

Femtosecond IN THE NEWS

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World News

In 1973, the Arab members of Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) declared an oil embargo against the United States [1]. The impact to the US was devastating resulting in long gas lines, inflated prices, and a nation-wide speed limit of 55 miles per hour [2]. The consequence was a realization that OPEC controlled the fate of Western economies through the use of their oil weapon. Now the Saudi crown prince warned of the disruption of world oil due to the threat of Iran [3]. However, the US is now a net oil exporter, a situation not seen since 1953 [4]. With the benefits of oil fracking technology, the consequences of oil disruption are reduced [5]. Nevertheless, the latest Middle-East oil disruption comes from Iran. The Iranian government claims two missiles hit one of its oil tankers traveling through the Red Sea [6]. Meanwhile, to offset the Iranian threat, the US is sending 3,000 troops and advanced equipment to Saudi Arabia [7].

In Hong Kong, indications are that China is increasing its military presence. By one estimate, the number of troops has doubled with 10,000–12,000 now on station [8]. What's more, the level of violence between police and protesters is increasing. For instance, petro bombs were thrown at a metro station [9]. However, compared to past protests, the number of protesters has decreased [10].

On October 7, the US announced plans to leave Syria [11]. Shortly thereafter, Turkish forces attacked 181 military targets in Northern Syria [12]. One report indicates a prison holding Islamic State (IS) fighters was shelled by Turkish artillery [13]. This comes as former Secretary of Defense, James Mattis, warns that IS could rise in the conflict [14]. What's more, Turkey's President Tayyip Erdogan, threatened to send the 3.6 million Syrian refugees it now hosts to Europe if they call the military incursion an occupation [15]. In conclusion, Turkish forces are reported to have entered the border town Ras al-Ayn [16].

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Security

The race to keep commercial software vulnerabilities from being exploited continues. Case in point, Microsoft released warning to upgrade Windows to correct vulnerabilities in the Internet Explorer [1]. Then for October, the patch upgrade fixed 60 security vulnerabilities [2]. One big security concern is that the critical infrastructure will be compromised causing extensive loss. In California, the power company PG&E has started

rolling blackouts to reduce the risk from fires [3]. As a consequence, electric cars that rely on charging stations tied to the power company will stop once their batteries are exhausted [4]. Additionally, unrefrigerated food is spoiling and businesses are closed [5]. The interesting point is the blackouts were announced and approved by the California regulators earlier in the year [6]. However, there appears to be inadequate backup in place.

Meanwhile, state sponsored cyber-attacks continue. Case in point, Czech intelligence has identified a Chinese state sponsored cyber-attack directed against a key government institution that occurred last year [7]. That the report was so long in coming might indicate the complexity in determining the source of the attack.

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Special points of interest:

- Oil Attack
- Turkey attacks Northern Syria

Security

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*If they want peace,
nations should avoid the
pin-pricks that precede
cannon shots.—Napoleon
Bonaparte*

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13. Reuters, *Turkey shelled prison holding IS foreign fighters Kurdish-led administration*, October 10, 2019.
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16. AP, *Turkish forces say they've captured key Syrian border town*, October 12, 2019.

World News

Terrorism

Germany was subjected to multiple terror attacks.

In the town of Limburg, a person (originally from Syria) plowed a truck into eight vehicles injuring eight people [1].

Then in the City of Halle, an attack against a synagogue left two people dead [2]. The attack was streamed by the terrorist and at least 2,200 people viewed the attack [3].

The United Kingdom had another terrorist attack. Four people were stabbed at the Arndale shopping center in central Manchester [4].

Elsewhere, Indonesia's Security Minister Wiranto was attacked by a knife wielding terrorist that has ties to the Islamic State [5].

In Africa, terrorists attacked a

mosque in Burkina Faso killing at least 16 people [6]. The same African country suffered a terrorist attack on a gold mine resulting in approximately 20 dead [7].

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*We sail within a vast
sphere, ever drifting in
uncertainty, driven from
end to end—Blaise Pascal*

Economy

Disappointing news on the economic growth. For the second quarter, the growth rate fell to 2% [1]. However, the unemployment rate fell to 3.5%, the lowest it has been since December 1969 [2].

The unemployment numbers remains strong. For the week ending September 21, the number of first time unemployment claims was 213,000 [3]. For the week ending September 28, the number was 219,000 [4]. Finally, for the week ending October 5, the number was 210,000 [5].

One of the ongoing challenges is getting fair trade. To this end, there appears to be some early progress on the China-US trade war [6]. While many companies are positive over the agreement, there is a realization that much work re-

mains [7]. This comes as the US and Japan agreed to a new trade deal [8].

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*Finish last in your league
and they call you idiot.
Finish last in medical
school and they call you
doctor.—Abe Lemons*
