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Could toxic ingredient in Botox become terrorist tool? **P.44**

INSIGHT

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P.30 **Safety problems**
Car keyless entry and ignition systems

Safety problems: Car keyless entry and ignition systems

BY RALPH VARTABEDIAN AND KEN BENSINGER
LOS ANGELES TIMES



The sleek Infiniti G37 Cindy Marsh bought last August was the car of her dreams, equipped with the latest keyless electronics technology that allows her to start the engine with the touch of a button.

But right away, the system gave her trouble. To get the engine started, she would sometimes have to tap the power button repeatedly. Sometimes it wouldn't start unless she opened and closed the car doors, Marsh recalled.

She eventually adapted to the system's quirks but said that even now she isn't sure how to shut off the engine in an emergency.

"I don't know if I ever read it in the owner's manual or not," said Marsh.

Old-school car keys appear headed for extinction, as automakers rush to install wireless systems that allow drivers to unlock their doors and start their engines with an electronic fob that they never have to take out of their purse or pocket.

Introduced less than a decade ago on luxury models, the push-button systems are rapidly

spreading to all segments of the market, including bargain-priced Kias. The number of models with them as standard or optional equipment has quadrupled in the last five years.

Many drivers don't fully understand how the systems work, however, leaving them vulnerable to potentially serious safety problems.

In complaints to federal regulators, motorists have reported that they were unable to shut down engines during highway emergencies, including sudden acceleration events. In other cases, parked vehicles accidentally rolled away and engines were left running for hours without their owners realizing it.

And although traditional keys all work the same way and are universally understood by consumers, automakers have adopted different procedures for using the keyless ignition systems. As a result, owners may not know how to operate their own cars in an emergency, let alone a rented or borrowed car.

"Where you have a second to make an emergency maneuver, you shouldn't have to search around for the right procedure to use on a switch," said Henry Jasny, general counsel at Advocates for Highway and

Auto Safety, a nonprofit group based in Washington, D.C., that pushes for laws to make roads safer.

STANDARDS WEIGHED

The risk is considered serious enough that federal regulators and an auto industry trade group are looking at adopting standard procedures.

All of the systems rely on a similar architecture that uses a fob: a small transmitter that communicates with the vehicle's computer. The fob can automatically open door locks when the owner approaches the vehicle, and then the engine can be started with just the push of a power button on the dashboard.

But to shut down the engine while the vehicle is moving, drivers must hold down the power button for one to three full seconds, depending on the make. In some cases, two or three successive taps on the button will work. Mercedes-Benz allows drivers to kill the engine with a single push of the power button, but only if the transmission is in neutral. At least one manufacturer prevents emergency engine shut-downs if the vehicle is moving at less than 5 mph.

Industry officials say that the devices have become

wildly popular with buyers and that glitches will be eliminated through the normal course of technological improvements, making new regulations unnecessary.

"We really haven't seen too much confusion with these systems," said Dave Proefke, a vehicle security engineer at General Motors Co.

"As they become more widely adopted, I think we'll find that they converge in how they operate," he said.

Besides offering convenience for motorists, Proefke said, the technology gives auto designers greater styling freedom because there's no longer the need for a key cylinder in the steering column. It also benefits older people who have difficulty removing keys from their pockets or turning a key in a lock.

And "it has that cool factor," said Dan Edmunds, director of vehicle testing at www.edmunds.com, an Internet automobile research site.

Auto safety experts say the industry needs to do a better job explaining the functions of advanced technology to motorists and needs to adopt common operating procedures.

Automakers are offering the systems on 155 models this year, compared with 41 in the 2006 model

year, according to Edmunds.com. Ford Motor is planning to make keyless ignition an option in its entry-level 2011 Fiesta, due out later this year.

HIGHWAY PANIC

But some owners say that confusing software rules have put them in peril.

Wally Brithinee was in his 2007 Toyota Avalon last August when it began to speed out of control on Interstate 5 near San Diego. Thinking quickly, Brithinee, president of an electric motor repair business, pressed the sedan's power button, but nothing happened.

"This car isn't stopping," he told a passenger as he felt panic swelling in his chest. "I really didn't know what to do at that point."

Five terrifying miles later, Brithinee managed to halt the runaway Avalon by braking hard and shifting to a lower gear. He walked away unharmed. All that could have been avoided, he later learned, had he depressed the button for a full three seconds, the emergency shut-off procedure used in Toyota Motor Corp. vehicles.

A keyless ignition system may also have played a role in the Aug. 29 crash that took the life of California

Highway Patrol Officer Mark Saylor and three members of his family when a Lexus ES 350 lent to Saylor by a car dealer accelerated out of control to speeds of more than 120 mph before hitting an embankment in suburban San Diego County.

Some safety experts believe that a warning label should be included on the dashboard, telling motorists how to shut off the engine. But industry analysts say manufacturers typically resist installing such labels.

What's more, automakers maintain that shutting off the engine may not be the best option in an emergency, because doing so will cause the driver to lose power steering and possibly braking ability.

Toyota has blamed the San Diego accident on a floor mat that trapped the accelerator pedal. But a September memorandum by investigators for the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration also identified the Lexus' push-button ignition as one of the "significant factors" in the crash and noted that "there was no ignition key" that could shut down the engine or warning label on the power button to explain how to shut off the engine.

In the aftermath of the Saylor tragedy, Toyota is-

sued a recall covering 4.3 million of its vehicles and said it would modify gas pedals, change floor padding and install new software.

Toyota spokesman John Hanson said the company is also discussing internally whether to change the function of its power button.

And last Thursday, Toyota launched another recall targeting 2.3 million vehicles, including many of the models subject to the floor-mat recall, saying their gas pedals could stick.

Paul Green, a human factors expert at the University of Michigan Transportation Research Institute, said he sees the issue with keyless technology as part of a growing problem of high-tech features being introduced faster than the industry is able to agree on common operating procedures.

"The amount of research we are doing is not adequate," Green said.

Motorists are confused even when they pay top dollar for advanced features. The Insurance Institute for Highway Safety found in a recent survey that a majority of owners of Infinitis equipped with automatic lane departure warning systems did not know that a button on the steering wheel turned the system on and off.

"They had no idea that they had a button on the steering wheel that could activate the system," said Russ Rader, a spokesman for the institute.

The highway safety administration said in a statement that it has begun to look into possible standards for the keyless systems. And the Society of Automotive Engineers formed a committee in July to examine keyless technology and "study a possible standard on how long the ignition button should be depressed to shut off the engine."

But new federal safety rules or industry standards typically can take years to adopt. The scrutiny is coming eight years after the first system was introduced by Mercedes-Benz.

ABETTING THEFTS

Beyond safety problems, the push-button technology has some idiosyncrasies that have left motorists stranded but also provided loopholes for car thieves.

In early General Motors vehicles with push-button start systems, owners would sometimes shut down the engines with the transmission still in gear.

That would not electronically lock the ignition system, and thieves soon found they could simply get in



BY THE LOS ANGELES TIMES

HELP!

How do I stop?

Automakers have adopted different procedures for turning off engines in an emergency for cars with keyless ignitions.

GENERAL MOTORS

Corvette, Cadillac XLR: Push power button once.

Cadillac SRX, Buick LaCrosse: Push and hold button for two seconds or tap button twice.

FORD (includes Ford Taurus and Lincoln CCC)

Push and hold power button for one second.

TOYOTA (includes Toyota Avalon and most Lexus models)

Push and hold power button for three seconds.

CHRYSLER (includes Dodge Challenger and Chrysler 300)

Push and hold button for three seconds when speed is greater

HONDA (includes Acura RL and TL)

Push and hold button for three seconds or tap button three times

HYUNDAI (includes Genesis and Veracruz)

Push and hold power button for three seconds or tap button three times.

NISSAN (incl. Nissan Altima and Infiniti G37)

Push and hold button for two seconds or tap button three times.

BMW (includes X6 and 7-series)

Push and hold power button for two seconds or tap button three times.

MERCEDES-BENZ (most models)

Shift car into neutral and press button once.

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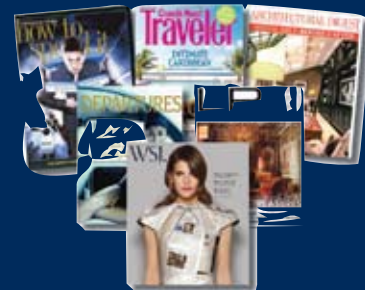


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the vehicle, push the start button and drive away, said Forrest Folck, a forensic mechanic who investigated the issue for an insurance company.

"Cars were being stolen all over the United States," he said.

Larry Stewart discovered an opposite problem with the technology in his 2007 Toyota Camry.

After he parked at a restaurant last summer, the car would not start. The tow truck driver who came to

Stewart's rescue wasn't surprised, telling Stewart he had been there several times recently for the same reason.

The driver blamed the problem on stray radio signals, possibly from a powerful police or fire station transmitter nearby. He towed the car 100 yards, and it started immediately.

"It's really unnerving that such a thing could happen," said Stewart.

Even GM engineers found themselves in the

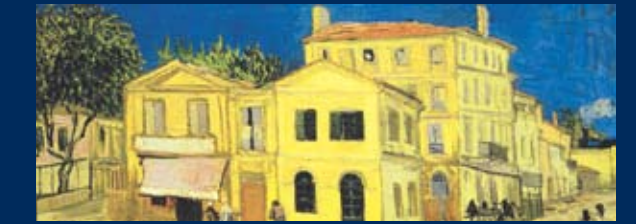
same situation when they parked test vehicles at a Detroit-area shopping mall and found that the keyless ignition system was disabled, according to Proefke, the GM expert.

"It was a dead zone," he said.

Proefke said the problem was traced to interference from a nearby nightclub's lighting system, which was broadcasting unlicensed high-power radio signals. ●

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China's \$2.4 trillion grip on the global economy

BY ROBERT J. SAMUELSON
WASHINGTON POST

China disclosed the other day that its foreign exchange reserves had increased to about \$2.4 trillion in 2009, up \$453 billion for the year.

These stupendous figures -- and the likelihood that the country's reserves will rise by a comparable amount this year -- have become a financial, economic and geopolitical reality of surpassing significance.

The significance is not, as many imagine, that China might suddenly "dump" the dollar and dethrone it as the world's major international currency, undermining American economic power and prestige.

As an economic strategy, dumping the dollar would boomerang. It would amount to a declaration of economic war in which everyone -- Chinese, Americans and many others -- would lose.

Consider what would happen, hypothetically. China would first sell securities in which its dollars are invested. After unloading the securities and collecting dollars, it would sell the dollars on foreign exchange markets for other currencies: the euro, the yen and who knows what else.

The massive disgorging of dollars could trigger another global economic collapse. As China's selling became known, other foreign and American investors might jump on the bandwagon, abandoning dollar securities and shifting currencies.

If panic ensued, markets would fall sharply. Banks' and investors' capital and wealth would erode. The resumption of the global recession, even depression, would shrink foreign markets for China's exports (in 2009, its exports fell 16 percent).

Why would China do this to itself? The answer: It wouldn't.

Look elsewhere for the significance of the huge foreign exchange reserves. For starters, they confirm China's mercantilist trade policies. A country that practices *mercantilism* strives to increase exports at the expense of its trading partners.

China has done this by keeping its currency, the renminbi (RMB), at an artificially low rate that gives its exports a competitive advantage on world markets. The resulting trade surpluses are huge -- even last year's, which were shrunk by the global slump.

It's often said that the United States "borrows" from China, because the Chinese hold so many Treasury bonds. This inaccurately describes reality.

When China receives dollars, it could use those dollars to buy imports. Or it could limit the dollar inflow by allowing the renminbi to appreciate, making its exports more expensive and its imports cheaper.

In 2005, China began a modest appreciation of the RMB against the dollar; in mid-2008, it stopped. Since then, the RMB has depreciated against many currencies, reports economist Nicholas Lardy of the Peterson Institute. In 2010, Lardy expects the trade surplus to grow. So China accumulates dollars, which must be invested.

The large surpluses cause China to "lend" to us and other countries, regardless of whether we want the "loans."

Even if China had no trade surplus, its foreign exchange reserves would probably grow because it receives earnings on its existing reserves. These reserves serve China's other strategic purposes. They're used to invest in raw materials (oil, food, minerals) and important technologies around the world; or they buy political influence with foreign aid or favorable loans.

In effect, China has a \$2.4 trillion stash to use as it pleases. The underlying purpose is to bolster the government's grip on power by ensuring rapid economic growth.

But what's good for China may not be good for the rest of the world, including the United States. It's not simply a redirection of economic power but a question of how that power will be used, consciously or unconsciously, to shape the global economic order.

Lopsided economic expansion poses many dangers. Already, China's huge reserves -- invested in U.S. bonds -- are cited as one reason for the low interest rates that brought on the financial crisis. The artificially depressed RMB hurts exports from developing countries and not just the United States, Europe and Japan.

China grows at others' expense. The manipulation of trade subverts support elsewhere for open trading policies. For now, China has no desire to substitute the RMB for the dollar as the primary global currency. Its ambition is more sweeping: to create a world economy that serves China's interests and, only as an afterthought, anyone else's. ●

China: The world's next great economic crash

BY GORDON G. CHANG, Christian Science Monitor

Has the global economy recovered? Forecasters say there will be an uptick this year of 2.4 percent, but they're forgetting something. China could fail soon, and, if it does, the world's most populous state will drag the rest of us down.

At this moment, a Chinese crisis seems like the last thing we should be worried about. After all, last year China overtook America as the planet's largest car market and passed Germany as the biggest exporter.

On Thursday, Beijing announced that growth for the fourth quarter of 2009 was 10.7 percent and 8.7 percent for the entire year. Some analysts said the numbers were so strong that the country zoomed past Japan to become the world's second-largest economy. Stock markets, property prices, you name it: Everything Chinese is soaring.

Dubai was once soaring, too. Global markets therefore, shuddered in November at the news that Dubai World, Dubai's state investment firm and biggest corporate debtor, had asked for an extension on its \$59 billion of obligations. Stock investors were caught unawares, apparently thinking a default would not occur.

They were obviously wrong. Global markets, for the time being, got past the shock, in part because the emirate is small. China, on the other hand, is not. Legendary short-seller James Chanos, who predicted the failures of Enron and Tyco, calls the country "Dubai times 1,000 -- or worse."

Like Dubai at the beginning of last year, China is now reaching the peak of a bubble. At first glance, there is not much that connects the tiny city-state with the continent-sized nation. Yet both of them suffer from overexpansion.

China's export-led economic model delivered spectacular growth in the post-cold-war period of seemingly never ending globalization and economic development. Yet global trade is now stagnant after dropping significantly last year. As a result of troubles abroad, Chinese exports declined 16.0 percent in 2009. There is little prospect for a sustained recovery this year.

Beijing, ignoring advice from Washington and other capitals, did not in the boom times try to restructure its economy to favor consumption. Instead, the Chinese government sought to take maximum advantage of then-surge foreign demand. The role of consumption, therefore declined -- falling from a historical average of 60 percent of

the economy to about 30 percent last year. No country has a lower rate.

To make up for slumping demand abroad and sluggish consumer spending at home, the State Council, the central government's cabinet, announced a stimulus plan in November 2008. Beijing originally said it would spend \$586 billion through 2010. In the first full year of the program however, it has directly and through state banks disbursed about \$1.1 trillion in stimulus funds.

The plan, not surprisingly, is creating gross domestic product, but growth is an artificial "sugar high." For one thing, Beijing's stimulus spending

last year was around a quarter of the total economy. Now, perhaps as much as 95 percent of China's growth is attributable to state investment, as a Chinese analyst noted recently.

Despite the massive state spending, the country's economy is not particularly robust. Moreover, essentially flat consumer prices last year belie official reports of roaring retail sales. So does the full-year 11.2 percent decline in imports, another sign of sluggish domestic demand. And if the economy is really growing by double digits, why is Beijing insisting on continuing its stimulus?

Yet however fast the economy is growing, China's

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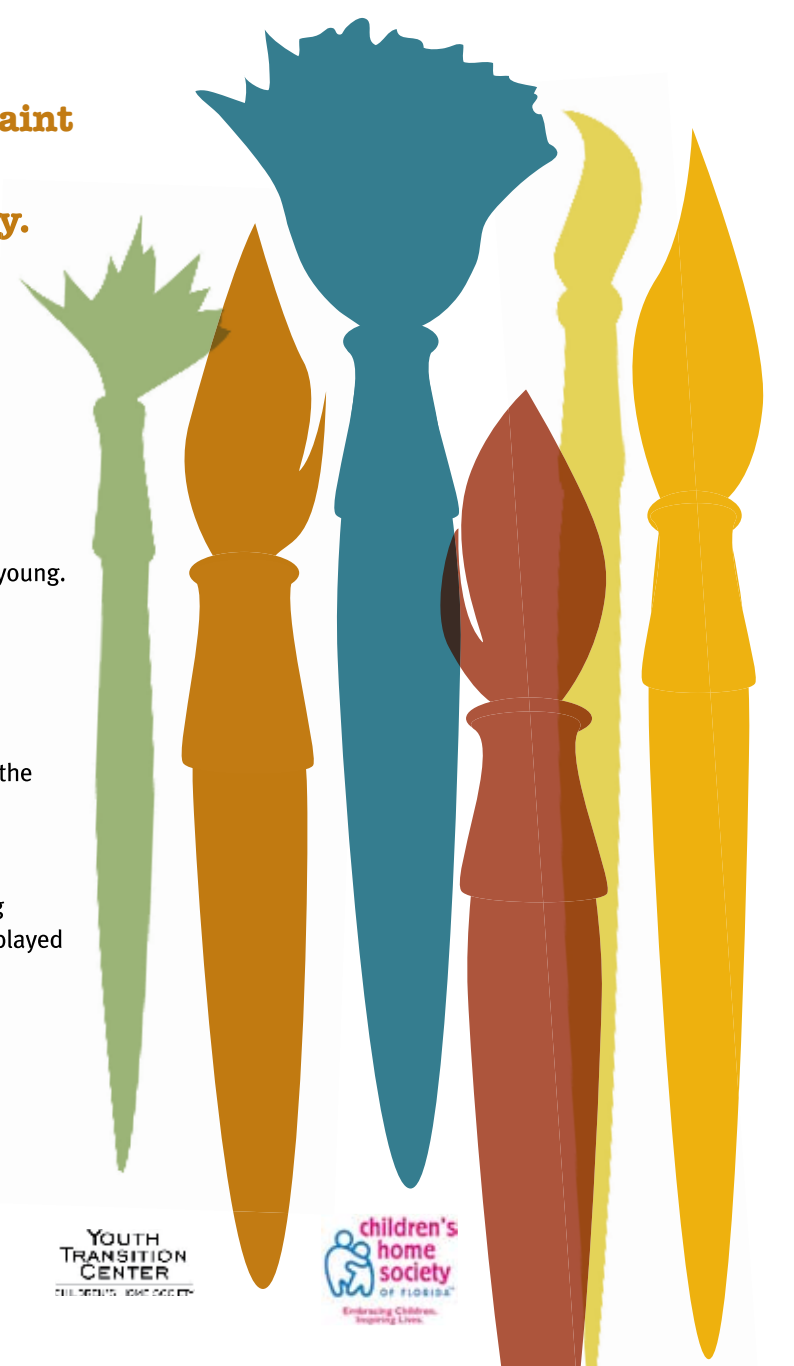
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policies are unsustainable. First, the central government will be hard pressed to find the money to continue the spending spree. Budget deficits are going up fast, a constraint on additional expenditures. More important, Beijing's regulators are concerned that the state banks, the primary source of stimulus funds, are accumulating bad loans.

New York Times columnist Thomas Friedman, however, thinks none of this will be a problem. Arguing that China is not the next Enron, he gives this advice to Mr. Chanos: "Never short a country with \$2 trillion in foreign currency reserves."

Yet Beijing's record-setting reserves – now \$2.4 trillion – are essentially unusable for this purpose. Why? China's leaders need local currency, the renminbi, to deal with domestic needs.

Second, the state's stimulus plan is taking the nation in the wrong direction. It is favoring large state enterprises over small and medium-sized private firms, and state financial institutions are diverting credit to state-sponsored infrastructure. Beijing is renationalizing the economy with state cash.

Third, Beijing's flooding of state enterprises with government cash will undermine their competitiveness, as a similar tide of money severely damaged Japan's corporations during the bubble years.

Japanese managers discovered they could make more money managing cash than from anything else, and they neglected their underlying businesses. Essentially the same thing is happening in China.

About a fifth of state bank loans have found their way into the country's climbing stock markets, and another large portion is fueling property market bubbles.

Finally, stimulus spending, as time goes on, becomes less effective in creating growth. The country already has one empty new city – Ordos in Inner Mongolia – and thousands of vacant facilities, especially shopping malls. New factories are underutilized.

For all its faults, the State Council's spending program is just about the only thing generating growth at this moment. Unfortunately for the government, its plan is also creating imbalances and dislocations that will be difficult to handle this year.

Chinese officials, working in a state-led economy, once had the ability to defer problems. Yet the challenges they face have grown over time as they have pursued pro-growth policies instead of implementing structural change.

And that is why, when their growth policies run out of steam – as they soon will – China will become the next Dubai. Only bigger. ●



3 steps to reducing nuclear terrorism

BY MICAH ZENKO AND MICHAEL LEVI
CHRISTIAN SCIENCE MONITOR

The last time the US had a congressionally mandated review of its nuclear status was in 2002. In that Nuclear Posture Review, declassified portions contained no mention of "preventing nuclear terrorism."

The latest review, slated to be finished in March, appears to indicate that America's nuclear arsenal and the threat of nuclear terrorism are interconnected issues. That means that how the US handles its nuclear weapons will have to change.

Such a shift, one long advocated by experts and practitioners, would recognize two key principles:

First, the threat from terrorists acquiring a nuclear weapon (or the material to make one) is greater than that of a nuclear strike against the US.

As a National Intelligence Estimate warned in December 2001: "The Intelligence Community judge[s] that US territory is more likely to be attacked with WMD [weapons of mass destruction] using nonmissile means – most likely from terrorists – than by missiles."

Second, the routine maintenance and deployment of nuclear weapons throughout the world increases the likelihood of nuclear terrorism. In short, the bomb does not necessarily make us safer.

The Nuclear Posture Review is intended to provide strategic guidance for the US on how to handle nuclear weapons for the next five to 10 years. If the following steps are implemented, loose nuclear material – and thus the threat of nuclear terrorism – around the world could be secured within a few years:

1. Washington must recognize that the only role for US nuclear weapons is deterrence. Currently, the US has a more expansive approach. In particular, it retains the threat of preventive offensive strikes against adversaries' weapons of mass destruction.

This encourages others to disperse their weapons widely, to adopt weaker command and control, to employ weapons on mobile systems, and to avoid transparency and cooperation with US or international efforts to better secure their nuclear weapons. All these steps put their arsenals at greater risk to theft.

Since each weapon is vulnerable to theft during transport for maintenance, refurbishment, or deployment, reducing the number of weapons in every nuclear weapons nation is an important component of preventing nuclear terrorism.

2. The US currently deploys some 2,700 operational nuclear warheads: 2,200 "strategic" weapons mounted on intercontinental missiles or long-range bombers and 500 "tactical" weapons for short-range weapons systems. (Another 600 strategic weapons will be cut when the forthcoming US-Russia

nuclear reduction agreement is implemented.)

America's arsenal is deployed at various states of readiness on bases across the US, on 14 Trident submarines, and in allied countries.

The US should consolidate the sites where warheads and bomb-grade fissile materials are stored, convert Trident submarines for conventional missions to threaten an adversary's WMD programs, and, in consultation with European allies, remove all forward-deployed tactical nuclear weapons.

3. Finally, sustained diplomacy with countries that have the bomb or bomb-grade fissile materials is an essential ingredient for implementing the review's new guidance.

Years after the revelations of Al Qaeda's efforts to obtain a bomb, there remain foreign leaders unwilling

to remove unneeded fissile material, bureaucratic hurdles to implementing or sustaining threat reduction programs, and complacency about the threat. Diplomatic initiatives to reduce the likelihood of loose nukes could be more accepted if conducted parallel to a strategy that reduces the use of US nuclear materials.

In his April 2009 speech in Prague, Czech Republic, President Obama announced "a new international effort to secure all vulnerable nuclear material around the world within four years."

If the forthcoming Nuclear Posture Review acknowledges that America's nuclear arsenal and the threat of nuclear terrorism are interconnected issues, and carefully translates that into practice, it will improve the administration's odds at meeting its deadline. ●

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The electricity shell game continues



PHOTO BY TOM MCCARTHY JR.

Let's hear a big cheer for the lower electric bills that Vero Beach utilities customers are receiving this month. That new power contract with the Orlando Utilities Authority sure is a winner.

Oh, wait a minute. Is it possible that the Vero city government is once again playing the majority of barrier island customers for suckers and fools?

Why, yes. That seems to be exactly what is happening.

It was exactly a year ago this month that Vero Beach utilities customer services manager John Lee — addressing the anger of customers then paying 13.6 cents per kilowatt hour for electricity — promised we would see about a 5 percent decrease in our electric bills in February 2009 as a result of declining fuel prices.

That, of course, never occurred. Electric rates, as we all recall only too clearly, never came down, then took off in May. From June through December, residents of Indian River Shores paid an astronomical 16 cents per kilowatt hour — way above the FPL rate.

The situation was even grimmer for residents of the unincorporated county, who on top of their monthly charge pay a 6 percent county franchise fee. Summer electric rates for those in 32963 served

by Vero Beach utilities were among the very highest in Florida.

But barrier island residents would finally get a big reduction, we were repeatedly assured, in January 2010, when Vero Beach utilities finally would be free of its old power provider, and able to switch to a new, far better contract with OUC.

So fast forward to January 2010. We get our bills, and for those who receive them in midmonth, they contain — according to Lee, who has since been made interim utilities director — a 20 to 25 percent reduction. So we do the simple calculation: Total electric charges (lines one and two on your bill) divided by kilowatt hours.

Well, we're not sure where Lee learned math but the new 13.9 cent per kilowatt hour rate we calculate that we are paying (they sure hate suggestions that they put the rate per kilowatt hour out there for you to see on the bill) is at best a 14 percent reduction.

And it is a reduction from the sky-high rate we were paying during the last seven months of 2009 — not from the already high rates we were paying last January. In fact, the new 13.9 cent per kilowatt hour rate is actually a 2.3 percent *increase* from the rate we were complaining about at this time last year.

So what happened to our promised 20 to 25 percent reduction? Well, as we have noted before, whenever city officials talk about electric rates, they never talk about the kilowatt hour rate but insist on talking about the bill of the "typical" customer who uses under 1,000 kilowatt hours per month. Makes it easier to understand, right?

Alas, Lee's "typical" customer is *not* the typical Vero Beach electric customer on the barrier island. With the exception of residents who live in smaller condos, very few 32963 households fall under the 1,000 kilowatt hours per month usage threshold. We are not talking mansions here. People who live in 2,000 to 3,000 square foot homes often have double or triple that monthly electrical usage.

But in an article a week ago in the local daily paper, Lee explains to the credulous reporter that "a county household that used 564 kilowatt hours" would have paid about \$105 under the old rate and about \$80 under the new rate. Voila! A 23 percent reduction.

It is to laugh. Our guess is that most 32963 customers who used 564 kilowatt hours last month spent the holidays up north with the grandchildren.

So what's going on here? Why does our rate cut add up to 14 percent and Lee's rate reduction example total more than 20 percent.

Well, the answer is that if you use more than "typical" 1,000 kilowatt hours of electricity per month, the base rate you pay — which does not include power, but goes strictly to pay for "operations" and to "replenish reserves" — is a whopping 56(!) percent higher than the rate paid by people who live in smaller residences.

Since it takes the same kind of "operations" to bring electricity into your home whether you use a lot of power or a little, this is nothing more nor less than another form of tax on people with larger residences aimed at providing the \$8 million each year the electric utility dumps into the City of Vero Beach general fund.

And guess who disproportionately pays this higher rate? Ah, yes. The residents of 32963.

With Lee's January rate cut, Vero Beach utilities customers are still paying about 35 percent more than FPL customers on the northern part of our barrier island. So before you believe the blather and conclude that the electric crisis is over, do your own math. When you do, we suspect most 32963 residents will conclude that getting Vero Beach out of the electric business remains the best idea. ●

Cycle of promise and reality shifts into overdrive

BY GREGORY RODRIGUEZ, LOS ANGELES TIMES

All last week, commentators recounted the dramatic swing in the national mood between this January and last. In 2009, President Obama was talking about bending the arc of history. In 2010, it doesn't look like he can bend enough arms to get healthcare reform through Congress.

Americans are not happy. We're on the downside of a familiar cycle: the bitter disillusionment that follows outsized hope.

What could be accomplished in Washington isn't matching our expectations. And although Obama's fall has been steep and hard, he's not alone. Traditionally, a new president's party loses ground in the election that follows his inauguration. What's surprising is that we never seem to tire of the vaunted hope that gets the cycle going in the first place.

What's going on? Are we schizophrenic? Gluttons for punishment? Are we so addicted to the possibilities that, even when reality mugs us, we can't wait to dream again? Why hasn't the mountain of disappointing political realities — presidents, parties, causes and processes — turned us into a nation that stops caring?

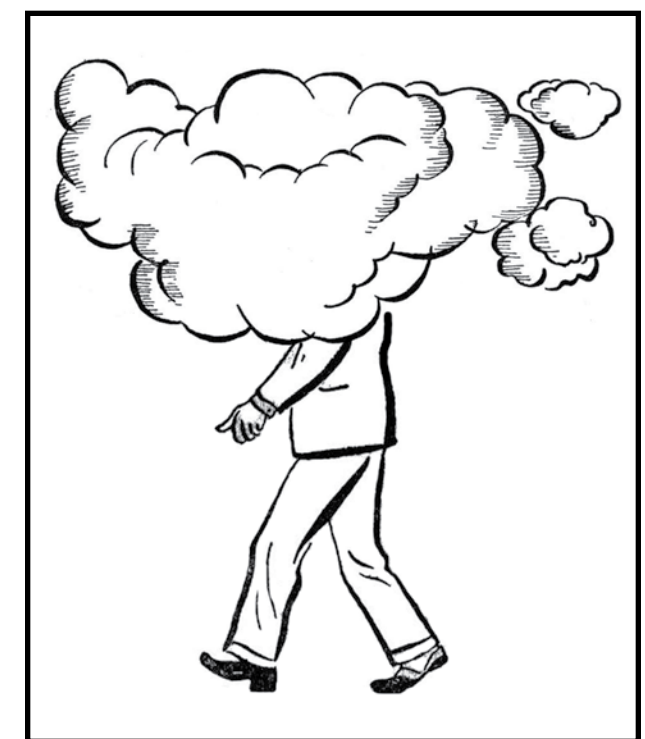
The answer to these questions lies in the contradictory heart of the American character. On the one hand, we pride ourselves on our idealism. On the other, we fancy ourselves sturdy realists. If the U.S. were a cartoon character, it'd be a cheerful fellow with his head in the clouds and his feet planted squarely on the ground.

This contradiction between idealism and realism is not just an incidental quirk in our collective personality. It's one of the primary tensions that drive us. Although the manic back-and-forth is frustrating, even alarming, one could argue that it's also the source of our dynamism as a nation.

Harvard historian Bernard Bailyn has identified the creation of this fundamental tension as one of the great legacies of the founders. He hypothesizes that if Thomas Jefferson's intellectual idealism had

not been tempered by the "hardheaded pragmatism" he learned as a "man of business," he wouldn't have played such a powerful role in history.

"The blending of realism and idealism," Bailyn writes, "permeates the entire history of the Revolutionary era." The Constitution, with its checks



can idealism. "That saddle's going to jump now and then," he wrote, "and it pricks."

In other words, it's uncomfortable to be so rudely awakened from our lofty dreams. We express this discomfort in our art, literature and humor. Americans love to debunk, satirize and ridicule. When Stephen Colbert pokes fun at the devilishness of a sanctimonious politician, he's just trying to close the gap between the spin and the facts.

Another way we close the gap is through incessant reform. The late great political scientist Samuel P. Huntington argued that the tension between the ideal and the real stoked the American "moral motive for reform."

Activists on all sides routinely seek to draw stark contrasts between our ambitions for good and our painful imperfections. The ability to expose hypocrisy, or even just the inevitable shortfall when our reach exceeds our grasp, can determine the success or failure of any given cause. When the civil rights movement forced us to compare discrimination to our ideal of equality, something had to give.

Huntington called the tension between promise and reality our nation's "distinguishing cleavage." If it were to disappear, he wrote, the U.S., "as we have known it, will no longer exist." And to those who would point to the gap between what we strive for and what we achieve to prove that the American promise is bogus, Huntington responded: "America is not a lie: It is a disappointment. But it can be a disappointment only because it is also a hope."

The cycle between the two these days seems to be in overdrive. It's hard to believe it won't eventually wear us down. I don't know if it has the potential to turn us into a nation of cynics, but it seems to me that it could cause us to lower our sights and goals.

Was the Obama hype way over the top? No question. And any reasonable person could have predicted his fall from grace. Nonetheless, there is something irresistible about a country so willing to believe, despite its disappointments, that it tried to walk with its head in the clouds. ●

ERRORS AND CLARIFICATIONS

- In our Jan. 21 issue, as a result of a miscommunication, we erroneously reported that Piper had purchased a 49 percent stake in Czech Sports Aircraft. Piper has entered into a licensing agreement whereby CSA will manufacture three versions of a light sport aircraft to be marketed by Piper as the PiperSport. We also erroneously reported the listing price for Unit 204B at 300 Harbour Drive. The correct listing and selling price should have been \$395,000. We regret the errors. Vero Beach 32963
- In our Jan. 21 issue, on our Featured Real Estate sales page, we erroneously reported the selling price of Unit 203B at 300 Harbour Drive in the Moorings. The correct listing and selling price should have been \$435,000. We also erroneously reported the listing price for Unit 204B at 300 Harbour Drive. The correct listing and selling price should have been \$395,000. We regret the errors. Vero Beach 32963

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code 32963 have asked if it can be mailed to their homes. We will be happy to mail each issue of Vero Beach 32963 to you anywhere in Florida for a one-time payment of \$59.95 (which doesn't even cover our postage and handling).

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#396 - 2BR/2BA, 2400± SF : \$1,290,000
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310 Sabal Palm Lane	\$1,725,000
251 John's Island Drive	\$1,725,000
70 Paget Court	\$1,750,000
321 Sabal Palm Lane	\$1,795,000
460 Indian Harbor Road	\$1,895,000
306 Island Creek Drive	\$1,995,000
221 Clarkson Lane	\$2,200,000
751 Shady Lake Lane	\$2,300,000
290 John's Island Drive	\$2,300,000
389 Island Creek Drive	\$2,450,000
90 Dove Plum Road	\$2,600,000
71 Cowry Lane	\$2,700,000
120 Sago Palm Road	\$2,750,000
275 Coconut Palm Road	\$2,800,000
601 Sea Oak Drive	\$2,800,000
400 Indian Harbor Road	\$2,850,000
381 Sea Oak Drive	\$2,940,000
220 Indian Harbor Road	\$2,950,000

580 Indian Harbor Road	\$2,950,000
311 Llwyd's Lane	\$2,995,000
351 Indian Harbor Road	\$3,375,000
140 North Shore Point	\$3,400,000
220 Sandpiper Point	(NEW) \$3,450,000
150 Clarkson Lane	\$3,650,000
370 Indian Harbor Road	\$3,650,000
310 Island Creek Drive	(REDUCED) \$3,700,000
35 Waxmyrtle Way	\$3,750,000
360 Palmetto Point	\$3,850,000
228 Island Creek Drive	\$4,050,000
380 Island Creek Drive	\$4,100,000
330 Palmetto Point	\$4,650,000
30 Gem Island Drive	\$5,450,000
21 Sago Palm Road	\$5,700,000
664 Ocean Road	\$5,750,000
646 Ocean Road	\$7,500,000
801 Shady Lake Lane	\$7,500,000
Homesites	
580 Sea Oak Drive	\$825,000
541 Sea Oak Drive	\$1,100,000

551 Sea Oak Drive	\$1,100,000
381 Sabal Palm Lane	\$1,250,000
280 Sea Oak Drive	\$1,450,000
225 Coconut Palm Road	\$1,750,000
270 John's Island Drive	\$2,300,000
80 Stingaree Point	\$2,300,000
100 Stingaree Point	\$2,600,000
13 Sea Court	\$3,775,000
60 Gem Island Drive	\$4,150,000
662 Ocean Road	\$4,900,000
810 Manatee Inlet	\$5,300,000
Townhouses, Cottages and Island House	
777 Sea Oak Drive #720, 2BR/2BA	\$400,000
777 Sea Oak Drive #717, 2BR/2BA	\$410,000
777 Sea Oak Drive #714, 2BR/2BA	\$450,000
777 Sea Oak Drive #710, 3BR/3BA	\$525,000
263 Silver Moss Drive	\$625,000
401 Silver Moss Drive	\$625,000
111 John's Island Drive, #17	\$675,000
777 Sea Oak Drive #702, 3BR/3BA	\$685,000
777 Sea Oak Drive #725, 3BR/3BA	\$685,000

777 Sea Oak Drive #707, 3BR/3BA	\$695,000
777 Sea Oak Drive #701, 3BR/3BA	\$710,000
111 John's Island Drive, #12	\$775,000
213 Silver Moss Drive	\$820,000
251 Silver Moss Drive	\$825,000
233 Silver Moss Drive	\$850,000
453 Silver Moss Drive	\$879,000
111 John's Island Drive, #4	\$975,000
111 John's Island Drive, #5	\$975,000
111 John's Island Drive, #19	\$1,775,000
Island House (590-660± SF efficiencies)	
#117	\$190,000
#118	\$190,000
#121	\$195,000*
#120	\$199,500
#147	\$225,588*
#251	\$248,000
#151	\$230,588*
#210	\$287,500
#144	\$325,000*
#224	\$395,000*

#237	\$395,000
#243	\$450,000
* Assumed Land Mortgage not included in list price	
Condominiums	
950 Beach Road #192, 2BR/2BA	\$710,000
600 Beach Road #331, 2BR/2BA	\$725,000
700 Beach Road #355, 2BR/2BA	\$725,000
100 Ocean Road #104, 2BR/2BA	\$750,000
700 Beach Road #159, 3BR/2BA	\$750,000
550 Beach Road #221, 2BR/2BA	\$775,000
500 Beach Road #210, 2BR/2BA	\$795,000
100 Ocean Road #111, 2BR/2BA	\$825,000
850 Beach Road #178, 2BR/2BA	\$905,000

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241 Sea Oak Drive	600 Beach Road #135 & #330	381 Sabal Palm Lane	1000 Beach Road #295	191 Terrapin Point
71 Dove Plum	700 Beach Road #250	650 Indian Harbor Road	850 Beach Road #375	1 Dove Shell Lane
300 Ocean Road, #1E	311 Indian Harbor Road	401 Indian Harbor Road	381 Sea Oak Drive	531 Sea Oak Drive
730 Beach Road	110 Coconut Palm Road	511 Sea Oak Drive	430 Coconut Palm Road	210 Live Oak Way
8 Sea Court	241 Sundial Court	103 Island Creek Drive	291 Sabal Palm Lane	1150 Beach Road #3L
900 Beach Road #181	750 Beach Road #303	130 Sago Palm Road	281 Sea Oak Drive	353 Silver Moss Drive
800 Beach Road #169 & #371	450 Beach Rd. #120, #223 & #324	500 Beach Road #109	950 Beach Road #391	231 Silver Moss Drive
400 Beach Road #133 & #222	111 John's Island Drive #3 & #4	100 Ocean Road #212	321 Island Creek Drive	652 Ocean Road
400 Beach Road #228 & #230	111 John's Island Drive #5 & #10	250 Ocean Road #2C	400 Ocean Road #183	351 Sea Oak Drive



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Why doesn't cash fly on many airlines?

BY DAVID LAZARUS, LOS ANGELES TIMES

Beginning Feb. 1, your money's no good on American Airlines.

The carrier is the latest to go completely cashless during flights, meaning that if you don't have plastic, you won't be buying food, drinks, duty-free items or whatever.

"The implementation of cashless cabins on select flights last summer has simplified the in-flight transaction process for both customers and flight attendants," Lauri Curtis, American's vice president of onboard service, said in a statement.

"For this reason, we look forward to going cashless on board all American Airlines flights."

Wait a minute.

Take a look at the paper money in your wallet or purse. Look at the words on the left-hand side, either above or below the very impressive seal of the United States Federal Reserve System: "This note is legal tender for all debts, public and private."

It doesn't say "all debts unless a business would rather take plastic." Or "all debts except for when you fly."

It says "all debts." Period.

Yet American now joins United Airlines, Continental Airlines, Southwest Airlines, JetBlue Airways, Alaska Airlines, Frontier Airlines and other carriers in rejecting cash during some or all flights.

So how can an airline discriminate against cash users? Isn't that, well, illegal?

A spokeswoman for the Treasury Department told me I should ask the Fed.

A spokesman for the Fed said this was a matter for the Treasury.

Talk about passing the buck.

As it happens, the Fed spokesman was right. On the Treasury Department's website I found some information about the Coinage Act of 1965, which delves into the minutiae of what "legal tender" means. And it's pretty straightforward:

"United States coins and currency (including Federal Reserve notes and circulating notes of Federal Reserve banks and national banks) are legal tender for all debts, public charges, taxes and dues."

There it is, right? Cash is king.

Apparently not.

The Treasury Department goes on to say that there's no law "mandating that a private business, a person or an organization must accept currency or coins as for payment for goods and/or services."

"Private businesses are free to develop their own policies on whether or not to accept cash unless there is a state law which says otherwise. For example, a bus line may prohibit payment of fares in pennies or dollar bills."

Tim Smith, a spokesman for American Airlines, elaborated on this interpretation of the law. "Any

business can do what it wants," he said. "If they say you have to pay in carrots, they can do it."

I asked the Treasury Department why my money says one thing but the law is apparently interpreted differently. A spokeswoman reiterated that "there is no mandate requiring private enterprises to accept currency as payment for goods and services."

In other words, American and other airlines -- and all other businesses, for that matter -- are free to reject cash if they please.

Santa Monica resident Mark Bartelt, 61, flew American recently from Los Angeles to Boston. He said he bought a small bottle of wine during the flight for \$5. The flight attendant wouldn't take cash.

"I was surprised," Bartelt said. "It's not really an inconvenience to have to use a credit card, but what if a kid is flying unaccompanied? What's the airline going to do, tell him that he has to go hungry?"

Bartelt added that when he asked the flight attendant about the cashless policy, she joked that it's because the airline doesn't trust crew members with passengers' money.

Smith, the airline spokesman, told me at first that this was indeed "a small factor" in the company's decision to go cashless. But he corrected himself later to say that sticky-fingered flight attendants weren't a factor at all.

"The vast majority of our flight attendants are hardworking and honest," he said. ●

United States
Census
2010



BY RON SCHERER
CHRISTIAN SCIENCE MONITOR

What you need to know

At the end of this month, a symbolic parade of dog sleds will head across the frozen tundra into Noorvik -- an Alaskan fishing village of 634 people, according to the last US census.

On the dog sleds -- as well as on some snowmobiles -- will be officials carrying census forms. After the forms are filled out, they'll tell the federal government if the Inupiat population of Noorvik has grown or shrunk.

Welcome to the official start of distributing forms for the 2010 Census, a national head count that is required by the US Constitution every 10 years.

Most of the 134 million residences in America will receive their questionnaire the conventional way -- via first-class mail, starting March 15. However, not everyone has a postal address -- and not everyone will reply to the blue-and-green form. So this year, the Census Bureau is hiring 800,000 people to follow up with door-to-door canvassing, set to begin May 1.

The scope of the census endeavor is Alaska-sized. In fact, it is the largest civic effort that the United States undertakes every decade. Congress has set aside \$14 billion for the 2010 operation.

This time, the census form is 10 questions long -- a length that officials maintain will take the average person 10 minutes to complete. If the 2000 census effort is any guide, about three-quarters of Americans will participate, despite a \$130 million advertising and public-relations campaign.

Here are some common questions about the census:

How will census results be used?

The primary purpose of the census is to determine the apportioning of seats in the US House of Representatives. As a result of the 2000 Census, 18 states gained or lost seats. The biggest winners were Arizona, Florida, Georgia, and Texas. Poll-data, a political data consulting firm, has predicted that the 2010 Census will result in a shift of 13 seats, with Texas potentially gaining four.

The US government will also use the census to determine how to divvy up \$400 billion in annual federal spending for programs such as Medicaid.

How accurate is it? The process has "a variety of -quality-control procedures built in," says Robert Groves, census director. After the census itself is over, for example, the bureau will conduct another survey -- "a large sample-based" one to see how well it did, Mr. Groves says.

The undercounting of residents is of particular concern to many states and cities. After the 2000 Census, the accounting firm PricewaterhouseCoopers, in a report to Congress, estimated that because of undercounting, 31 states and the District of Columbia lost \$4.1 billion for eight federal programs between fiscal years 2002 and 2012.

Will the census count noncitizens? Yes, US law requires a count of all "persons" and "inhabitants" -- without specifying whether they are citizens or noncitizens, legal or illegal.

The First Congress was aware that many foreign-born people were living in the country, says Audrey Singer, a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution in Washington. "They intentionally did not use the term 'citizen,'" she says of the 1790 law establishing the census.

Am I required to fill out the form? Yes, every resident is required by law to fill out the form -- a fact that is noted on the mailing envelope.

Who gets to look at the information I give? By law, the Census Bureau cannot give the data to any government agency. For example, in the 1950s, the White House was being redecorated and President Truman and his wife needed to be relocated. The Secret Service wanted to know more about the people living near the first couple's temporary residence, but the Census Bureau would not supply the requested information. In other instances, the US Supreme Court has upheld the secrecy of the data.

All census takers are checked by the Federal Bureau of Investigation. And they take an oath to never reveal personally identifiable information. The penalty for violating the oath is five years in prison and a fine of up to \$250,000.

After the forms are processed, they go into a locked vault for 72 years. In 2012, the results of the 1940 survey will be open to the public.

Will a census taker come to my home? Only if you have not mailed back the form. ●

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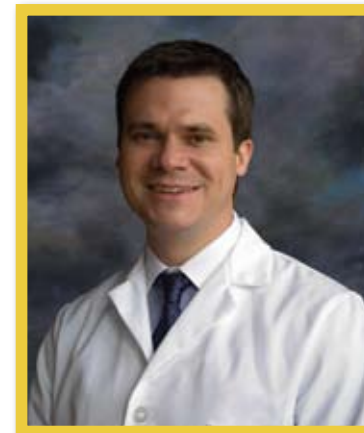
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In early 2006, a mysterious cosmetics trader named Rakhman began showing up at salons in St. Petersburg, Russia, hawking a popular anti-aging drug at suspiciously low prices.

He flashed a briefcase filled with vials and promised he could deliver more -- "as many as you want," he told buyers -- from a supplier somewhere in Chechnya.

Rakhman's "Botox" was found to be a potent clone of the real thing, but investigators soon turned to a far bigger worry: the prospect of an illegal factory in Chechnya churning out raw botulinum toxin, the key ingredient in the beauty drug and one of world's deadliest poisons. A speck of toxin smaller than a grain of sand can kill a 150-pound adult.

No Chechen factory has been found, but a search for the maker of the highly lethal toxin in Rakhman's vials continues across a widening swath of Eastern Europe, the Middle East and Asia. U.S. officials and security experts say they know the lab exists, and probably dozens of other such labs, judging from the surging black market for the drug.

Al-Qaeda is known to have sought botulinum toxin. The Lebanese Hezbollah movement, which the United States has designated a terrorist organization, and other groups have bought and sold counterfeit drugs to raise cash. Now, with the emergence of a global black market for fake Botox, terrorism experts see an opportunity for a deadly convergence.

"It is the only profit-making venture for terrorists that can also potentially yield a weapon of mass destruction," said Kenneth Coleman, a physician and biodefense expert.

Could toxic ingredient in Botox become terrorist tool?

BY JOBY WARRICK, WASHINGTON POST



Last year, Coleman and fellow researcher Raymond Zilinskas set out to test whether militant groups could easily exploit the counterfeit Botox network to obtain materials for a bioterrorism attack.

In a project sponsored by the James Martin Center for Nonproliferation Studies, two scientists found that a biologist with a master's degree and \$2,000 worth of equipment could easily make a gram of pure toxin, an amount equal to the weight of a small paper clip but enough, in theory, to kill thousands of people.

Obtaining the most lethal strain of the bacterium might have posed a significant hurdle for would-be terrorists in the recent past.

But today, the prospect of tapping into the multibillion-dollar market for anti-wrinkle drugs has spawned an underground network of suppliers and distributors who do most of their transactions online, the researchers found. Customers don't need prescriptions or identification, other than a shipping address.

"We assume that illicit producers are willing to sell their products to anyone with cash," Zilinskas said.

Each vial contains a minuscule amount of the ac-

LETHAL WEAPON

Botox -- the trade name for the most common commercial formulation of the drug botulinum toxin Type A -- is not a weapon. It has been used for decades to cure medical ailments including migraine headaches and facial tics, and more recently as a wildly popular treatment for the wrinkles of aging.

Eight companies worldwide are licensed to make variations of the drug, and in the United States it is sold only by prescription, under the oversight of the Food and Drug Administration.

Each vial contains a minuscule amount of the ac-

tual toxin, a naturally occurring nerve agent secreted by a kind of bacterium called Clostridium botulinum. The amount of poison in a prescribed dose is so small that a determined terrorist would have to obtain hundreds of vials at \$400 each to kill even a single person, bioterrorism experts say.

Pure toxin is another matter. At full strength, it is the most toxic substance known to exist.

So lethal is the undiluted toxin that at least three countries -- the United States, the then-intact Soviet Union and Iraq -- explored its possible use as a possible biological or chemical weapon. All three gave up on the idea, partly because botulinum toxin degrades quickly when exposed to heat, making it poorly suited for delivery by missile or bomb.

Terrorists, on the other hand, have long been drawn to the toxin as a way to inflict widespread casualties through contamination of food or water supplies. The Japanese doomsday cult Aum Shinrikyo experimented with a botulinum weapon in the early 1990s. An al-Qaeda training manual discovered in 2001 advocated the use of botulinum toxin in terrorist attacks.

None of the previous efforts succeeded. Aum Shinrikyo managed to cultivate a lethal strain of the toxin-producing bacterium, but stumbled when it tried to convert the poison into an aerosol form. Al-Qaeda's known bioweapons efforts were hampered by rudimentary lab equipment and limited access to lethal strains.

All of those problems can now be bypassed at a time when illicit networks are making the toxin for profit, said Coleman, the co-author of the DOD study.

"There are no major obstacles," he said. "It's not that hard to acquire the bacterial strains. But you

don't even have to make it. You can buy it from existing manufacturers. And you can buy it in sufficient quantity to cause widespread harm."

TRACKING THE SOURCES

The case of the Russian counterfeiter offers a glimpse into an illegal network of fake Botox suppliers that operates largely in the shadows.

Anti-wrinkle drugs are exceptionally popular in Russia and Eastern Europe, where less stringent consumer laws allow their distribution by non-physicians, including operators of beauty salons.

But commercial botulinum toxin is costly, and many users have flocked to vendors who offer cheaper substitutes, said Marina Voronova, until recently a Russia-based bioweapons expert who has investigated counterfeit networks in the former Soviet Union.

Voronova, who now works for the nonprofit environmental group Global Green, said the Rakhman case came to light because of the man's success in undercutting licensed suppliers in St. Petersburg's salon circuit. Rakhman built up a brisk trade simply by walking into upscale shops and offering to sell Botox at a deep discount, she said.

"He was coming to St. Petersburg with a suitcase full of vials," said Voronova.

When an undercover investigator asked how many doses he could deliver, he replied: "As many as you want," Voronova said, citing an account given to her by a Russian investigator.

Rakhman abruptly halted his St. Petersburg trips when local authorities began closing in, and Russian investigators were never able to determine

where his counterfeit Botox was manufactured.

Zilinskas and Coleman, in their study, concluded that much of the fake Botox sold over the Internet originated in China, a country with a history of producing knockoff versions of drugs and cosmetic products sold under patent in the West.

But they noted that the toxin could be made in a garage-size laboratory almost anywhere, including Chechnya, notorious for black-market smuggling and a home-grown Islamic insurgency.

China recently acknowledged the seriousness of Botox counterfeiting domestically when it announced it was shutting down a factory in Shanxi province accused of making a copycat version of the drug.

That crackdown came several months after Allergan, the chief U.S. manufacturer of commercial Botox, formally complained to Beijing that Chinese manufacturers were violating Allergan's patent protections.

Allergan officials say they are continuing to work with China to identify bogus manufacturers, but they also acknowledge that some producers are outlaws who hide from Chinese authorities by frequently changing their names and business addresses.

"There are organized criminal networks, and they act as registered agents for one another," said Allergan spokeswoman Caroline Van Hove.

Indeed, Internet hawkers of discount Botox -- sold under names such as Beauteous -- often list legitimate-sounding Chinese addresses that turn out to be fictional. The manufacturer of Beauteous gave a manufacturing address that turned out to be an upscale corner of Beijing where many foreign embassies are located. The street number listed on the Web site does not exist. ●



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BOOK REVIEWS

capital, military and diplomatic advisors urged President Harry Truman to retreat rather than risk another war. With hundreds of thousands of Red Army troops encircling the city, there was no way for a few thousand Allied soldiers to stand up to them.

Rejecting that counsel, Truman adopted a British idea and ordered his military chiefs to mobilize a massive airlift to ferry food, fuel and medicine from Allied air bases in Britain and West Germany to more than 2 million desperate residents in Berlin.

At a luncheon meeting on June 28, the president's top cabinet and military officials ticked off sundry reasons why the airlift would fail and then started laying out options for leaving the city. They were cut off by Truman: "We stay in Berlin. Period."

Richard Reeves, a bestselling author of three presidential biographies and several other books, has delved into declassified archives and provided fresh insights into the power clashes between Truman, Stalin and other leading figures, including the famous generals who opposed the airlift (George Marshall and Omar Bradley) and the younger ones who defied enormous odds to make it work, notably Lucius Clay and William Tunner.

But the real value of Reeves's book lies in the remarkable human sagas he collected through hundreds of interviews with uncelebrated pilots, mechanics, weathermen and ground controllers who sustained the airlift for almost a year. Many of them had fought the Germans and returned home to start families or begin new jobs. Now, barely three years later, they were going back to Europe to help feed their former enemies.

The Germans' role was similarly impressive. All social classes joined the fight against Soviet intimidation -- women in high heels pushed wheelbarrows, and doctors wielded shovels to transform rubble into new airfields.

In just three months, Berliners' willingness to set aside animosity toward Western pilots who had annihilated their city amazed the Americans, who were extolled as "angels in uniform."

But the success of "Operation Vittles" was far from assured. In the early stages, the allies could barely cope with the bewildering demands of feeding an entire city from the air. From the day the airlift began on June 26 until the end of the next month, more than 14,000 flights delivered more than 70,000 tons of fuel, food, medicine and other supplies -- yet it was less than half of what had reached the city before the blockade.

With planes landing and taking off every three minutes, flight crews and controllers were stretched to the breaking point. Lack of sleep and insufficient maintenance were main causes of crashes that killed a total of 73 Western airmen by the end of the 11-month airlift.

But gradually, Western ingenuity mastered the logistical challenges -- as well as the worst fog in half a century -- to prevail in a monumental test of wills.

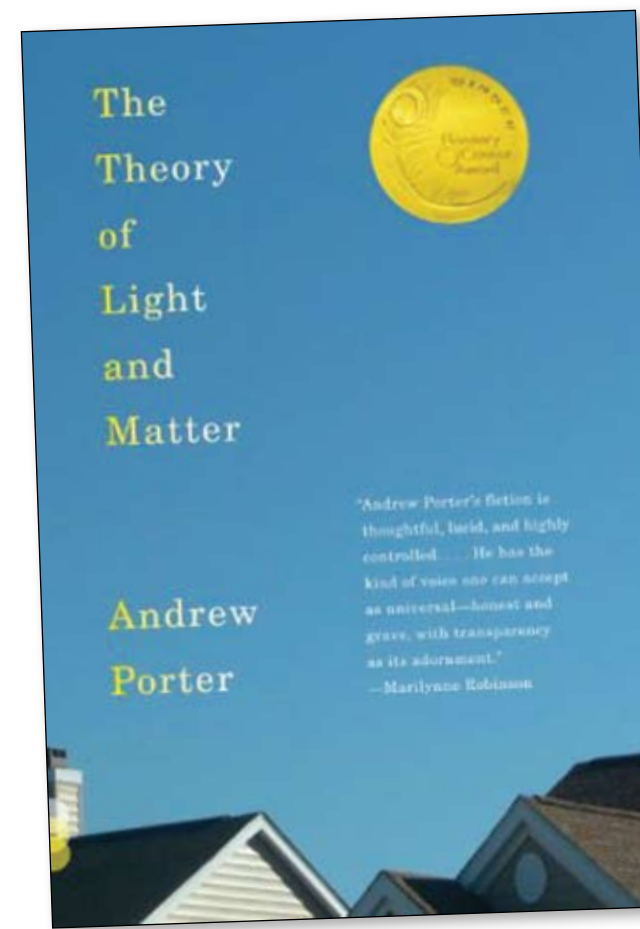
The Soviets suffered a humiliating propaganda defeat as the Americans were perceived by world opinion as selfless heroes who delivered candy to kids and CARE packages to hungry civilians, while the Soviets were exposed as brutal oppressors punishing innocent people.

On May 12, 1949, recognizing that the blockade had become counterproductive to their own interests, the Soviets announced that all road and rail deliveries from the West would be restored.

The Berlin airlift became one of history's hinge events, one that firmed up the political and military unity of the West in the face of the Soviet threat. Soon afterward the West German federal republic was created, and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization was founded to protect Western democracies against Soviet aggression.

But as Reeves makes clear, it was the extraordinary display of personal courage -- by President Truman, the American and British airmen and most of all the Berliners themselves -- that shaped such a favorable outcome to the first major crisis of the Cold War. ●

Daring Young Men by Richard Reeves
Simon & Schuster, 316 pp., \$28
Reviewed by William Drozdiak, Book World



BOOK REVIEWS

In "River Dog," a confused younger brother hears that his older brother, whom he idolizes, committed a reprehensible act against an unwitting girl. Still unable -- or unwilling -- to understand it, he later writes an essay about it in college, only to have the professor write across the front page: "The reader deserves to know what really happened."

It's a wonderful line on two levels: First, we assume the little brother, too, feels he deserves to know what really happened; but how can he tell the teacher something he doesn't know?

But on another level, it's a great line because one gets the sense that Porter, with his nonlinear approach to storytelling, has probably had those same words scrawled across his own stories -- by teachers and perhaps by readers.

This inability to know and to tell what "really" happened seems to be precisely Porter's point: The more we think about the past -- about the moments that have come to define us -- the more our memory reshapes them.

And, take this a step further, as Porter's characters do: Is there a difference between what "really" happened and what we remember happening? Isn't all the past created and shaped by memory anyway?

The title story, "The Theory of Light and Matter," plays the most with memory. Flawlessly told in female first-person, this story won the prestigious Flannery O'Connor Award for Short Fiction.

Of all the things to love about *The Theory of Light and Matter*, Andrew Porter's wonderful collection of short stories, my favorite is how tenderly his characters treat one another's failings and vulnerabilities. Like outsiders looking in, one step removed from their own lives, Porter's characters tread carefully in their quest toward understanding.

Such tenderness was a hallmark of minimalist master Raymond Carver -- not a bad writer with whom to be compared. While Porter's young characters haven't yet fallen on the hard times that Carver's have, their sensitivity is just as stirring and their subtle moments of epiphany just as poignant.

But where Carver's tales tend to follow a linear projection, action rising to a climax, Porter favors a more circular route. His stories contain not just the retelling of what happened, but also the stories the narrators tell themselves long after: what it meant then, and what it means now.

Porter plays with the effect time has on memory. At times the reader may feel unmoored; after all, we're hearing these stories from narrators who wanted things to have turned out differently.

Amish girl who loves her weekly dose of reckless riding in the boys' truck and racing barefoot in the dark.

When Rachel's family finally succumbs to developers who covet their farmland, the narrator quietly watches her go. Wisely he observes she probably wasn't going to miss her forays into modern culture as much as she was going to miss her family's homestead.

Years later he looks back: "We have new malls and outlet stores where their farms were, and out where Rachel used to live, actors dressed in Amish costumes and fake beards stand along the thruway, chewing on corn cob pipes...."

[W]hen I think about Rachel now, I think mostly about those races we used to have out across the railroad bridge, thirty feet above the water, and I still shudder at our carelessness, our blind motions, not watching where we were stepping, not even considering what was below us."

This collection, originally published by University of Georgia Press, deserves to be read and reread. Porter is a master storyteller, a creator of tender and hopeful characters, a writer who whispers rather than screams his truths. ●

The Theory of Light and Matter by Andrew Porter,
Vintage Contemporaries/Random House, 192 pp., \$14
Reviewed by Elizabeth A. Brown
Christian Science Monitor

When Soviet dictator Joseph Stalin tried in 1948 to drive the Western powers out of Berlin by imposing a ground blockade to halt supplies going into the devastated German




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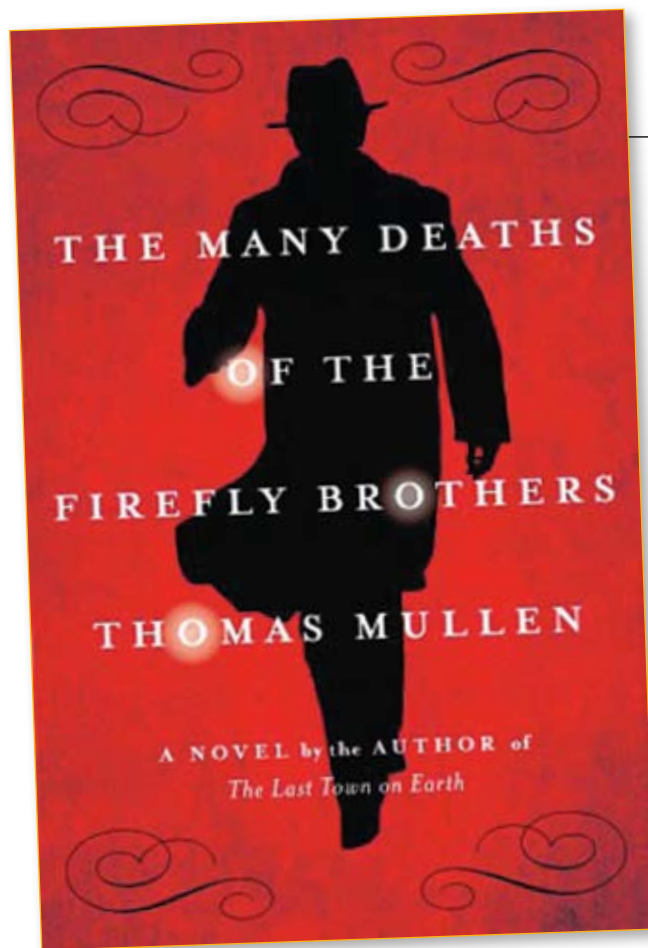


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W“We . . . we just can’t die.”
 “No, we seem to be pretty good at dying. But something’s not letting us stay dead.”
 Set in the Depression-era Midwest, Thomas Mullen’s second novel, “The Many Deaths of the Firefly Brothers,” tells a rip-roaring yarn that manages to be both phantasmagorical and historically accurate. In its labyrinthine, luminous narrative, reminiscent of Michael Chabon’s best fiction, readers will find powerful parallels to the present-day.
 The Firefly Brothers, bank robbers Jason and Whit Fireson, wake in a police station morgue after having been shot dead. They do not remember what happened. Confused but undeterred, they escape and embark on a crime spree intended to bring in enough cash to disappear for good.
 Complicating their plans, Jason’s girlfriend Darcy Windham has been kidnapped by rogues unknown. Will the Firefly Brothers find her in time? Will their law-abiding brother Weston turn them in for the reward money? More important, what

happens if the police shoot them dead again?
 The elements a jaded reader might expect are all present: the plucky main squeeze, stumblebum cops, accomplices with names like Brickbat and Chance McGill, greedy bankers, an intrepid federal agent and the sometimes glib but darkly glamorous outlaws themselves.
 But Mullen avoids cliché by digging deep into the past lives of his characters, exploring not only the bond between brothers but also their relationship with their uncompromising yet deeply flawed father, Patrick Fireson -- a man who conjures “invisible advantages from the darkness, had taken emptiness and poverty and turned them into the raw materials of a life’s adventure. . . .”
 The novel also features brilliant set pieces, including a shootout in an old house and a harrowing car chase, while even incidental descriptions are appropriate to the time period. “The old man’s face was unreadable,” Mullen writes, “like a pile of discarded typesetting keys in a junkyard.” The sound of bullets hitting a metal harness is “almost musical, like coins plinking a pond’s surface as they’re transformed into wishes.”

Mullen’s careful observations of the brothers, post-resurrection, help ground the novel as well. After their second miraculous return following a shootout, Whit finds that he’s covered in purple welts where the “cop had riddled him good.” His fingers are “tacky with blood.”

After awhile, with Jason not yet conscious, Whit “needed to escape his brother’s presence for a moment, needed to be spared the horrible and unknowable responsibility of being a living person in the company of the dead.”

The novel also keeps circling back to creation of the myths surrounding the Firefly Brothers. A populace desperate for hope has turned them into folk heroes while, in stark and damning contrast, ordinary people are disappearing: “They vanished from the factories and warehouses and workshops . . . the doors padlocked, the buildings like tombs.”

The desolation of such passages comes not so much from an appreciation of hardships suffered in the past as from the overlay in readers’ minds of similar scenes from the present day.

The longer the Firefly Brothers remain on the lam -- the more times they die only to return -- the greater the power of their mythology: “That was the thing about death: it could leave the old mysteries

BOOK REVIEWS

unsolved. The stories could go on telling themselves with the passage of time.”

But which stories, and which versions? Some stories contain a hint of the truth, while in others the brothers are “impregnating ex-lovers, coaxing kittens from flimsy branches, delivering impromptu sermons at Congregationalist services.”

Federal agent Cary Delaney sees the Firefly Brothers as “men who couldn’t handle the pressures everyone else is facing, so they decided to just take from decent people, even if it means killing along the way.” Darcy, as Jason’s lover, tries to turn the bank robber into a superhero, telling one of her kidnappers, “[Jason] walks through walls. He can change faces, slip through stakeouts. . . . Bullets pass through him.”

Sometimes, though, the participants don’t want to be part of the myth. In a flashback conversation, Jason tells Darcy about a time he saved Whit’s life, saying with disgust, “I let them put a bunch of other sick folks in my car, too, so the story gets twisted that I’m this saint ferrying the poor to the hospital, like I run my own ambulance service for the needy.”

Part of Jason’s disgust stems from the way the stories have outgrown his ability to control them or their message.

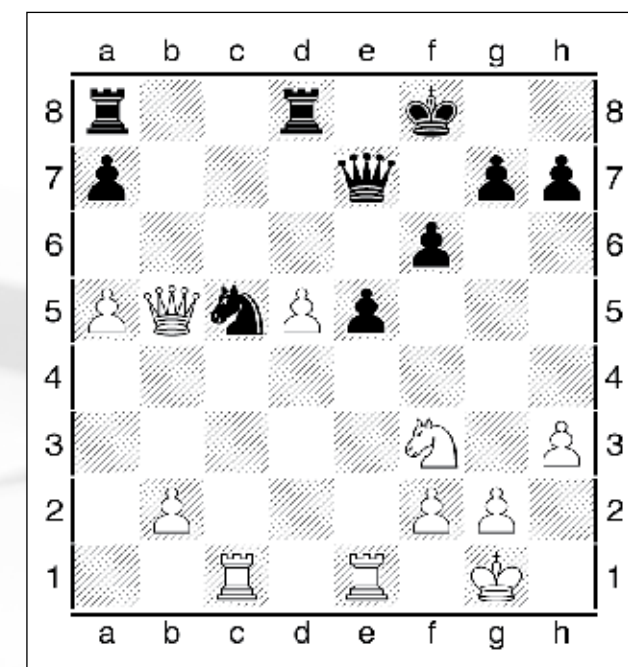
By the novel’s end, reality and myth cannot be disentangled, and finding one single version of the truth seems unimportant. Mullen provides enough traditional resolution -- Darcy’s fate, the facts behind Patrick Fireson’s involvement in a murder -- that any ambiguity to the secret behind the brothers’ resurrection seems less a tease than essential to the novel.

The brothers live within an ongoing, unsolvable story: “Whit asked Jason if he thought this would keep happening, or if maybe this was the last time. How much longer would they haunt each other like this. Or would they both vanish, to each other and the world.”

Mullen’s first novel, “The Last Town on Earth” (2006), garnered significant praise. It’s easy to see why. In “The Many Deaths of the Firefly Brothers,” he has created a stunning work of fiction that is intense, deeply satisfying and always uniquely American. ●

The Many Deaths of the Firefly Brothers
 by Thomas Mullen, Random House, 404 pp., \$26
 Reviewed by Jeff VanderMeer
 Los Angeles Times

FOR THE LOVE OF CHESS BY HUMBERTO CRUZ - CHESS COLUMNIST



It is Black’s turn. Is it safe for the Rook on d8 to take the White pawn on d5?

Stopping mental analysis short is common error by experienced players

A common mistake by beginners, as I’ve written previously, is to make a capture without fully looking at the consequences. If they see they can capture one of their opponent’s pieces, beginners often go ahead and take it without stopping to think what the opponent may do in return.

But another common mistake, this one made by more experienced players, is to consider what the opponent may do but then stopping the mental analysis short without going further and also considering a possible reply to the opponent’s move.

For an example of this kind of mistake, I will show one of my own games and what turned out to be a decisive moment in the 2009 Indian River County Chess Club rated championship (see diagram at left).

This position occurred in the third game of a playoff match for the championship between Harold Scott and me. The first two games had ended in draws, and now I was playing Black and fighting for another draw.

In the diagrammed position, I am about to make my 25th move as Black.

Being a pawn down, I looked at playing 25...Rxd5, which would make the material even. But I mistakenly decided against capturing the pawn because I was afraid of White’s response 26. b4, attacking my suddenly pinned Black Knight on c5. But I overlooked that Black could then reply 26...Qb7!, reaching an equal position. I played 25...Nb7? instead, a blunder that Scott skillfully exploited with 26. Nd4!, winning the game in short order, and the match with a draw in the next game.

Humberto Cruz is a United States Chess Federation correspondence chess master and certified tournament director. He can be reached at askhumberto@aol.com.

THE BRIDGE COLUMN BY PIETER VANBENNEKOM - BRIDGE COLUMNIST

Flustered Flo was glad to hear that her partner, Loyal Larry, finally seemed to have a good hand when he opened the bidding on a recent duplicate pairs tournament deal with a strong 2 Club bid. The poor soul hadn’t been getting many good cards lately.

By a quirk in the bidding, however, Flo got to play the small Slam contract, not Larry, and she vowed to reward Larry for his great hand and aggressive bidding by making it. Alas, it was not to be.

Neither side vulnerable; West Dealer. Loyal Larry was North and Flo played the South cards.

The bidding:	West	North	East	South
	Pass	2 Clubs	Pass	2 Hearts
	Pass	4 Clubs	Pass	4 Hearts
	Pass	4 Spades	Pass	5 Clubs
	Pass	6 Hearts	All pass.	

Opening lead: **Diamond 4**

Larry’s opening 2 Clubs bid as North followed a modified precision bidding system, indicating he had 21+ points. Flo’s response bid of 2 Hearts with the South hand meant medium support (5-9 points). Larry might have established a suit first by bidding 3 Hearts and waiting for his partner’s 4 Hearts response before asking for Aces with the 4 No-Trump Blackwood convention, but instead jumped straight to ask for Aces and Kings with 4 Clubs (Gerber). He easily wound up in 6 Hearts when he found out that between him and Flo they had all the Kings and were missing one Ace.

Because of Flo’s artificial response in 2 Hearts, she became Declarer even with the weaker hand.

After dummy went down, Flo saw the problem. She had one sure loser in the Club Ace and she’d somehow have to get rid of another potential Spade loser. Two strategies were available. She could go for a 3-3 Diamond split to slough a losing Spade from dummy on the 13th Diamond in her hand. Or she could try to make an extra trick in Clubs and set up the Club Queen in her hand, again to slough a losing Spade from dummy. That would require a finesse on the Jack of Clubs.

Alas, Flo chose wrong. After getting the lead with the first Diamond winner, she drew trumps and cashed the rest of dummy’s big Diamonds -- only to discover the 4-2 split so her hand’s Diamond 3 was now useless. She got back to her hand with the Spade King to belatedly try the Club finesse, but West correctly put up the Ace and led a small Club back to dummy’s King and Flo was doomed.

Games

The right (and the wrong) way to Slam

NORTH		
♠	A 7 6	
♥	A K 10 9 7	
♦	A K Q	♠ 9 5 3 2
♣	K 10	♥ 4 2
SOUTH		
♠	K 10 8	♦ 10 7 5 2
♥	Q J 6	♣ 9 5 3
♦	9 8 6 3	
♣	Q 7 6	

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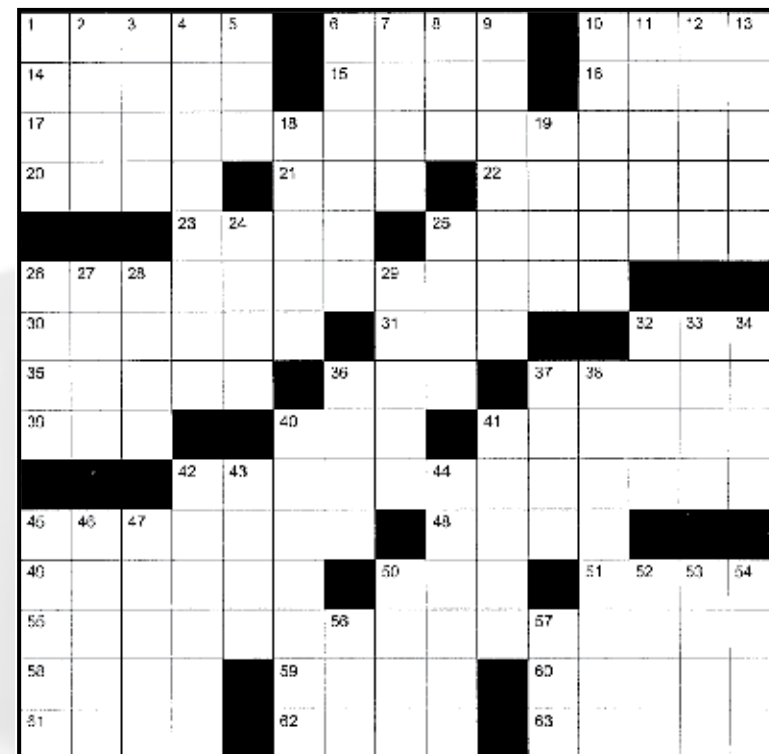
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Crossword

SOLUTIONS TO LAST ISSUE ON PAGE 75

PLANNING AHEAD



The Christian Science Monitor | By Judith Perry | Edited by Charles Preston

ACROSS

- 1 Quarterback Starr and TV's Simpson
- 6 Links rental
- 10 Actress Seymour
- 14 Fields of expertise
- 15 Jai ___
- 16 Foul smelling
- 17 Start of quip
- 20 Writer/critic James
- 21 Giant Giant
- 22 Set of governing facts
- 23 Lingering mark
- 25 Four earthly places?
- 26 Part 2 of quip
- 30 Squares with
- 31 Bay State cape
- 32 Meadow mom
- 35 Kind of kingdom
- 36 Census info
- 37 First name of 6 Down
- 39 Poivre's partner
- 40 Have bills
- 41 Salon treatment
- 42 Part 3 of quip
- 45 Patched again
- 48 In ___: attuned
- 49 Minister, at times
- 50 Hornswoggle

- 51 Autumn tool
- 55 End of quip
- 58 Doggie bag morsels
- 59 Geological span: var.
- 60 Too thin
- 61 Newshawk sense
- 62 Related
- 63 The end for Plato?

DOWN

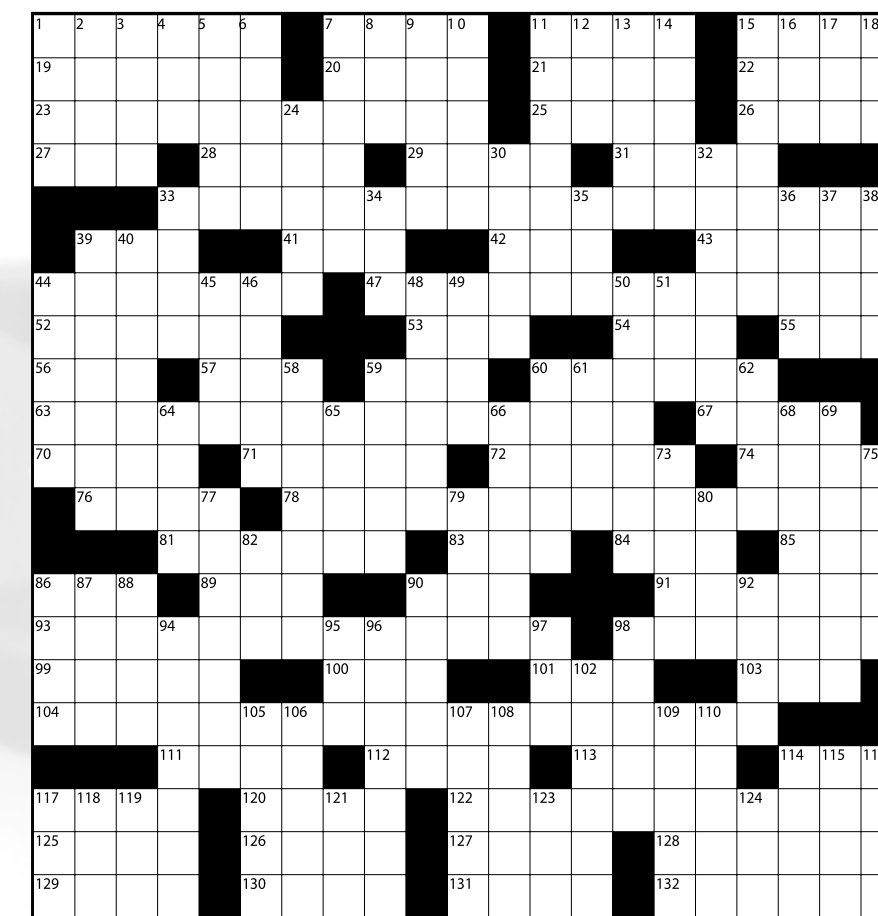
- 1 Mexicali area
- 2 Snug as a bug in ___
- 3 Actress Russo
- 4 Rests
- 5 Fed. stipend
- 6 Batista's successor
- 7 Full to the top
- 8 Barnyard butter?
- 9 Affix, as tents
- 10 New England corn cake
- 11 Roomy dress
- 12 Frisco player, familiarly
- 13 Noses out
- 18 Heads towards the sky
- 19 One-third of a WWII movie
- 24 Jazzman Baker
- 25 Rocker material
- 26 Mouths off
- 27 Goatish glance
- 28 Orsk's river
- 29 A gamble
- 32 Actress Falco
- 33 Lacking potency
- 34 Angled annexes
- 36 Impressed
- 37 Curry favor
- 38 Fountain purchase
- 40 A diet no no
- 41 "Captain Blood" actor
- 42 Bristly
- 43 Basin accessory
- 44 Make ___ choice
- 45 Pattern transfer
- 46 Julio's opposite
- 47 Examines carefully
- 50 These heads prevail
- 52 In unison, musically
- 53 Crowned checker
- 54 Warbler James
- 56 USN clerk
- 57 Swellhead's feature

ACROSS

- 1 Account of events
- 7 Great pleasures
- 11 Get behind
- 15 Remove (the fat)
- 19 Concerto key
- 20 Grunting negative
- 21 Singer Lovett
- 22 Purple Heart recipient
- 23 Amount of C you should take?
- 25 Ready to serve, perhaps
- 26 Checkup
- 27 Delta datum, briefly
- 28 "Spay" is related to it
- 29 Make (money)
- 31 Take ___ (doze)
- 33 Literary character who thinks his life is meaningless—except for the bullfighting parts?
- 39 Red Guard leader
- 41 Letters heard on "CSI"
- 42 Halibut habitat
- 43 Wild
- 44 Composer Claude
- 47 Periodical that Charlton Heston used to read religiously?
- 52 Going nowhere
- 53 Not dis?
- 54 Palais resident
- 55 "I'm impressed"
- 56 ACLU concerns: abbr.
- 57 "Rocky III" co-star
- 59 Hwys. and byways
- 60 Novelist Leonard
- 63 Org. for teens who don't want to be farmers per se but do enjoy watering?
- 67 Shiites or Amish, e.g.
- 70 Long ago
- 71 Italian poet Cavalcanti
- 72 Metal giant?
- 74 Investment house, T. ___ Price
- 76 Atty.-to-be's hurdle
- 78 Publicity still from Bob Hope's only appearance on "Star Trek"?
- 81 Stretch tight
- 83 Carats, for ex.
- 84 Down Under sight
- 85 Make lace
- 86 Beantown nine
- 89 Butt
- 90 Tweety, in real life
- 91 Clique wit?
- 93 TV show starring Charlie, Pete, and Axl that never caught on?
- 98 Guarantees
- 99 The "Tomorrow" show
- 100 Do soundtrack work
- 101 ___ Tech
- 103 Old Ford
- 104 Documentary about pillows and comforters?
- 111 Faux pas
- 112 Really chew out
- 113 Laid-back Perry
- 114 "Okay, I get it already"
- 117 ___ cheese
- 120 Will of "The Waltons"
- 122 What Bullwinkle says when he jumps?
- 125 Drill
- 126 Suggest strongly
- 127 Act like ___
- 128 More statuesque
- 129 Ant. of ans.
- 130 Senate runner
- 131 Product identifiers

DOWN

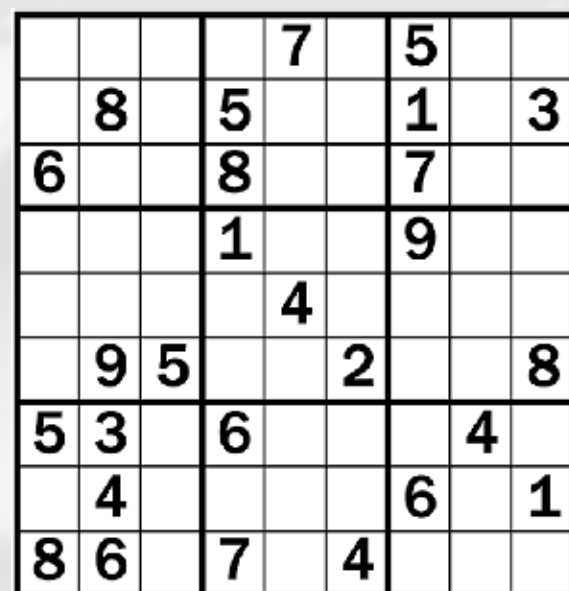
- 1 Pan's opposite
- 2 Utter (a sound)
- 3 Pocket bread
- 4 ___ mission
- 5 Love-struck lad
- 6 Jaunts
- 7 From Herod's kingdom
- 8 "What have we here!"
- 9 Composer Lateef
- 10 Clip, as wool
- 11 Marilyn Monroe et al.
- 12 Writer Rand
- 13 Smogless
- 14 Al's co-star in "The Devil's Advocate"
- 15 Obama, slangily
- 16 Henry (Higgins) portrayer
- 17 Roth or SEP, e.g.
- 18 "Can I? Huh?" addressee
- 24 Poor
- 30 Back-to-zero button
- 32 ___ of the heart
- 33 Danielle's day
- 34 On the ___ (at large)
- 35 Actress Grier
- 36 Not a copy: abbr.
- 37 Sugar source
- 38 Painter Paul
- 39 Cough drop ingredient
- 40 Humiliating types
- 44 Unwashed
- 45 Shoving match?
- 46 Gymnast Kerri who injured her ankle at the 1996 Olympics
- 48 The ___ favorite
- 49 Mailing courtesy: abbr.
- 50 Ulna, e.g.
- 51 Molasses, e.g.
- 58 Reassuring words
- 59 "The Thinker" sculptor
- 60 French females
- 61 Vito's hatchet man
- 62 Architect's first name
- 64 Jumping over 15 cars, e.g.
- 65 Walk or increase
- 66 Fairy tale abode
- 68 Twist
- 69 Adjusted slightly
- 73 The VA, for ex.
- 75 Adlai's running mate
- 77 North Carolinian
- 79 Has a mortgage, e.g.
- 80 Wiener holders
- 82 Fmr. Mideast merger
- 86 Sans date, perhaps
- 87 "Yikes!"
- 88 Strange prefix
- 90 It merged with Exxon
- 92 Hot time
- 94 Sniffer's boxful
- 95 A Kennedy: abbr.
- 96 Go off the leash
- 97 Asimov subj.
- 98 John of pop
- 102 Fancy ties
- 105 Unearth
- 106 Verdi's thing
- 107 Bother continually
- 108 "Laughing" animal
- 109 Drops out
- 110 Type of type
- 114 1996 campaigner
- 115 Hands-on type
- 116 For the wife
- 117 ___ sauce
- 118 He asked "Who's on first?"
- 119 Before, once
- 121 Nog need
- 123 Slangy toupee
- 124 Hermosillo hurrah



JUST ADD SUGAR

By Merl Reagle

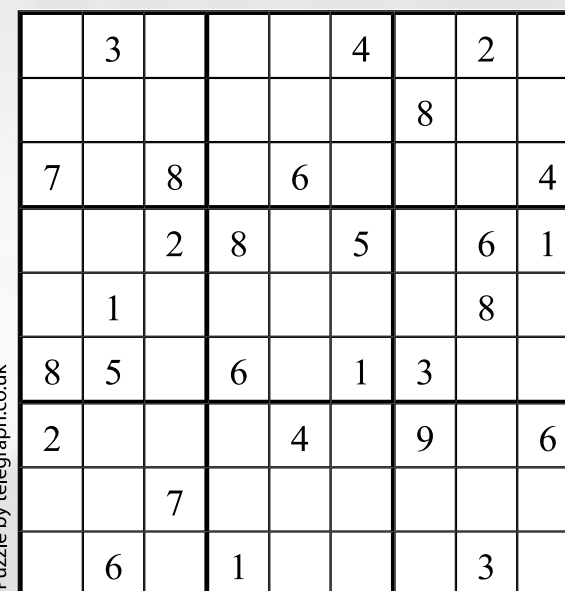
Sudoku



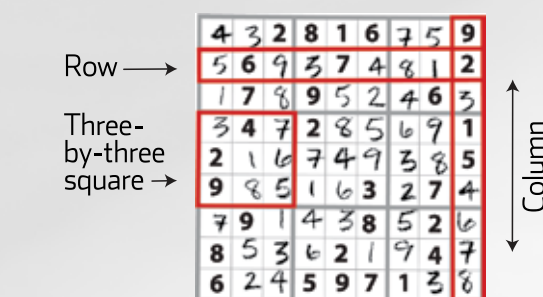
★★★★☆

How to do Sudoku:

Fill in the grid so the numbers 1 through 9 appear just once in every column, row and three-by-three square. See example (right).



★★★★☆



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Tales of a Mechanical Misfit (Part 3) By Jay McNamara

When it was determined by my 7th grade shop teacher that it would be safer for everyone if I ceased attendance in the course, I learned something valuable. I lacked an aptitude for all things mechanical.

The little wooden wall bracket that I made in shop, once my mother figured out what it was, was fastened to a wall in a small dining area off our kitchen. It was a permanent reminder of my ineptitude and a source of great amusement among family members. The intended use of the device as a place to set a plant was never attempted because my mother feared the bracket would crash.

Over the years, my brothers, who had observed from the start that the bracket was rough-edged and cracked, claimed that it was an antique and a family heirloom. Visiting relatives and friends would get to pass around our antique much to their enjoyment. Second to my art work from that period, the wall bracket got the most laughs.

As a member of the consuming public, knowing that one is mechanically challenged can be a good thing, requiring one to reach out to others to explain how objects work and what makes sense as a purchase. There is the downside of being recognized as a dunce by sales people and being played for one.

Nevertheless, over the decades I have owned four or five computers and managed to keep them operable, not without the help of expert advisors. Now that my Dell laptop is more than a few steps behind the world's latest versions, I believe it is time to venture forth to replace it.

Some would say that buying a car is the most daunting, exasperating, nerve racking buying experience. I would argue that buying a car is duck soup compared to a computer. With all the websites available to guide one through the car maze, it has become a tolerable experience.

In the computer world, Moore's Law insures that there will be smaller, more powerful, faster, cheaper computers available every few years. This month, the annual Las Vegas convention of all new gizmos took place. The news from the show is enough to intimidate the most hardened computer geek, much less a novice like me.

Importantly, the trend is toward greater portability, accessibility and versatility. For what is called "infotainment," various devices are taking on multi-roles. The home computer and the cell phone, for example, are heading toward a merger. The smart phone of the future will be able to perform all of the functions of today's computers.

The mouse and the keyboard are being replaced. Instead, voice, touch and motion are being employed to activate software functions that didn't exist even months ago. As we go to press, some people think that Apple will introduce a tablet computer called the "islate."

This machine supposedly will access books, videos, the internet, and music. It will act as a camera, book reader and a phone. For all we know, you will be able to grill a cheese sandwich on it. From Apple's app store, you will be able to access thousands of software applications, many of them free.

The fact that the product you purchase is going to be out of date before you get home is not reassuring. The risk of a friend laughing at your new purchase as a relic from the past is high. The costs associated with the purchase could include extensive, expensive rewiring and reconfiguration of your home as well as your brain.

Here is my plan. I am going to go to the website Gizmodo.com. There, I hope I will be able to sort out the many options available, matching those options to my needs. Then, I can venture to retail websites and to their physical outlets to learn from observation and conversation with sales experts. Finally, I can discuss the subject with informed friends and family members before providing credit card information. I am confident that operators will be standing by whenever I need one.

And so, with any luck in a few weeks I will have a new toy to play with. Then, in a few months I will learn how to use it. It will not be something hanging on a wall, available to be mocked and laughed at by family members. And I can continue to be eternally grateful to my shop teacher for his early identification of me as a mechanical misfit. After all, isn't that what schooling is for?

Editors note: *With any luck, Jay will also acquire new word-processing software in place of his beloved WordPerfect, a program which peaked in the early 1990s and is used by two other barrier island residents today.*