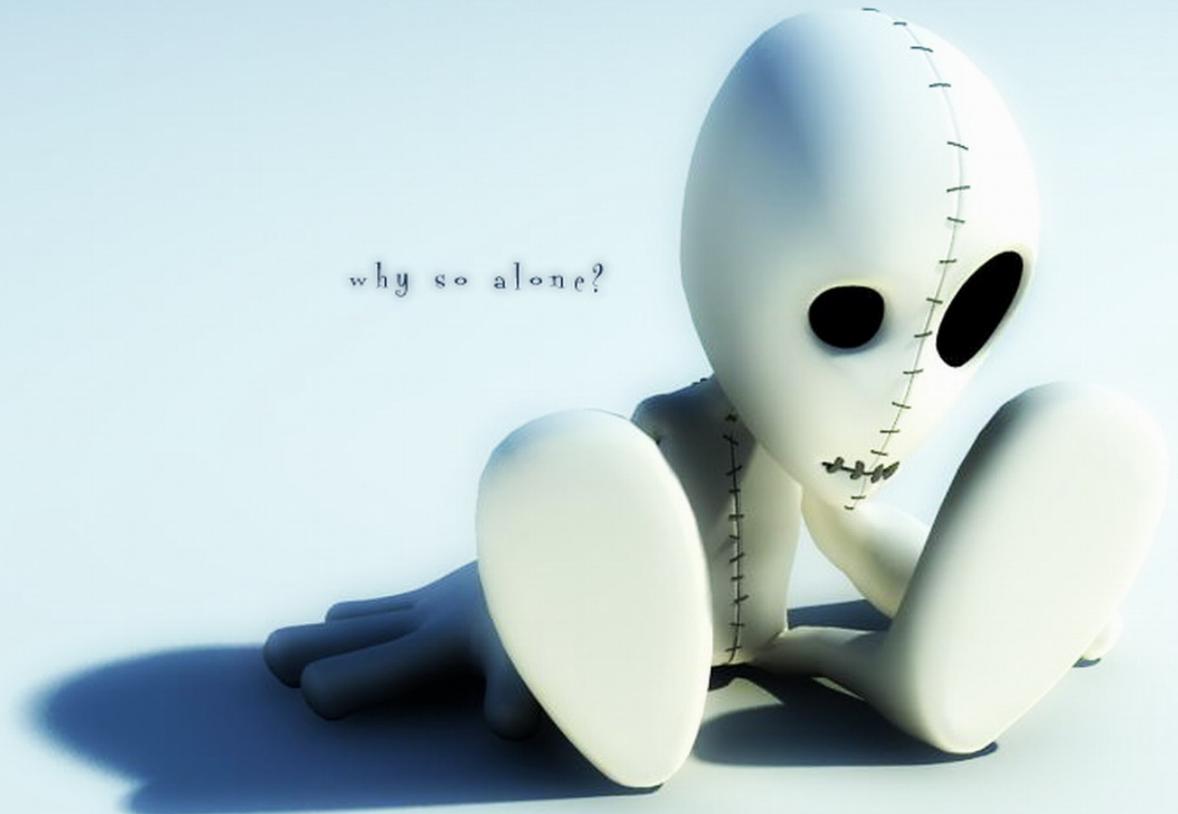


Current Events #10: North America (but not USA)

why so alone?



The Sharper the Thorns



In Mexico's male-dominated drug trade, her life story became a legend.

After more than seven years behind bars, the woman known as "The Queen of the Pacific" is free.

She was first arrested in Mexico City on September 28, 2007, smiling before cameras as authorities trumpeted her detention.

Ávila is the niece of Miguel Ángel Félix Gallardo, founder of the now-defunct Guadalajara cartel. She's also related to drug lord Rafael Caro Quintero, who was released from a Mexican prison in a controversial 2013 decision and now has a \$5 million State Department bounty on his head.

<http://edition.cnn.com/2015/02/08/americas/mexico-drug-queen-sandra-avila-released/index.html>

Panic at the Carnival



At least 16 people were killed and 78 injured early on Tuesday when a singer on a Carnival float hit an overhead power line in Port-au-Prince, setting off a stampede by bystanders, officials said.

The tragedy in Haiti's capital prompted the government to cancel the last day of Carnival - the raucous celebrations preceding the start of Lent - and to declare three days of national mourning.

<http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/02/17/us-haiti-carnival-idUSKBN0LL0VZ20150217>

Feed the World

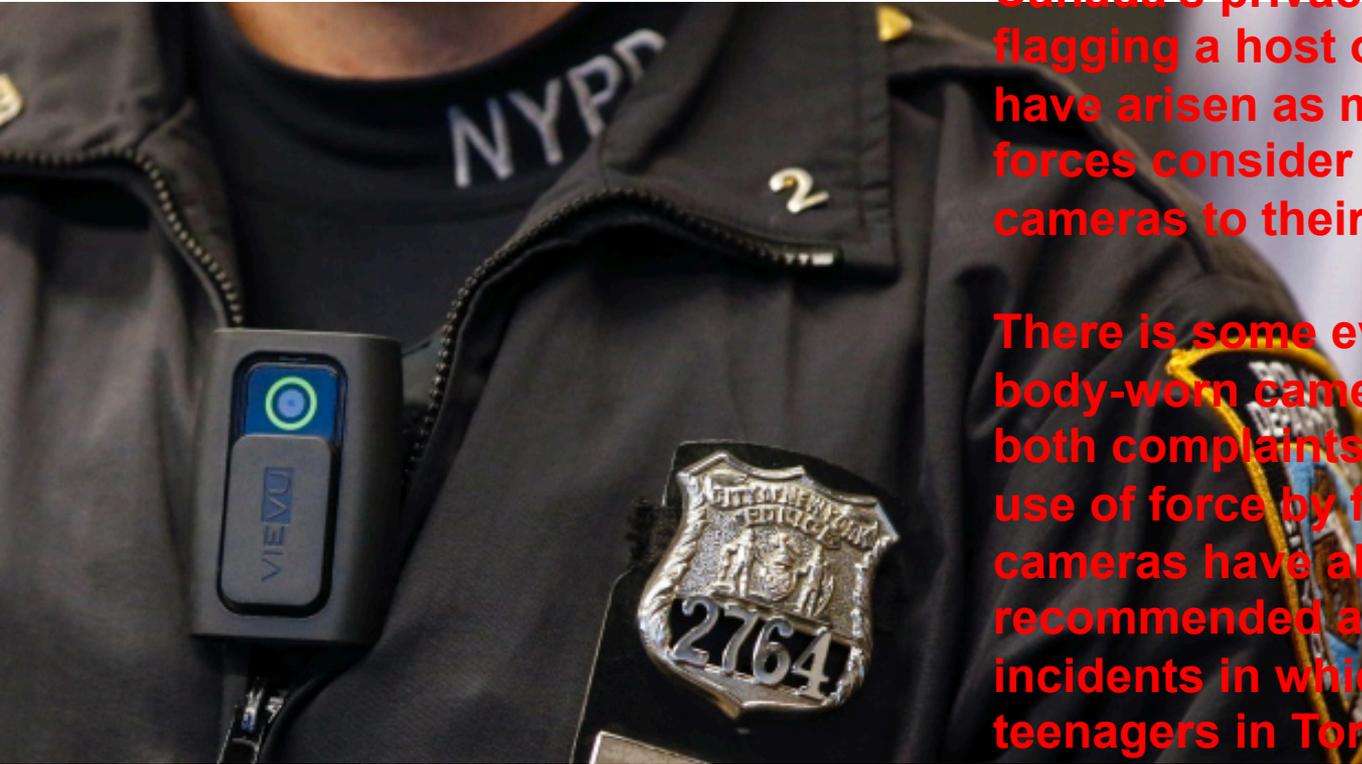
With fewer restrictions and greater investment, agriculture could expand its capacity and serve international markets. Through its favorable climate, Cuba can become "a winter garden for North America," Ritter believes.

The island also boasts an advanced biotech industry that is vital to the nation's economic strategy, as well as its own high standards of healthcare. But to build its exports the government must consent to international testing and standardization.



<http://edition.cnn.com/2014/12/23/business/cuba-bread-basket/index.html>

The World is Watching



Canada's privacy commissioners are flagging a host of privacy issues that have arisen as more and more police forces consider attaching video cameras to their officers' uniforms.

There is some evidence that use of body-worn cameras by police reduces both complaints against police and the use of force by front-line officers. The cameras have also been publicly recommended after high-profile incidents in which police shot to death teenagers in Toronto and in Ferguson, Mo., last year. Some police forces in Canada have already tested or are testing the technology, including Calgary, Edmonton and Toronto, which is launching a pilot test this month.

<http://www.cbc.ca/news/technology/police-body-cameras-flagged-by-privacy-commissioners-1.2962041>

My Kingdom for Online Access



Cuba has temporarily reduced the hourly charge for using state-run Internet cafes in the country's first small but substantive public move to increase online access since the declaration of detente with the U.S.

Virtually all home connections remain illegal in Cuba and getting online at government centers remains prohibitively expensive. Post-discount, an hour costs roughly 10 percent of the average monthly salary of \$20.

Users nonetheless hailed the decision to cut the rate by 50 percent until April 10. State centers previously charged \$4.50 an hour. The promotion gives Cubans two hours and 16 minutes for \$5.

http://news.yahoo.com/cuba-temporarily-cuts-price-internet-access-214443905.html;_ylt=AwrTWfwKPeVUoDUATILQtDMD

Is There an App for the Protest?



Hundreds of taxi drivers ground traffic to a halt in parts of downtown Montreal Thursday as they drove in a slow-moving convoy to protest online competition.

The drivers They say the government is slow to await the city of Montreal and the provincial government to put a stop to a new car sharing service.

ct on the unfair competition coming from "UberX", calling the ride-sharing app an illegal form of transportation.

At issue is two services offered by Uber. The first is a mobile app - called Uber - that allows customers to request taxi rides from their phone. The second is a network of drivers - called UberX - that taxi drivers say circumvents the legal requirements necessary to chauffeur the public.

UberX rates are also cheaper than the amount dictated by the taxi bureau.

<http://montreal.ctvnews.ca/taxi-drivers-protest-downtown-against-uber-1.2243281>

The Cost of Education-Eh



The federal government is writing off another \$295 million in uncollected Canada Student Loans from more than 63,000 bad debts, leaving taxpayers on the hook for at least \$837 million in write-offs over the last three years alone.

Federal supplementary spending estimates tabled Thursday in the House of Commons for the 2014-15 fiscal year show the government needs an additional \$294.6 million to cover tens of thousands of Canada Student Loans to post-secondary students that won't be collected.

“This funding will be applied to write-off 63,540 debts related to Canada Student Loans,” show the documents.

<http://news.nationalpost.com/2015/02/19/federal-government-writes-off-almost-300-million-more-in-student-loans/>

43 “Mistaken Identities”



Mexican authorities say they're not done. But Mexican Attorney General Jesus Murillo Karam says there is "legal certainty" that 43 college students who went missing four months ago in the Mexican state of Guerrero were murdered.

Forty-three students remain missing after armed men ambushed buses carrying students in southern Mexico on September 26 .

"These and other elements we found during the investigation allowed us to carry out an analysis about the logical causes and, without a doubt, we can conclude that the students at the teachers' college were abducted, killed, burned and thrown into the San Juan River, in that order," Murillo Karam said.

<http://edition.cnn.com/2015/01/28/americas/mexico-missing-students/index.html>

Canadian Conspiracy



Two people have been charged in connection with a plot to carry out a mass shooting in Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canadian police say.

Police said Lindsay Kantha Souvannarath, 23, and Randall Steven Shepherd, 20, are due to appear in court on Tuesday.

A third person has been released without charge.

Media reports say a 19-year-old man found dead had written a blog with dark references to death and shootings.

<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-31477799>

Sacrifice a Virginian



An eruption of Guatemala's so-called "fire volcano" has closed an airport and forced the evacuation of at least 100 people.

Guatemala's national disaster agency says the volcano, known locally as Fuego Volcan, erupted Saturday and spewed ashes "to an altitude reaching 5,500 meters (18,000 feet) above sea level."

The smoke and ash forced Guatemala's La Aurora International Airport to stop all air traffic around the area.

Guatemala's alert level has been raised to "orange," which puts in place the possibility of rescue operations, the disaster agency said.

<http://www.cnn.com/2015/02/08/americas/guatemala-fire-volcano/>

Stop Thief (ves)!

Mexico's state-owned oil company Pemex has announced it will stop shipping ready-to-use petrol and diesel through its pipelines, in an effort to curb fuel thefts.

Pemex says it will use its pipelines across Mexico only for unfinished fuel.

That fuel will go through a last phase of mixing when it reaches the company's storage plants.

More than \$1bn (£650,000) worth of fuel was stolen by Mexican gangs in 2014, an increase of 70% over the previous year.

Last year, Pemex discovered more than 2,600 illegal taps along its network of ducts.



<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-31513937>

The Sting that Sickens

Thousands of travelers to the Caribbean and nearby regions are coming home with an unwanted souvenir: a mosquito-borne virus that recently settled there.

The virus is called chikungunya (chih-kih-n-GOON'-yuh). It can cause severe, often disabling joint pain, fever, rash and other problems.

Few U.S. doctors have ever seen a case and many are stumped by the symptoms. More than 2,300 U.S. travelers to the Caribbean and parts of Latin America, South America and Mexico have caught the virus since last May.

There is no vaccine or treatment except medicine for pain. To prevent infection, doctors recommend keeping arms and legs covered and using bug repellent with plenty of the active ingredient, such as DEET.



<http://www.foxnews.com/health/2015/02/06/mosquito-virus-sickening-more-travelers-to-caribbean/>

The Doctor Will Now See You



As the Obama administration chips away at the economic isolation of Cuba, whittling at an embargo that is older than most people on this island, industries of many kinds are trying to figure out what the easing of tension will mean for them, and exactly how much wiggle room there will be.

Thousands of people from other countries go to Cuba each year for what is known as medical tourism: travel abroad for surgery or other medical care, often because the treatment is less expensive there or is not available where patients live.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2015/02/18/world/americas/americans-may-see-appeal-of-medical-tourism-in-cuba.html?smid=nytcore-iphone-share&smprod=nytcore-iphone>

Without Hockey Sticks?



A government report issued in late August says 130 Canadian citizens have gone abroad to join terrorist groups, including 30 believed to be fighting in Syria.

In Calgary, five of those young men are linked to one downtown apartment building, which has a mosque on its ground floor.

That mosque is where a recent convert to Islam, Damian Clairmont, began worshipping in 2012. Not long after, he slipped away. His mother told CNN that her son said he was going to Cairo to study Arabic. Instead, she says, he flew to Istanbul and later across the Turkish border into Syria.

<http://www.cnn.com/2014/09/10/world/canada-isis-jihadists/>

No Oil for You



President Obama rejected a bill that would approve the controversial Keystone XL pipeline Tuesday, issuing the third veto of his presidency to block a Republican-led effort to accomplish one of the GOP's top priorities.

Republicans lack the votes to override his veto, but the fight over Keystone is far from over – and what happens next is anyone's guess. That's because Mr. Obama's veto did not reject the pipeline outright; rather, it allows the president to retain decision-making authority over the \$8 billion project, which requires a green light from the State Department because it crosses the US-Canada border.

<http://www.csmonitor.com/Environment/Energy/2015/0224/Obama-vetoes-Keystone-XL-bill-but-pipeline-saga-is-far-from-over-video>