

IN THE NEWS

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World News

There is much concern over the role of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in autonomous weapons; referred to as killer robots [1]. This is not a new concept. Consider the 1951 movie, the Day the Earth Stood still: *"For our policemen, we created a race of robots. Their function is to patrol the planets-in space ships like this one-and preserve the peace. In matters of aggression, we have given them absolute power over us; this power can not be revoked. At the first sign of violence, they act automatically against the aggressor."* [2] Perhaps this is another example of science fiction merging into science fact.

For forty years, there was a belief; if the West traded with China, the communist giant would become a nonthreatening nation [3]. Instead, this policy has completely failed. Consider, China continues to press its trade funded might in the South China Sea. For instance, the foreign minister in Vietnam called on China to remove its survey ship and coast guard escorts from Vietnamese claimed waters [4].

In Saudi Arabia, drone attacks set alight two oil facilities [5]. The attack was claimed by Yemen's Iran-aligned Houthi group [6]. However, the Secretary of State Mike Pompeo placed the blame for the attack on Iran [7]. What's more, the attacks were in Khurais and Buqayq which are much closer to Iran than Yemen [8]. As a consequence, Saudi Arabia shut down 5 million barrels of oil production; approximately 5% of the world oil output [9]. One report indicates Iranian media are suggesting Iranian oil should be used to offset the loss in Saudi production [10]. Another report indicates the US provided information to Saudi officials that places the blame on Iran [11]. What is unclear is if Iran is actually behind the attacks or is it another power trying to get Iran into a war.

1. Chan, Melissa K., Time, *China and the U.S Are Fighting a Major Battle Over Killer Robots and the Future of AI*, September 13, 2019.
2. Klaatu, *The Day the Earth Stood Still* (Movie), 1951.

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Special points of interest:

- Saudi Oil Facilities Attacked

Security

There are weapons, such as the AGM-88 High Speed Antiradiation missile (HARM), that detect radar and deliver an explosive package to that location, even if the radar is turned off [1]. That is, the weapon does not try to hack into the radar system, it simply destroys it. Now we see the US Army is developing soldier electronics that are claimed to be unhackable and are rich with wireless technology [2]. It seems that the designers of

this technology are unaware of anti-radiation weapons that exist today. In such cases, the enemy does not care to hack the system, they just want to kill the target.

The attack on the Saudi Arabian oil infrastructure is a major news story [3]. One report is questioning how the US missile defense system failed to stop the Iranian attack [4]. The question here is what level of cyber attack, if any, was used in this attack? How were tar-

gets selected and not stopped by the Saudi air defenses?

One of the fears for the upcoming 2020 election is hacking of the voting systems [5]. In looking at the most serious threat agent, we consider the ongoing US and China trade war. If a trade deal took place, this would likely benefit President Trump [6]. However, the signals from China, indicate a slow process. Case in point, China can-

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Security

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celled meetings with US farm organizations [7]. One possible reason may be that China wants to run out the clock and hope there is a new President. If this is the case, they will certainly use their influence to support the President's opposition.

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2. Osborn, Kris, *Fox News/Warrior Maven*, *Soldiers may 'wear' unhackable computers into combat*, Sep-

tember 3, 2019.

3. Marcus, Jonathan, *BBC News*, *'Drone' attack on Saudis destabilises an already volatile region*, September 16, 2019.
4. Axe, David, *The National Interest*, *Did U.S. Missile Defenses Fail During Saudi Oil Attack?*, September 17, 2019.
5. Popken, Ben, *NBC News*, *Election security experts say hack of voters' confidence may be biggest threat to 2020*, September 21, 2019.
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7. Garber, Jonathan, *Fox Business*, *Trade war: Chinese officials cancel farm visits*, September 20, 2019.

*A signal is comprehended
if it serves to make us
notice the object or
situation it bespeaks. A
symbol is understood when
we conceive the idea it
presents.—Susanne Langer*

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3. Gertz, Bill, *Washington Free Beacon*, *Gertz: Xi Jinping Has Created a 'Communist Nightmare'*, September 15, 2019.
4. Bloomberg, *Vietnam Fights China Moves to Hinder Offshore Energy Exploration*, September 13, 2019.
5. *BBC News*, *Saudi Arabia oil facilities ablaze after drone strikes*, September 14, 2019.
6. Kalin, Stephen, and El Gamal, Rania, *Reuters*, *Houthi drones hit two Aramco plants, Saudis say fires contained*, September 13, 2019.
7. Dorman, Sam, *Fox News*,

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Pompeo accuses Iran of 'unprecedented attack' after drones hit Saudi oil facilities, September 14, 2019.

8. Eshel, Tamir, *Defense Update*, *Attack on Saudi Oil Refineries Proves the Devastating Potential of Iranian Cruise Missiles*, September 14, 2019.
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11. DeMarche, Edmund, *Fox*

News, *US shares info with Saudi Arabia that blames Iran for oil field attack: report*, September 17, 2019.

Terrorism

Once again, the Islamic State (IS) is in the news. One report indicates IS fighters are being smuggled into Europe [1]. Meanwhile, in Iraq, US jets dropped over 40 tons of explosives on an IS infested island [2]. The resulting damage was a series of smoking craters [3]. One report indicates 37 targets were bombed and approximately 25 IS fighters were killed [4].

Elsewhere, suicide bombing continues to be a tactic used. For instance, in Afghanistan, a Taliban suicide bomber killed at least 12 people, including a US serviceman [5]. Then there was a motorcycle suicide bombing that targeted a campaign rally by President Ashraf Ghani, killing at least 24 people [6]. This was followed by a second suicide bombing downtown that brought the combined death toll to at least 48 [7]. Likewise, the Philippines is experiencing frequent suicide bombings [8].

During this news cycle, reports indicated justice is served. For instance, a terrorist wanted for killing a US Navy man during a 1985 TWA hijacking, was arrested in Greece [9]. Additionally, it was reported that Hamza bin Laden, the son of Osama bin Laden (who was also a high official within al-Qa'ida), was killed during a US operation in Afghanistan [10].

In the United States, the risk of terrorism by immigrants continues. For instance, one report indicates an American

Airline mechanic, accused of sabotaging a jetliner in July may have links to the IS [11]. Separately, a man in Alabama was arrested for planning an IS inspired attack to kill an American soldier [12].

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4. Ioanes, Ilen, Insider, *US jets smashed an island ISIS was using 'like a hotel' and troops found rockets and bombs stashed in caves*, September 11, 2019.
5. Akhgar, Tameem, and Anna, Cara, Fox News, *American service member among at least 12 killed in Taliban suicide attack in Kabul*, September 5, 2019.
6. AP/Fox News, *Suicide bomber on motorcycle targets President Ghani's campaign rally, killing at least 24 people*, September 17, 2019.
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10. Business Insider, *Osama bin Laden's youngest son, Hamza, had taken up terrorism to 'avenge' his notorious father*, September 16, 2019.
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12. Martin, Jeff, AP, *Man arrested in terrorism probe told FBI he'd execute a US service member for ISIS*, September 18, 2019.

That would be such a life-changing thing, for us all to know that there are other beings out there who we could potentially communicate with, or maybe we are listening to a signal that they transmitted hundreds of millennia ago.—Paul Allen

Economy

The trade war with China continues. One report indicates the US imports from China fell 16% to \$44.4 Billion, while exports fell 22% to \$10.3 Billion [1]. This article would leave the reader with the belief that China is winning the trade war. However, if we calculate the dollar amounts, the imports from China fell \$8.5 Billion while exports fell by \$2.9 Billion. Given the one-sided balance of the existing trade, the Chinese are clearly taking the bigger impact.

The attacks against the Saudi oil facilities drove oil prices higher [2]. However, since last year the US has achieved oil independence [3]. Now the US is an oil exporter. For instance, in June, the US even exported 8.7 million barrels of oil to China [4]. As a consequence, the impacts to Saudi oil do not have the impacts to the US that they did in the past.

Meanwhile, the unemployment numbers remain strong. For the week ending

August 31, the number of first time unemployment claims was 217,000 [5]. Then for the week ending September 7, the number of claims was 204,000 [6]. Finally, for the week ending September 14, the number of claims was 208,000 [7].

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5. Department of Labor, Unemployment Insurance Weekly Claims, September 5, 2019.
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*Distinguishing the signal
from the noise requires
both scientific knowledge
and self-knowledge.—Nate
Silver*
