

### Reflections

If we do not capture past lessons, we may not appreciate the actual state of affairs. To this end, I (the editor) decided to periodically memorialize some of my experiences. Forward: The news suggests that electronic voting machines used in the 2020 election were secure [1]. Indeed, the former head of the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA), Chris Krebs, defended the security of the election systems and processes [2]. The question here is how could anyone know? Consider, on his watch (Chris Krebs), a significant security breach that compromised many US Government agencies went undetected for months [3]. The hacking targets also included the agency he headed, the CISA [4]. So if CISA systems are being hacked undetected, how can a statement be made that voting machines are secure? The argument is non sequitur.

Recall the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) data breach of background investigation materials [2]. The attack appears to have come from China and was undetected for so long, the initial date of compromise remains a mystery [5]. Forensics indicated a failure in senior management to implement adequate security [6,7].

My contribution follows. Prior to the OPM fully taking the lead on background investigations; I made the cut for a GS-15 candidate job interview. In attendance was a senior and mid-level manager conducting my interview. They mentioned they were planning to become the lead agency for background investigations and asked how I would ensure security. I explained how the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC) where I worked had implemented a (Continued on page 2)

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### Wuhan Coronavirus

The number of COVID-19 deaths in the US passed the 300,000 mark [1]. While the US waited for the FDA's Pfizer approval; Canada approved the vaccine [2]. This came as the UK continued vaccinating its people with the vaccine [3]. Then on December 10, the FDA sponsored panel of outside experts endorsed the Pfizer vaccine on a 17 to 4 vote [4]. Finally, on December 12, the FDA approved the Pfizer vaccine emergency use authorization.

Meanwhile, COVID-19 continued to expand. In Japan and South Korea, after containing the virus,

new outbreaks were reported [5].

Elsewhere, China announced plans to import 100 million doses of the vaccine co-developed by Pfizer [6]. This comes as one report indicates China downplayed the virus and overstated its response to the pandemic [7].

Then on December 18, the FDA approved Moderna's COVID-19 vaccine emergency use authorization [8].

One consequence of a delayed vaccine implementation is the virus has had time to mutate. For instance, in Nevada, a new mutation of the COVID-19 virus was discovered [9]. In

another example, a new strain of COVID-19, referred to as VUI-202012/01, appears to be more infectious and is spreading in the U.K., Australia and continental Europe [10]. What's more, the new strain appears to be spreading. For instance, the new virus was detected in Japan for the first time [11]. Another report indicates the new variant has also been detected in Canada, Spain, and Sweden [12]. Additionally, China has banned all flights coming from the UK [13].

1. Albert, Victoria, CBS News, *U.S. coronavirus*

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#### Special points of interest:

- More Infectious VUI-202012/01 Spreading in the U.K.
- Moderna COVID-19 Vaccine
- Terror in Nashville

# Wuhan Coronavirus

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  3. Shepherd, Katie, Washington Post, FDA panel prepares to consider Pfizer vaccine, as U.S. reports record 3,140 deaths in a single day, December 10, 2020.
  4. Kirka, Danica, AP, UK starts virus campaign with a shot watched round the world, December 8, 2020.
  5. Farber, Madeline, Fox News, FDA panel endorses

Pfizer's COVID vaccine, December 10, 2020.

6. CBS News, FDA authorizes Pfizer's COVID-19 vaccine for emergency use, December 12, 2020.
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8. Calicchio, Dom, Fox News, China used internet troll 'army' to shape coronavirus narrative: report, December 20, 2020.
9. Schultz, Jaclyn, KUUV (Fox), New COVID-19 mutation found in Nevada, December 22, 2020
10. AFP, China's Fosun Pharma to import 100 million

BioNTech vaccine doses, December 16, 2020.

11. Donaldson, Kitty, Bloomberg, U.K.'s Hancock Says New Covid Mutation Is 'Out of Control', December 20, 2020.
12. Fox News/AP, Japan confirms 1st cases of coronavirus variant found in UK, December 25, 2020.
13. The Guardian, Spain, Sweden and Canada report cases of UK Covid variant, December 26, 2020.
14. Jerusalem Post/Reuters, China to suspend UK flights indefinitely - foreign ministry, December 24, 2020

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*I do believe we have voter fraud in America—Jeff Sessions*

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smart card based Public Key Infrastructure (PKI). I detailed the smartcard multifactor authentication and other controls I considered necessary. Obviously, I didn't get the job and OPM didn't follow my recommendations prior to the breach. However, since the breach, the OPM has implemented most of the controls I posited years prior to the breach discovery.

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2. McNamara, Audrey, CBS News, Krebs again defends election at contentious Senate hearing, December 16, 2020.

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3. Volz, Dustin, and McMillan, Robert, Wall Street Journal, Suspected Russian Hack Said to Have Gone Undetected for Months, December 15, 2020.
4. AFP/MSN, Hackers breach US agencies, Homeland Security a reported target, December 14, 2020
5. Wagstaff, Keith, et. al., NBC News, OPM: 21.5 Million People Affected By Background Check Breach, July 9, 2015.
6. Fruhlinger, Josh, CSO, The OPM hack explained: Bad security practices meet China's Captain America, February 12, 2020.
7. Korolov, Maria, CSO, The OPM data breach 2 years on: What government agencies must do now, June

20, 2017.

8. Boyd, Aaron, Federal Times, OPM breach a failure on encryption, detection, June 19, 2015.
9. FDIC Office of Inspector General, Development of the FDIC's Public Key Infrastructure, Audit Report No. 01-011, May 24, 2001.
10. Smart Card Alliance, Smart Card Case Studies and Implementation Profiles, Publication Number SC-03005, December 2003.
11. Orelli, Brian, Motley Fool, Moderna Gains FDA Authorization for Its Coronavirus Vaccine, December 18, 2020 .

## Terrorism

It appears that religious terrorist wars will continue for generations. Case in point, in Nigeria, Boko Haram terrorists abducted approximately 330 boys from a school [1]. Fortunately, Nigerian forces were able to free the schoolboys [2].

The use of children by terrorists in Nigeria continues. Case in point, a teenage girl suicide bomber killed three people in her attack [3].

Terrorism within Afghanistan continues. Three bombs killed at least two police officers in Kabul [4].

Once again there is a case of terrorism within the US. In Nashville, an RV was detonated causing significant damage [5]. The blast occurred outside of the AT&T building and caused disruption of telecommunication services [6]. One report indicates human remains were discovered near

the explosion site [7]. A question here is how did the bad actor (or actors) get the materials necessary for such a powerful bomb?

1. AP/New York Post, *Boko Haram claims abduction of students in northern Nigeria*, December 15, 2020.
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3. AFP/Barron's, *Suicide Bomber Kills 3 In NE Nigeria: Security Sources*, December 19, 2020.
4. Faiez, Rahim, AP/ABC News, *Series of explosions target police in Kabul; at least 2 dead*, December 26, 2020.
5. Levenson, Eric, et. al., CNN, *A timeline of the Nashville RV explosion on Christmas morning*, December 26, 2020.
6. Stephenson, Cassandra, Nashville Tennessean, *AT&T outages caused by Nashville explosion impact card machines at Walmart, other retailers*, December 26, 2020.
7. Almasy, Steve, et. al., CNN, *Possible human remains found near Nashville explosion site, police chief says*, December 26, 2020.

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*Pretending that voter fraud  
does not exist puts the  
integrity of our voting  
process at risk—Mercedes  
Schlapp*

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## Economy

The value of stocks remained high. For example, on December 7, the Nasdaq composite closed at a new record high [1]. Then on December 8, the S&P 500 and Nasdaq set record high closes [2]. On December 17, the three major stock indexes (S&P 500, DJIA, and NASDAQ) closed at record highs [3].

The consequences to the US economy due to COVID-19 are obvious. For instance, one piece suggests China's economy will overtake that of the US in 2028, five years earlier than expected [4]. Additionally, due to the impact of COVID-19, state and local governments are not getting funding they need [5].

A good indicator of the weak economy can be seen in the bleak unemployment claim numbers. The first time unemployment rate for the week ending December 5 was 853,000 [6]. For the week ending December 12, the number rose to 885,000 [7]. For the week ending December 19, the number reported was 803,000 [8].

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5. McGahey, Richard, Forbes, *Covid Recession Hurting State And Local Budgets, And The Economy*, December 26, 2020
6. Department of Labor, *Unemployment Insurance Weekly Claims*, December 10, 2020.
7. Department of Labor, *Unemployment Insurance Weekly Claims*, December 17, 2020.
8. Department of Labor,

*Unemployment Insurance Weekly Claims*, December 23, 2020

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*Voter fraud especially matters when elections are close—Mercedes Schlapp*

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