutch commenters didn't buy into the Remkes-van der Tak love story, pointing out that van der Tak is also part of the old-boys network with Rutte. They feel the pair might well be steering the movement toward a horse trade.

“Don't fall for it #Farmers!” one commenter on Twitter remarked. “Sjaak van der Tak will sell out your soul and salvation to his friend Mark Rutte for his own interests,” he said. “Those cons all know each other far too well.”



Farmers drive on the highway en route to a protest action against nitrogen policy at A12 Arnhem - Utrecht on June 22, 2022 in Arnhem, Netherlands (Image: Getty Images)

Flexing muscles

Farmers Defence Force (FDF) frontman Mark van den Oever didn't have a good word to say about the outcome of the talks either, “When I assess the mood a little bit, I think you can brace for the toughest actions FDF has taken so far,” he said, Hart van Nederland reported.

It was a fine flexing by van den Oever, who represents the more hardline factions of the demonstrating growers. But the quintessence of their argument, however, that there is no nitrogen crisis to begin with, has not yet been brought up by the FDF.

Furthermore, the reputation of the genuine protesters with the public is already on the wane because of ruthless actions some elements took, such as dumping vast amounts of waste and toxins like asbestos on the motorways.

A sinister plan

Some identify these more radical elements as false flag operatives, such as the so-called “Romeos,” notorious for disturbing the peaceful anti-COVID-19 measure demonstrations over the past two years.

“Those farmers themselves know very well what they can and cannot do. Nobody is in favor of throwing asbestos on the highway,” he said, according to the outlet.

“I think we all agree on that,” van den Oever, who is increasingly finding himself on a sticky wicket about whom to side with: the brassbound demonstrators or the more moderate elements, added.

“But look, it's also our constituency, of course, so we're not going to attack them,” van den Oever continued, which some pundits felt created the perfect excuse to have him fall from grace in the eyes of the general public by not vehemently denouncing the asbestos dumping.

It seems Rutte and Remkes have managed to successfully drive a wedge between different factions of the farmers' resistance movement, and thus some feel the pair are on schedule with their nitrogen reform plans.

According to Dutch MP Thierry Baudet, those plans are a mere shameless land grabbing scheme to disown farmers and destroy the country's agricultural industry in favor of creating huge housing barracks for refugees.

Rhine River Just 1.5 Feet Deep in Some Areas as Heatwave Scours Europe

By Neil Campbell
Vision Times

The Rhine River, a major thoroughfare that connects the Netherlands, France, and Austria via Germany, is running dry, causing major disruptions to both European industry and energy supplies.

The massive heat wave that rocked much of Europe in July caused water levels on the Rhine to sink to lower levels, and at a faster pace than normally seen, DW reported on July 21.

One of the major problems, sev-

eral experts told the outlet, is that the low levels have required cargo ships, which transport more than 195 million tons of everything from diesel to gasoline to food annually, to carry only half their regular capacity so as to not bottom out.

Because of the restriction, more ships must be contracted to move the same amount of goods, leading to both a shipping backlog and higher costs.

At the time, the Steag coal-fired power plant in Essen stated during a press release that their facility had no more than a week's supply of coal remaining for electrical generation.

Aug. 7 reporting by Politico stated that the crisis is giving the European Union and its plans to shift 25 percent of goods transports away from roads and into waterways as part of the controversial United Nations Agenda 2030 "Sustainable Development Goals" a wakeup call.

President of the General Directorate for Waterways and Shipping (GDWS), Hans-Heinrich Witte, told DW that although transitioning to water shipments plays "an important role to play in meeting Germany's climate goals," unfortunately, since 2018, Witte had not seen "anything concrete that would help ship-



Oxidation on the stairs of a pontoon at the Rhine River illustrates just how far the water level has fallen. (Image: Thierry Monasse/Getty Images)

ping meet the challenges of low-water situations presently and going forward."

“ (Witte had not seen) anything concrete that would help shipping meet the challenges of low-water situations presently and going forward.”

Hans-Heinrich Witte,
President of the General
Directorate for Waterways
and Shipping

Politico stated that water levels were as low as 49 centimeters (~19 inches) at a crucial bottleneck located in Kaub.

And noted, "Levels at the Kaub chokepoint are already lower than they were at the same point

in 2018 ahead of that October's historic low of 25 centimeters (~9.8 inches)."

"The water was so low then that the river was closed to ship traffic for weeks, forcing companies to switch their freight to railways and roads. But that's costly and inefficient since it takes hundreds of trucks or train cars to handle cargoes that can be loaded onto a single barge," the article added.

This number, as shocking as it sounds, casts an even more somber hue in light of reporting by Reuters just days earlier on Aug. 3, which said Kaub was 61 centimeters (~24 inches) deep.

The article put the economic consequences into context. The cost of contracting a liquid tanker barge in the area had risen 7 Euros in a single day to €87.

In June, before water levels fell, the cost was only €20.

And if it isn't drought, it's flooding. In 2021, Germany and the Rhine faced exactly the opposite problem when the thoroughfare had to be shuttered because excess rain had driven the level at Maxau to 750 centimeters (~295 inches), the Independent Commodity Intelligence Service reported.

Regulations require traffic to be stopped when the water level is above 650 centimeters (~255 inches).



Cargo ships travel on the Rhine River on August 10, 2022 in Koenigswinter near Bonn, Germany. The ongoing hot weather and lack of rain have caused water levels on the Rhine and several other German rivers to fall, which is complicating shipping. (Image: Andreas Rentz/Getty Images)

India Contemplates Blocking Sales of Sub-\$150 Phones By Chinese Phone Makers

By Darren Maung
Vision Times

According to a recent Bloomberg report, India is considering restricting the sale of smartphone devices, in the sub-\$150 range, manufactured and sold by Chinese smartphone makers. The move would negatively affect Chinese phone makers like Xiaomi and is intended to give local Indian manufacturers the opportunity to prosper in the market.

Market crackdown

Bloomberg's report revealed that India — the second largest mobile market in the world — is thinking about pushing away devices made by Chinese manufacturers, especially Xiaomi, amidst growing fears that Chinese brands, like Realme and Transsion, could overshadow the country's local smartphone makers.

The report said that India's restrictions would hinder Chinese manufacturers, which have

depended on India for profit. It remains unknown if the Indian government will implement formal policies or utilize informal channels to act on their blockage.

On Aug 8, Xiaomi's shares dropped 3.6 percent in the final minutes of trading in Hong Kong, adding to a more than 35 percent drop in share value so far in 2022.

According to market tracker Counterpoint, smartphones that are sold under \$150 took up "a third of India's sales volume for the quarter through June 2022," Bloomberg reported. Chinese firms supplied 80 percent of the devices sold in that period.

Local Indian companies like Lava and MicroMax found success after their launch in the past decade, but Chinese firms drove a stake into the market and have beaten the competition with their cheap yet expansive devices.

Chinese smartphone makers now sell the "vast majority" of devices in India. However, according to India's junior tech minister, who spoke to the Business Standard, their rule over the market was not "on the basis of free and fair competition."

However, following the border clashes between China and India in 2020 — where more than a dozen Indian soldiers died in a dispute at the Himalayan border — the latter pushed to pressure Chinese firms.

"The level of distrust is so high between India and China, I don't

think there's any likelihood that these companies are not closely watched by the government," Ashutosh Sharma, research director at market researcher Forrester, told the Financial Times.

In one instance, the Indian government banned more than 300 apps, including WeChat and TikTok — both of which are owned by Chinese state-run companies Tencent and ByteDance respectively — on the grounds of security concerns.

Following the news on Aug 8, Xiaomi's shares dropped 3.6 percent in the final minutes of trading in Hong Kong, adding to a more than 35 percent drop in share value so far in 2022.

Steven Tseng and Sean Chen, analysts at Bloomberg, predict that Xiaomi shipments may decrease by 11 to 14 percent a year

(20 to 25 million units), potentially seeing a four to five percent fall in sales should India crack down on Chinese-made devices.

Despite the considerations of a ban, CNN reported that the Indian people's attachment to Chinese smartphones shows that there is staying power for Chinese firms, due to affordable prices and access to more features

Indian pressure on Xiaomi

Before their report surfaced, Bloomberg said the Indian government was already pressuring Chinese firms with close scrutiny of their finances, which resulted in "tax demands and money laundering."

Xiaomi and rival company Vivo are being investigated by New Delhi's local financial crime fighting agency for illegal remittances and money laundering, with both companies denying any wrongdoing.

Xiaomi is accusing India of inciting "physical violence" and engaging in coercive practices following a probe launched to investigate the aforementioned claims.

India also previously enacted unofficial means to ban equipment by Huawei and ZTE Corp, prompting wireless carriers to consider alternatives. Currently India has no official policy banning Chinese networking gear.



A man uses his mobile phone as he sits outside a shop selling phones from Chinese electronics company Xiaomi. (Image: INDRANIL MUKHERJEE/AFP via Getty Images)

Pelosi's Taiwan Visit Sharpens Tensions at a Bad Time for Beijing

Broken 'red line' by senior congresswoman throws Xi and the CCP an unwelcome dilemma ahead of the 20th Party Congress

By Larry Ong & Leo Timm
Vision Times

The People's Republic of China (PRC) reacted angrily to the recent high-profile visit to Taiwan by U.S. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, issuing warnings and launching a series of military exercises around the island that Beijing claims as its sovereign territory.

Mainland Chinese forces launched 11 ballistic missiles into the waters near Taiwan, five of which landed in Japan's exclusive economic zone. Live-fire drills by the People's Liberation Army (PLA) went on for days before concluding on Wednesday, Aug. 10, according to the PLA's Eastern Theater Command.

During the unscheduled 19-hour trip, which ran from late Aug. 2 to Aug. 3, Pelosi and her entourage met with Taiwan president Tsai Ing-wen, local legislators, and human rights activists. The 82-year-old congresswoman made statements of support for the island and its government, urging Washington and other countries to back Taipei against Communist China's ambitions.

"In the face of the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) accelerating aggression, our congressional delegation's visit should be seen as an unequivocal statement that America stands with Taiwan, our democratic partner, as it defends itself and its freedom," Pelosi wrote in an Aug. 2 op-ed published in the Washington Post.

Her visit adds to the long list of troubles facing the CCP leadership under Xi Jinping. The senior Democrat's high-profile outreach to Taipei notably comes as the CCP prepares to hold its 20th Party Congress, where Xi hopes to secure a norm-breaking third term as General Secretary.

Pelosi's crossing of the Party's "red line" on Taiwan leaves Beijing with little room for flexibility in dealing with the U.S., in part given the Xi leadership's heavy promotion of hawkish "great power diplomacy" and the "great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation." Xi and the CCP must continue acting tough and become more bellicose to retain support at home, despite the consequences of escalating bilateral, regional, and even global tensions.

Conciliatory moves by Beijing to lessen tensions — even in the short term — risk a significant loss of face and political prestige for Xi at a time when domestic pressure over the CCP's "zero-COVID" policy, bubbling crises in the property and banking sectors, and rapid economic deterioration all threaten the regime's legitimacy.



A US military aircraft with US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi on board prepares to land at Songshan Airport in Taipei on August 2, 2022. (Image: SAM YEH/AFP via Getty Images)

With the "hostile" moves taken by Washington, failure on Beijing's part to get tough on Taiwan and the U.S., or at least keep up the pretense of doing so, threatens to erode Xi Jinping's 'quan wei' within the Party.

Xi has thus far resisted the temptation to invade Taiwan and has instead shut down dissenters.



Television broadcasts news about Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) at a local restaurant on August 02, 2022 in Taipei, Taiwan. (Image: Annabelle Chih/Getty Images)



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'Strong and resolute'

In recent years, the CCP has stepped up propaganda and bellicosity over Taiwan, with Xi Jinping having delivered multiple speeches and remarks commenting on the need to bring the island and its 24 million inhabitants into the fold. A new white paper released Aug. 10 a week after Pelosi's visit repeats Beijing's objectives for Taiwan under the CCP's "one China principle."

The CCP sees the "reunification" of Taiwan with the PRC as a key political aim. The island is officially governed as the Republic of China (ROC), which retreated to Taiwan in 1949 after losing control of the mainland to communist forces in the Chinese civil war — a conflict that has technically never ended.

Starting in mid-July, when media outlets began reporting that Pelosi was planning a stop in Taiwan during her Asia tour, Beijing's diplomats and state media warned the U.S. against allowing the visit to take place, promising "strong and resolute measures." Former Global Times editor-in-chief Hu Xijin even floated the idea that People's Liberation Army (PLA) jets should shoot down the Speaker's plane if it traveled to Taiwan with fighter escorts.

Pelosi's trip to Taiwan and the aggressive rhetoric of prominent propaganda workers like Hu Xijin received close attention from the Chinese public. A Weibo hashtag about Pelosi's arrival on Aug. 2 drew nearly 1.3 billion views and the popular Chinese social media platform later briefly malfunctioned for many users.



1 U.S. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) alongside members of the Congressional Delegation who recently traveled to the Indo-Pacific Region attends a press conference in the U.S. Capitol Building on August 10, 2022 in Washington, DC. During the trip Pelosi (D-CA) became the highest-ranking U.S. Official to visit Taiwan in over 25 years. (Image: Anna Moneymaker/Getty Images)

2 Speaker of the U.S. House Of Representatives Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) speaks after receiving the Order of Propitious Clouds with Special Grand Cordon, Taiwan's highest civilian honour, from Taiwan's President Tsai Ing-wen at the president's office. (Image: Chien Chih-Hung/Office of The President via Getty Images)

3 Nancy Pelosi (D-CA), center left, speaks Taiwan's President Tsai Ing-wen, center right, after arriving at the president's office on August 03, 2022 in Taipei, Taiwan. (Image: Chien Chih-Hung/Office of The President via Getty Images)

Videos of "little pinks" and other jingoistic hyper-nationalists sprouting expletives and engaging in various forms of performative self-abuse in anguish upon hearing that Pelosi's plane had landed safely — instead of being shot down as Hu Xijin boasted it would — made the rounds on the Chinese internet.

In lieu of a direct confrontation, PLA military maneuvers and live-fire drills covered six regions around Taiwan. Numerous PLA jets and warships crossed the median line in the Taiwan Strait, and the Taiwan defense ministry reported the presence of unidentified aircraft — likely drones — in the skies over Kinmen island. The landing of Dongfeng ballistic missiles in the Japanese EEZ near Taiwan, as reported by Tokyo's defense ministry, elicited mocking comparisons to North Korea.

Meanwhile, the PRC announced eight countermeasures against the United States over Pelosi's trip, including canceling bilateral defense communications and the suspension of cooperation on transnational crimes, counter-narcotics, and climate change. The PRC foreign ministry further imposed sanctions on Pelosi and her immediate family members for her "egregious provocation," but did not offer details about the nature of the sanctions.

Gathering storm

The CCP's response to Pelosi's Taiwan trip has many observers concerned about rising tensions in the region.

"Around us, a storm is gathering.



Weak or inconsistent responses to Beijing's provocations in the Taiwan Strait on the part of the U.S. and its allies will give Xi breathing room to "spin tragedy into victory" for the communist regime and regain his political footing.

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4 Tourists look on as a Chinese military helicopter flies past Pingtan island, one of mainland China's closest points from Taiwan, in Fujian province on August 4, 2022, ahead of massive military drills off Taiwan following US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's visit to the self-ruled island.

(Image: HECTOR RETAMAL/AFP via Getty Images)



5 The army of the Eastern Theater Command of the Chinese People's Liberation Army conducts long-range live-fire drills in the Taiwan Strait on August 4, 2022.

(Image: Lai Qiaoquan/Xinhua News Agency via Getty Images)



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U.S.-China relations are worsening, with intractable issues, deep suspicions, and limited engagement," said Singapore prime minister Lee Hsien Loong in a televised address ahead of the country's national day on Aug. 9. He continued, "This is unlikely to improve anytime soon. Furthermore, miscalculations or mishaps can easily make things much worse."

The worries of Singapore's leader are not unfounded. Whatever her motives of traveling to Taiwan, Nancy Pelosi effectively crystallized the "new cold war" between the U.S. and the PRC by making the trip. Mainland propaganda outlets and commentators argue that Pelosi's visit is extremely provocative because she is second in the line of succession to the U.S. presidency and her presence in Taipei is tantamount to backing "Taiwan independence."

Despite Washington's assurances that it does not support Taiwanese independence or officially recognize the ROC, and continues to follow the "One China policy," the CCP is ideologically bound to trump up Pelosi's recent Taiwan trip as "evidence" that the U.S. is bent on undermining China's sovereignty.

Four decades of mostly friendly "engagement" notwithstanding, Communist China has long viewed America as its chief geopolitical rival and is actively working on displacing the latter as global hegemon. Beijing regards the U.S. as an incorrigibly "imperialist" power bent on carrying out regime change and bringing Western-style democracy to China.

The PRC's continued saber-rattling and propaganda aimed at the U.S. over the past two years indicate that the Biden administration's efforts to "compete" with China without tense ideological or military confrontation have done little to sway the Marxist-Leninist CCP from its convictions.

For the Party, engagement with any non-communist state ultimately serves the aim of either rebuilding the regime's strength following a setback, or helping the Party expand its dominance to regions or countries not yet under its control. The CCP's totalitarian roots and organization pit it directly against the U.S. and its system of constitutional government.

Further, the CCP will see as disingenuous the Biden administration's suggestion that the White House cannot interfere in the legislative branch's business and hence will not stop Pelosi from traveling to Taiwan. Despite the actual differences between the PRC and U.S. political systems, the CCP tends to consider the de facto operation of power in the U.S. as being similar to its one-party dictatorship.

With the "true intentions" of Washington finally "exposed" by Pelosi's Taiwan visit, Beijing has little choice but to become more openly antagonistic towards the U.S. in both word and deed instead of pretending to go along with "engagement."

Wolf warriors

With the "hostile" moves taken by Washington, failure on Beijing's part to get tough on Taiwan and the U.S., or at least keep up the pretense of doing so, threatens to erode Xi Jinping's *quan wei* (权威, a Chinese term referring to a leader's political authority and prestige) within the Party.

More broadly, a disappointing response to the "Taiwan Question" — as termed in the CCP's recent white paper — could alienate nationalistic Chinese citizens who support the CCP for making China the "great power" it boasts of in its propaganda. Loss of public confidence in the Party's ability to deliver results, be it economic prosperity or national strength, would further weaken the regime's legitimacy in the eyes of the public.

However, Beijing's insistence

on looking tough for public consumption will only exacerbate the negative backlash PRC officials have already received for their "wolf warrior"-style diplomacy. As the regime proceeds to "defend national sovereignty" in accordance with Communist Party culture, the PRC risks further rifts with the international community, including countries that might otherwise be willing to work with Beijing.

CCP officials are known for going to embarrassing — and often revealing — extremes in promoting policies as they strive to be more "politically correct" than their peers and hopefully shore up career security.

On Aug. 3, PRC ambassador to France Lu Shaye told French television channel BFMTV that the CCP will "re-educate" the Taiwanese people after "reunification" to restore their sense of "patriotism" to the regime. Lu's comment shocked observers because it was akin to a public confession that the CCP would subject the island's residents to brainwashing and other human rights abuses after a successful invasion in the same horrific way that it treats political dissidents and ethnic minority populations in the mainland.

Another example is PRC foreign ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying's attempt to justify the CCP's "reunification" of Taiwan from the large presence of Chinese restaurants in Taipei. "Baidu Maps show that there are 38 Shandong dumpling restaurants and 67 Shanxi noodle restaurants in Taipei. Palates don't cheat. Taiwan has always been a part of China. The long lost child will eventually return home," she tweeted on Aug. 7. Hua's tweet was roundly ridiculed by Chinese netizens for its shoddy logic.

Pressures on Xi

Xi Jinping is looking to take a norm-breaking third term and appoint trusted officials to key positions at the 20th Party Congress near the end of the year. To secure his political agenda this

close to the Party Congress, Xi would prefer to keep things as stable as possible and maintain his present *quan wei* through propaganda. Unnecessary adventurism at home and abroad that could court trouble for himself and the regime would be avoided.

Nancy Pelosi's Taiwan trip, however, has forced Xi to take added risks to preserve his "quan wei." Stepping up military maneuvers around Taiwan may intimidate the Taiwanese populace and get other countries to think twice before taking a leaf out of Pelosi's book in supporting the ROC. But those maneuvers will also impose a strain on the PRC's dwindling finances, heighten conflict risks, and could achieve the opposite effect of what was intended. Already, legislators in the United Kingdom and Germany are planning to visit Taiwan later this year.

Strong international follow-up to Pelosi's trip would heap pressure on Xi Jinping ahead of the 20th Party Congress and create fertile ground for internal contradictions in the Party elite to fester. Xi's rivals have been goading him into taking Taiwan as soon as possible to prove his worthiness to lead the Party beyond two terms.

Xi has thus far resisted the temptation to invade Taiwan and has instead shut down dissenters. Overseas Chinese-language media reported in late 2021 that former People's Liberation Army Air Force general Liu Yazhou was detained for questioning Xi's ability to lead the CCP to victory in a "decisive battle" over Taiwan and requested "a change of commander-in-chief."

On the flipside, weak or inconsistent responses to Beijing's provocations in the Taiwan Strait on the part of the U.S. and its allies will give Xi breathing room to "spin tragedy into victory" for the communist regime and regain his political footing. For instance, the Biden administration's postponing of a routine test launch of an Air Force Minuteman III intercontinental ballistic missile after Pelosi's Taiwan trip to avoid heightening tensions with mainland China would be viewed by Beijing as a sign of weakness. The Xi leadership could also cite the delayed test as a sign that its pressure campaign against Taiwan is yielding results and further prop up its "the East is Rising, the West is in Decline" propaganda. More shows of weakness could embolden the PRC to undertake greater transgressions against Taiwan and in the surrounding region.

Larry Ong is a senior analyst with New York-based political risk consultancy SinoInsider. He was part of the SinoInsider team that forecasted the 19th Party Congress and 2018 Two Sessions personnel reshuffles with a high degree of accuracy.

Leo Timm contributed to this report.

“Around us, a storm is gathering. U.S.-China relations are worsening, with intractable issues, deep suspicions, and limited engagement.”

Lee Hsien Loong, Singapore prime minister

(Image: Getty Images)



NYC Care Holds Successful Healthcare 'Week of Action,' Holding Events in All Five Boroughs

By **Todd Crawford**
Vision Times

Last week in New York, the Mayor's Public Engagement Unit (PEU) in conjunction with NYC Health + Hospitals successfully held a "Healthcare Week of Action" which aimed to connect New Yorkers, in all five boroughs, to NYC care and GetCoveredNYC and to encourage all New Yorkers, no matter their immigration status or financial means, to access health care in the Big Apple.

NYC Care provides healthcare for those who are traditionally ineligible for, or who can't afford, health insurance. GetCoveredNYC is a program that offers New Yorkers assistance in enrolling in health coverage.

The "Week of Action" was supported by PEU's GetCoveredNYC specialists, CUNY interns, and NYC Care's community-based organization partners.

NYC Care partners traveled the five boroughs scheduling on-site appointments with NYC Care specialists and encouraged eligible New Yorkers to make primary care appointments.

Events were held in Brooklyn, Staten Island, Manhattan, the Bronx and Queens, and culminated in an event at NYC Health

+ Hospitals/Elmhurst which featured health screenings and COVID-19 testing. Queens was chosen to host the final event because the borough has the highest number of NYC Care members, as well as the highest number of eligible enrollees.

"Here in New York City, we believe that healthcare is a human right, not a privilege. And we are committed to ensuring that all New Yorkers, regardless of their immigration status or income can get the care they need," said New York City Mayor Eric Adams. "New York City is a city of yes, and we are going to do all it takes to get every New Yorker covered," he said.

Speakers at the event included Mayor Adams, Adrienne Lever, Executive Director of PEU, the Executive Director of NYC Care Dr. Jonathan Jiménez, Elmhurst Hospital CEO Helen Arteaga, PEU GetCoveredNYC Specialist Tania Navas, and local elected officials, Councilman Moya and Councilwoman Schulman.

"PEU's mission is to proactively engage New Yorkers and connect them to critical benefits and services, including affordable, quality healthcare," said Adrienne Lever. "The reason we do this work is because we know at PEU that healthcare is not just about having access to a doctor. It is about having all of the resources that you need to



Executive Director of NYC Care Dr. Jonathan Jiménez speaks at an event on July 30 in Queens. The event aimed to connect eligible New Yorkers with healthcare services no matter their immigration status or financial means. (Image: Vision Times/Ryan Wu)

live a life of dignity and respect," she said.

The "Week of Action" coincided with the launch of PEU's CUNY Benefits Corps, supported by over 100 interns from CUNY's Career Launch program, part of the City's summer youth employment campaign. The interns offered free comprehensive benefits screening to New Yorkers at locations in all five boroughs using the ACCESS NYC screening tool.

Benefits Corps interns participated in core outreach work, making direct phone calls, reaching out via peer-to-peer text messaging and canvassing to connect with New Yorkers in their communities and to connect them to critical City, State, and Federal resources.

After three years of operation the NYC Care program has over 110,000 members and NYC Care members have made 879,969 primary and specialty care appointments including 86,503 telehealth appointments. Of these, 67 percent of patients had one or more chronic conditions and 18 percent had a cancer diagnosis.

The program has seen significant success in New York communities with 50 percent of members with diabetes and 42 percent of members with hypertension reporting improvements in their blood sugar and blood pressure, respectively, after only six months in the program.

"At Elmhurst and at all New York City Health and Hospital facilities, we do not turn not one single patient away. We encourage everyone from our communities to seek care without fear," said Helen Arteaga, CEO of Elmhurst Hospital. "Through NYC Care, New Yorkers can have access to health coverage regardless of immigration status and ability to pay. If you are a new patient in New York City Cares, you get an appointment within two weeks. That is true evidence, not only of commitment, but of action."

To contact NYC Care go to nyccare.nyc or call 1-646-NYC-CARE (1-646-692-2273).



"... healthcare is not just about having access to a doctor. It is about having all of the resources that you need to live a life of dignity and respect."

Adrienne Lever, Executive Director of PEU

'It's Got to Stop': Robert Speranza Wants to Tackle Surging Crime as Rep for NY's 26th Congressional District

Continued from *FRONT*

However, he and many other public officials argue the laws are simply releasing criminals, violent and otherwise, back on to the streets where they may reoffend.



(Image: Vision Times/Ryan Wu)

"... Cops can't do their jobs when their hands are tied."

Robert Speranza, Rep for NY's 26th Congressional District

"They are taking baseball bats to people's heads, like the girl in the subway, and nobody's doing anything about it. These people should be in jail or in a mental facility but we're doing nothing," Speranza said, citing various examples of re-offenders who were released under the cashless bail system.

Reoffending after getting out of jail free: 'It's got to stop'

"It's got to stop," Speranza told Vision Times, referring to soaring crime rates statewide, arguing that bail reform is the key to tackling the problem.

"I'm tired of criminals going out, beating people, almost killing people, robbing people, doing all this ... molesting children and then getting let go," he said adding that, "They are doing the same crimes over and over and over again, with no penalty. It's got to stop."

He expressed support for comments recently made by the president of the Police Benevolent Association (PBA) Patrick J. Lynch, who in conversation with New York's Fox5 commented on a recent assault on a police officer in New York's subway system.

"If New Yorkers want to know why the chaos in the transit system is not improving more quickly — this is why. The criminals underground know they can get in a brawl, choke a cop and be back out in hours. Cops are putting ourselves on the line to make the subways safer, but we are feeling abandoned by a justice system that won't back us up," Lynch said at the time.

"I know Patty very well and he's 100 percent right. Cops can't do their jobs when their hands are tied," Speranza said.

Per Speranza's campaign website he believes that "Today, we have criminals running rampant in all neighborhoods in NY. Our assembly and senate, along with our past and current governor, saw fit to give a free pass to criminals with cashless bail and defunding police resources, thus allowing offenders to continuously repeat the same crime without any fear of interruption."

If elected, he promises to vote to repeal the "ill-fated" bail reform laws as well as to introduce change to the parole system so that "murderers do not go free while their victims and their families will never be free from their actions."

Education a key tool in the fight

Speranza believes that New York children

are "the most deserving of our investment," and as such has laid out how he would address the problems plaguing the state's education system.

"Parents are being told that budget cuts are going to negatively impact our schools," he says on his campaign website, "Our education system is failing us as students graduate without the necessary skills and knowledge to compete in college and the workplace," he added.

He believes New Yorkers' tax dollars are not reaching the children the money is intended to help, and that layers of administration are depleting the resources.

As such he argues that there needs to be more teachers and less administration

in schools. "We must ensure that all students get the programs and education that is geared toward them, not a blanket policy that doesn't address individual students' needs," he says.

If elected, he promises to fight to restore funding for vocational schools as well as to "advocate for the Specialized High School Test and the Gifted and Talented assessment."

He encourages parents to be involved with their children's schools saying that parents need to be partners with their schools and "should be allowed to prevent controversial issues from being taught to their children without consent," something that he "vehemently opposes" and promises to fight for every parents' rights.

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Talking Trees

Communal and Altruistic Habits of the Forest

By Simone Jonker

According to Peter Wohlleben, best-selling author of *The Hidden Life of Trees: What They Feel, How They Communicate*, understanding how trees communicate with each other may help us better understand ourselves and the world around us. The trees included in his story include trees with “human-like” characteristics, “talking trees,” and trees that sometimes “walk.”

Located in the Eifel Mountains in west Germany, Wolfleben has been managing the natural reserve woodland since 2006. The forest is bordered by extensive oak and beech woods. In these vast sacred groves, ethereal communication occurs through scent, taste, and electrical impulses, creating a mysterious and enchanting atmosphere.

In his experience with trees, Wohlleben became aware of trees’ “daily dramas and moving love stories.” In true German tradition, this concept of the hidden life of trees is what might be called a forest ethic, which allows forests to grow to enormous proportions through partnerships, extended families, and contacts with its inhabitants.

With a goal of higher ecological standards, Wohlleben sees monocultures and heavy machinery as villains. Under management aimed at the preservation of undisturbed forests, trees can fulfill their “social needs,” pass their knowledge on to future generations and grow “old with dignity.”

As a forester, Wohlleben sees to it that the trees are cut by hand and removed on horseback instead of using heavy equipment, which protects the underground root systems and fungal networks that enable plants to share nutrients and chemicals. Globally, he believes, humans should and could manage forests similarly. Ecology is not passive; it is dynamic, with ecosystems actively contributing to their complexity, resilience, and survival.

Wohlleben’s revelatory reexamination of our earliest companions challenges us to see with new eyes what we have taken for granted for eons.

Gifts of wisdom

Two massive beech trees stand side by side deep in the forest. Despite their sparse winter crowns, they seem to be taking care not to intrude on each other’s space. “These two are old friends, they are very considerate in sharing the sunlight, and their root systems are closely connected. In cases like this, when one dies, the other usually dies soon afterward, because they are dependent on each other,” Wolfleben says.

Darwin’s work instilled the notion that trees, among other species, compete for resources, with the winners being the survivors. The timber industry thus creates forests where each tree has its “optimum space,” but this artificial scenario is far from ideal.

Wohlleben explains the difference between cultivated and natural forests, describing trees as able to plan ahead to foster the best environment for their lifespan.

In natural forests, trees create “friendships.” He observes that birch trees take care of each other, and “look after their own, and they help their sick and weak back up onto their feet. They are even reluctant to abandon their dead,” he says. Scientific research by Suzanne Simard also showed that “trees are more altruistic than competitive.”

In cultivated forests, trees are planted in regular intervals, and become “loners” who “suffer from their isolation.”

To be continued

(Image: Adobe Stock)



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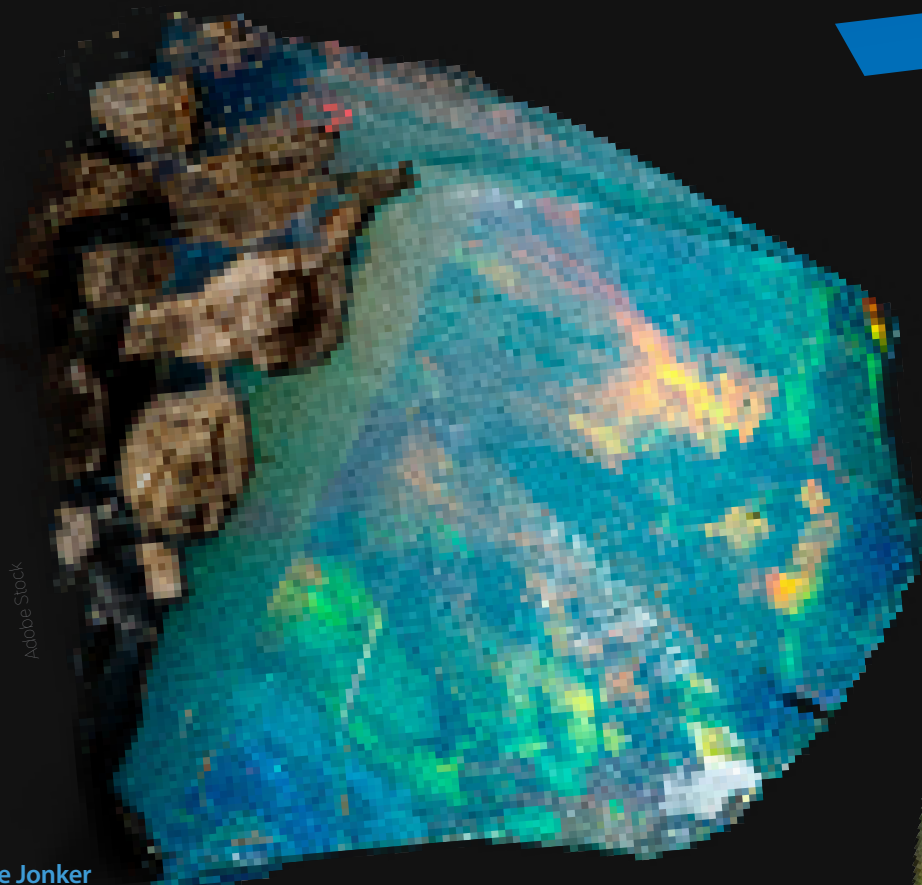
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OPAL



By Simone Jonker

The name "opal" derives from the Latin word *opalus*, which means "precious gem," as well as from the Greek word *opalios*, which means "to see a color change."

This prized gemstone has inspired fantastic folktales, and a fine specimen can fetch a whopping sum, as we saw at the recent auctioning of the famous "Americus Australis."

Opal has historically enjoyed a reputation for mystery and luck, with its many colors that enchant us all at once. The birthstone for October opal is widely regarded as a symbol of hope, honesty, purity, and truth. Composition of opal

Opal is hydrous silica (minuscule silica spheres bonded with water), ranking between 5 and 6 on the Mohs hardness scale. When light passes through the spheres, it bends and generates a rainbow of colors. Precious opal offers a magnificent dance of hues (opalescence.) Shifting the stone causes light to hit distinct spheres at different angles within the stone, and they appear to be continually changing color.

The majority of opal is dull and lifeless, and the so-called common opal is often gray or yellowish in color and waxy in appearance. It is rare for a piece of opal to be discovered that is translucent enough to facet. Since it is amorphous rather than crystallized, opal is not considered a mineral, but a "mineraloid."

Opal Folklore and literature

The formation of opals is the subject of Aboriginal legends in Australia. They believe that the Creator arrived via a rainbow and caused the creation of opals wherever his feet touched the earth.

The Aztecs named the fire opal after Quetzalcoatl, their feathered serpent deity." According to them, the "Stone of the Bird of Paradise" could inspire new beginnings and stimulate creativity. They also believed it had the potential to bring about required destruction.

Historical novelist and poet Sir Walter Scott wrote a Gothic novel called *Anne of Geierstein* (1829), which cast a shadowy hue on the reputation of Opal. The story tells of an enchanted princess named Hermione. Her hair was usually tied up with an opal diadem that "displayed

a subtle hue of red like a spark of fire," and at times she resembled an invincible spirit. A "twinkling and flashing glimmer which seemed to be released by the gemstone itself" appeared whenever she became upset or enthusiastic.

When the princess was attending a baptism, the father of the baby dipped his finger in the font, offering holy water to his wife, and put the rest on Lady Hermione's brow. A drop landed on her opal talisman, from which shot out a dazzling light, leaving the opal "colorless as a common pebble." Hermione then fell to the ground and was reduced to a smattering of gray ashes within hours.

Queen of Gems

The best opals are beautiful, rare, and costly. The gems can resemble aurora borealis encapsulated in stone, a snowy landscape speckled with colored fireflies, or even a black night sky striped with rainbow illumination. Opal has been prized for its distinctive attributes and beauty since ancient times.

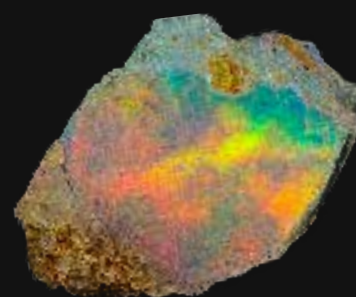
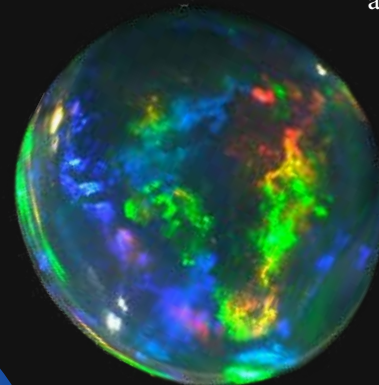
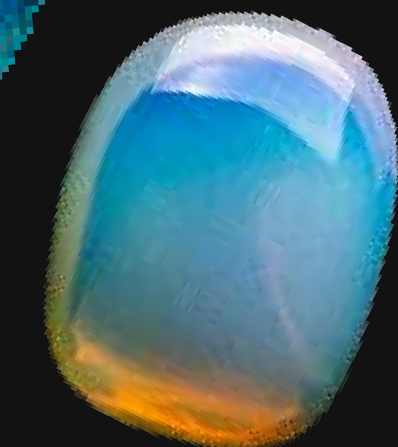
Australia produces by far the best and most beautiful opals. Some are so spectacular that they have their own names, such as the Empress, the Red Admiral, the Pandora, the Light of the World, and the Harlequin Prince.

Categories of gem opals

Different kinds of opals are found in a variety of locations in Australia.

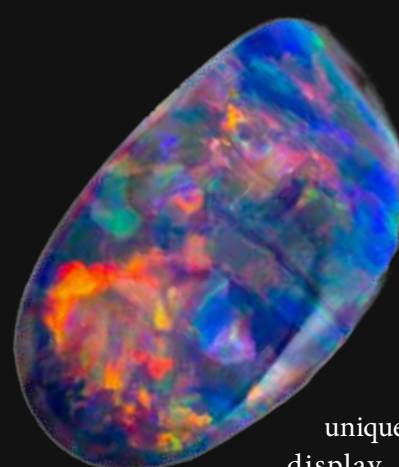
Light or White Opal is mostly mined in the South Australian fields of Mintabie, Coober Pedy, and Andamooka. Black Opal is mined in New South Wales' Lightning Ridge.

What makes opal distinctive is its



Often called the 'Queen of gems,' the opal is Australia's national gemstone.

The Queen of Gems



unique display of color called "fire."

There are four opal gem types:

Australian white opal has a pale white or light body tone and resembles porcelain or milk. The fire appears as shimmering specks of rainbow-colored film. White opals are the most commonly used opal in jewelry making.

Black opal also contains fire. The color play in black opals is accentuated by the dark gray or black body color, Black opals are extremely rare and costly.

Water opal is the translucent colorless kind, which has fire with flashes of color swimming inside.

Fire opal has an orange and reddish transparent body hue. It may or may not have fire. Opals with reddish or orange hues are classified as "fire opals" although they may not have any fire at all.

Opal's most precious specimens

When a massive white opal of gem grade was auctioned off on February 20

in Alaska, it fetched a whopping \$143,750. According to Alaska Premier Auctions & Appraisals, the opal is one of the biggest opal specimens in recorded history. The opal nicknamed "Americus Australis" weighs over 11,800 carats.

"Americus Australis" is described as the "sister stone" of the "Olympic Australis," the record-breaking 17,000 carats "Olympic Australis" that was discovered in 1956.

Fred von Brandt, an Alaskan gold miner, owned the large stone until it was sold last month. The gemstone, which is larger than a brick, is split into two pieces. Von Brandt explained that jewelers once employed the tradition of splitting a gem into two parts to show its purity.

According to the Associated Press, von Brandt's grandfather purchased the opal from Australian opal merchant John Altmann in the late 1950s. The von Brandt family owned the opal for over six decades and exhibited it in gem shows and family enterprises in California, Oregon, and Alaska.

The Americus Australis was kept in a linen closet in Big Lake, north of Anchorage after Von Brandt moved to Alaska over a year ago. It had been "locked up long enough," he said,

and that "it's time to put it back out in the world and see what interest it might generate."

Predicted to fetch over \$250,000 at the February auction, according to pre-sale estimates, the final bidder got a real deal.

Opalized fossils

Lightning Ridge is a small outback town located near the southern border of Queensland and is well-known for its abundance of opal. The region has produced significant quantities of black opal.

This highly valuable geological marvel has been extensively mined and fossilized there since the early twentieth century. Almost every type of fossil found at

Lightning Ridge has been opalized, giving a fascinating and extraordinary image of prehistoric life.

An opalized fossil is a natural casting in which the surface has been entirely coated with opalized material. It takes an astounding 5 to 6 million years for a 1-centimeter opal to mature and attain its full beauty.

In 1984 Bob Foster discovered the most complete dinosaur skeleton ever found in New South Wales. The glittering opal-encrusted bones were donated to the Australian Opal Centre at Lightning Ridge. The findings were published in the *Journal of Vertebrate Paleontology* and revealed the first fossil evidence of a dinosaur herd in Australia.

The opalized remains represent the newly described species *Fostoria dhimbangunmal*. The species is the youngest Australian member of the iguanodontian dinosaurs, a plant-eating group that had a horse-shaped skull and a build similar to the kangaroo. The name of the new dinosaur is 'dhimbangunmal' meaning 'sheep yard' in the Yuwaalaraay, a language of the Indigenous people living in the area near Lightning Ridge.

(Image/Wikipedia)

6 Reasons You Attract Mosquitoes and What to Do About It

By Ila Bonczek
Vision Times

Do you attract more than your fair share of mosquitoes?

Your mosquito magnetism is not a figment of your imagination. For a variety of reasons, some people are naturally more attractive to these tiny vampires. While you can't alter certain features of your existence — like your blood type, or how much you breathe — there are a number of things you can do to deter these pests from making a meal of you.

How mosquitoes decide where to dine

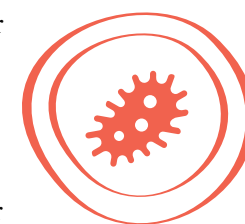
Odorless to us, carbon dioxide — which we produce simply by breathing — is easily detected by mosquitoes' antennae, and lets them know there is living flesh nearby. They also have sensory organs (palps) that can detect trace amounts of odors that they find desirable — like the lactic acid found in sweat or alcohol present in one's breath.



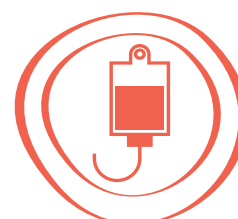
Most recently, it has been discovered that mosquitoes favor people infected with viruses like dengue and Zika, increasing the likelihood for spread of these mosquito-borne diseases. The study found a correlation with vitamin A levels and mosquito attraction, with those deficient in vitamin A being more likely to be bitten.



Your microbiome also acts as a messenger. Our skin is naturally teeming with microorganisms including bacteria, fungi and viruses that add to your "odor profile." People with more diverse microbiota are less likely to attract mosquitoes than those who have a heavy population of fewer types of organisms. Most people also emit detectable identification of their blood type.



Perhaps it's not surprising that mosquitoes show a preference for one blood type over another, but different species even have different favorites. Research has found that type O is favored by the *Aedes albopictus* mosquito, while type AB is preferable to the *Anopheles gambiae*. Although research has yielded no conclusive results as to why type O would be preferred, it is believed to be more digestible.



Our body warmth also makes a difference. Mosquitoes are naturally attracted to warmer people. Core temperature is raised in physical exertion and pregnancy. Since both these states also result in heavier breathing than normal, you also get the added carbon dioxide as a bonus.



Studies have shown that mosquitoes use visual cues as well. They can see human shapes from up to 50 feet away, and are attracted to specific colors; namely, black, red, orange, and cyan.



With over 3,000 species of mosquitoes patrolling the planet, it's lucky for us that only half the population bites humans.

Female mosquitoes need to obtain the protein found in blood in order to produce eggs. Depending on the species, a mosquito mother-to-be might, in one meal, drink the equivalent of her weight in blood, lay up to 100 eggs at a time, and see her offspring mature in less than ten days!

Male mosquitoes are vegetarian, finding their nutrition in nectar and sap; but females can sense more about you than you might think.



Natural ways to repel and reduce mosquito populations

Clearly, some of the above attractive conditions cannot be altered; but let's look at what you can do to make yourself a little less appealing, naturally.

Most obviously, you can dress in colors that mosquitoes don't care for — like white, green, blue, and purple. Presuming that the colors which attract mosquitoes do so because they are reflected in human skin; it would be advisable to cover the skin as much as possible — effective protection in and of itself.

You may want to make some alterations to your diet, since the food you consume naturally has an effect on your odor profile.

Salty foods increase the amount of lactic acid in your sweat, so reducing your salt intake can help turn you from irresistible, to resistible.

Consuming healthy foods in general can help you build a more diverse microbiome, thus reducing your mosquito magnetism. Boosting your vitamin A levels with foods like carrots, sweet potatoes, spinach, liver and dairy, may also be helpful in deterring mosquitoes.

Since mosquitoes' normal diet consists of nectar, they are naturally attracted to sweet foods. While many claim that a diet high in sugar can attract mosquitoes, that is generally regarded as a myth; but you can certainly make use of their sweet tooth. One study found that feeding mosquitoes sugar water deterred them from biting for up to 6 days.

Garlic is known to repel mosquitoes, but there is little evidence that it has any effect when taken internally. Consuming garlic does have many health benefits, however; and

healthy bodies sweat less and emit lower levels of carbon dioxide; but garlic is more effective as a plant or a spray to produce an odor in the environment that is offensive to the insects.

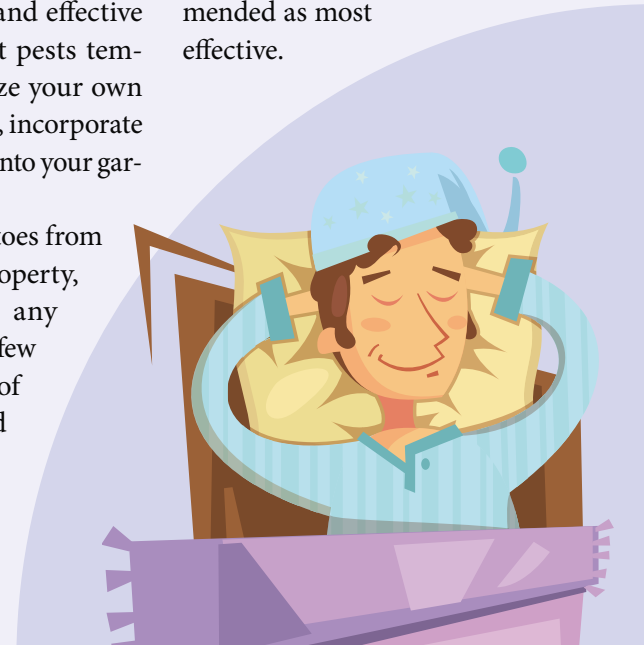
You are likely familiar with the citronella scented candles sold to repel mosquitoes. Citronella as an essential oil can be blended with other essential oils, like lavender, peppermint, or geranium to make a pleasant-smelling and effective spray to repel insect pests temporarily. To minimize your own mosquito population, incorporate these aromatic herbs into your garden.

To prevent mosquitoes from breeding on your property, be sure to remove any standing water every few days. Many species of mosquito eggs need only about a teaspoon of water to successfully hatch and mature.

To minimize the

number of mosquitoes in your environment, attract birds and bats with plantings and habitat. Refrain from using insecticides and pesticides that will harm natural predators like spiders, dragonflies, wasps, and mosquito hawks.

The above remedies are certainly suitable for nuisance mosquitoes. Where disease is likely, products containing DEET, a toxic chemical, are generally recommended as most effective.



(Image: Adobe stock)

By Lucy Crawford

Before the age of 40, much of the way a person looks is determined by genetics. But after 40, a person's experiences and state of mind have a big impact on their appearance and personality. Since one's temperament is reflected in one's appearance and demeanor, you can change how you are perceived by others by changing your temperament, and improve your appearance naturally.

People who are fussy are often frowning and looking tense. Impatient people tend to have panicky eyes and lack poise. People who treat others kindly wear a natural smile, putting others at ease. A person who is easy-going will look naturally gentle and warm.

But the physical beauty of an attractive face and the deeper beauty of a serene mind can hardly be compared.

A good-looking person without a good personality or cultural refinement is bound to have limited appeal; his or her looks will decline with age. An ordinary-looking person, who treats others kindly with a generous heart and a smile, is pleasing to the eye and enjoys enduring beauty.

An old Chinese legend demonstrates this concept.

Legend shows how you can improve your appearance naturally

There was once a skilled sculptor who loved to make demons and monsters. His creations were vivid and lifelike.

One day, he passed by a lake. The lake was surreal and its surface was like a mirror. When he looked into it, he noticed suddenly that he looked a lot uglier than two years ago.

His facial features seemed to have changed little, but his skin looked pale with a greenish-white hue as if he

was sick and tired; and his eyes were menacing, erratic, and despicable.

The sculptor became panicked and grew agitated, depressed, and suspicious. He lost his appetite, tossed and turned at night, and suffered from nightmares, fearing that he would die soon.

From the time he was an apprentice, he heard from people in his village that there was a senior monk in a temple in the nearby mountains who could cure all diseases and relieve all sentient beings of their problems. Since he never believed in Buddhism and was physically strong and healthy as a child, he had never gone there. Remembering this now, he hurriedly went to the temple to seek treatment from the monk.

The old monk indeed had an all-knowing and powerful appearance. He looked kind-hearted too. The man's anxiety reduced by half upon seeing him. He told the old monk all about his illness. The old monk listened quietly. The man was out of breath after finishing speaking. The monk patted him on the shoulder and said, "Don't worry, sir. I can help you. But there is one condition before the treatment. You must first make a hundred Buddha statues for me," and he pointed his finger at a Buddha statue nearby.

The next day, the man hurried up the mountain to the temple early in the morning and started working. After selecting the stone, he began to observe and study the appearance and look of the Buddha, accompanied by the sound of bells and chimes and the chanting of scriptures by the monks. Every two or three hours, the old monk would ask a young monk to bring him a bowl of brown rice porridge, which he respectfully picked up and drank, finding it incomparably delicious.

Little progress was made on that day. After only two or three chiseling on the selected stone, it was already dark. Exhausted, he went home from the mountain and went straight to bed. The next morning, he went up the mountain and continued to work, observing the Buddha statue and chiseling away.

Day after day, the craftsman became more skillful, and his work became more exquisite. He carved more statues and finished them more quickly and more perfectly. Near and far, the good

IMPROVE YOUR APPEARANCE NATURALLY BY Changing Your Mind



men and women of faith came to admire the Buddha statues and worship. Nearby state and county officials and the gentry went to the temple to invite a Buddha statue home for prayer and worship. The craftsman was overjoyed and worked more diligently than ever.

Every day as the man went in and out of the township, climbed up and down the slope along the way of the mountains and rocks; he found trees and grasses, flowers and birds, insects and animals, the sun, moon, and clouds to be more and more familiar and dear.

For the past ten years, the man had been always busy with work and rarely left his workshop. But now he gradually became acquainted with the families, merchants, and peddlers in the towns and villages he passed through. He often helped

people on the way to deliver a message, carry something, or give a hand to busy parents. He had turned the ten miles from his workshop to the temple into his own neighborhood.

Many seasons had passed when he finally finished sculpting the 100 statues of Buddha. They were so vivid and lifelike that they made people forget their worries and their hearts were at peace. The craftsman then paid a visit to the old monk and asked him to keep his promise to cure his sickness.

The old monk smiled, patted him on the shoulder, and said, "Your disease has been cured." Saying so, he handed him a mirror. The man took the mirror and examined his face. It was unbelievable: his facial features seemed to have changed little, but his complexion was rosy, his face was dignified, his eyes were peaceful and his gaze was clear. He realized that, indeed, from the first day he started carving, his appetite had grown, he ate well, and every night when he returned home from the mountain, he fell asleep straight away and never had a nightmare again. But all these years he only focused on the carving of the 100 Buddha statues, without noticing these changes.

He held the mirror happily, and then looked at it again and again. He found himself, other than his hair and his dress, looking quite similar to the kind-eyed old monk.

(Image: Adobe Stock)



3

Ribboned summer squash

This salad comes from a Swiss couple that visited us when I happened to be up to my ears in zucchinis. A good rule for harvesting your summer squash is to “pick quick,” when they are small and tender, unless you plan to scoop the seeds out and stuff them.

Ingredients

- 1 8-10 inch zucchini or other summer squash
- Juice of 1 lime
- Hard or semi-hard cheese like romano or asiago

(Image: Ila Bonczek/Vision Times)



- Fresh cilantro (or basil if you are a cilantro-hater)
- Olive oil

Instructions

- Use a peeler or a mandoline to slice the squash lengthwise into thin ribbons, directly onto serving plates.
- Drizzle with lime and olive oil.
- Using the peeler again, top with cheese shavings.
- Sprinkle with chopped cilantro and serve directly.

4

Green beans and potato salad

Ingredients

- 3 lbs of potatoes, cooked and diced
- 1 pound of green beans, stems removed, cut into 1 ½ inch lengths
- Olive oil
- Balsamic vinegar
- Sea salt
- Red onion, minced
- Fresh or dried Italian herbs (Oregano, rosemary, thyme, marjoram)

Instructions

- Cook potatoes in salted water until tender, and dice when they are cool enough to handle
- Steam fresh green beans until just tender, cool under running water
- Make a small pool of dressing in the bottom of a large bowl with the remaining ingredients. The potatoes absorb a lot, so don't make it too small!
- Mix the green beans and potatoes into the dressing and serve at room temperature for best flavor.

(Image: Adobe Stock)



Exceedingly simple, refreshing and delightful, cucumbers and dill seem to be made for each other.



7 Summer Salads That Will Knock Your Socks Off (2)

5 **Cucumber with dill**

Eating seasonally could never be easier. Crunchy and refreshing, this favorite from Sweden is like a quick pickle without the sour flavor. Similar to zucchinis, cucumbers are best picked before their seeds start to develop and the skin gets tough.

Ingredients

- 2 fresh cucumbers, sliced into rounds
- 2 tsp salt
- Small bunch of dill, chopped

Instructions

- Slice the cucumbers into thin rounds.
- Mix with salt in a medium bowl.
- Place a weight on the cucumbers (a smaller bowl filled with water works well).
- Refrigerate for 1-2 hours
- Drain off the salt and water that will have been pulled from the cukes.
- Toss in the dill, and enjoy chilled.

(Image: Adobe Stock)

By Ila Bonczek
Vision Times

Continued from the previous issue

6

Swiss chard and mango with beet ginger dressing

Ingredients

- 1 bunch swiss chard
- 2 ripe mangos

Dressing:

- 1/2 inch fresh ginger, peeled and chopped
- 1 fresh (or dried) cayenne pepper or other chili
- 1 small beet, peeled and cooked
- 1 tsp toasted sesame oil
- 1 Tbsp soy sauce
- 1 Tbsp rice vinegar
- 1 scallions, chopped

Instructions

- Tear bite size bits off the chard stems.
- Use a peeler to remove the mango skin
- Working one side at a time, slice lengthwise towards the pit in ½ inch strips, then slice across those once or twice.
- Cut along the pit for uniform slices.

- With a blender, puree the cooked beet, scallion and ginger with the liquid seasonings plus a half cup of water. The dressing will be thick and will color the mango to look like peaches.
- Toss the chard and mango with enough dressing to coat them.
- Serve sprinkled with sesame seeds and a sprig of Thai basil.

(Image: Ila Bonczek/Vision Times)



7

Tomato salad

I still recall this amazing dish from my first trip to Italy long ago — an incredibly simple salad, best made with fresh, vine-ripe tomatoes, still warm from the sun.

Ingredients

- 2 or 3 ripe tomatoes
- Olive oil
- Sea salt
- Basil leaves

Instructions

- Slice the tomatoes into thick half-rounds
- Drizzle with your best olive oil
- Sprinkle with coarse sea salt and fresh basil slivers
- Enjoy with just about anything.



(Image: Adobe Stock)

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English Mandarin Cantonese

The Polemic History of

Crossword Puzzles 1

By Carolina Avendano
Vision Times



(Image: Adobe stock)

To many newspaper readers, solving the crossword puzzles inhabiting the back pages of the bundle has been an essential part of their Sunday routine.

Can crossword puzzles really improve your brain?



The seemingly simple layout of black and white squares has the ability to challenge the reader, who is likely to experience a unique feeling of achievement after solving a

In 2011 a study published in the US National Library of Medicine found that solving word puzzles could delay the onset of memory decline in patients with dementia.

2

While doing crosswords may aid in maintaining the brain active which helps older people to manage their daily tasks better, the activity is not believed to prevent or slow down mental decay, for which more active pursuits are recommended.

particularly difficult grid. While widely considered an exceptional tool to promote mental health, word puzzles have also faced condemnation as a social threat.

In December of 2018, however, the findings of a new study were announced, stating that crosswords and puzzles did not prevent mental decline, but could only provide a “higher cognitive point” from which to decline.

A social concern



5

(Image: Manan Vatsyana/ AFP via Getty images)

The divergent views opposed each other for decades, relenting only with the onset of WW II, from which crosswords provided welcome distraction.

A later study was published in 2019 in the Science Daily journal, showing that solving word and number puzzles regularly resulted in older adults having a sharper mind.

In 1924, the London Times posted an article titled “An Enslaved America,” declaring that crosswords puzzles were “almost a national menace” in the United States due to its intrusion into the working hours of the population.

6

While a definitive conclusion to the debate may never be realized, The Global Council on Brain Health advises people to engage in stimulating activities such as learning a musical instrument, designing a quilt or gardening rather than brain training to help their brain function in later life.

The article described that the entertaining grids were becoming omnipresent throughout society, estimating that over ten million people spent half an hour each day working out the puzzles when they should have been working.

The increasing number of people being found pondering words in subways, factories, offices and even courtrooms; made crossword puzzles be seen as a threat or “wild hyacinth” to American industry. The black-and-white game did not spare the UK from its effects.

The Grand Duchess Viktoria Feodorovna of Russia in her suite at the Waldorf Astoria on December 9, 1924. The pastime had become popular in all spheres of society (Image: Underwood Archives via Getty Images)



The case of a British woman who took her husband to court for staying in bed until 11 a.m. doing crosswords, became widely known. The European country saw how this hobby, if taken to extremes, could give rise to interpersonal conflicts.

3

To be continued