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OVER-THE-ROAD-BUS INTELLIGENCE AWARENESS DAILY (OTRBIAD) REPORT

December 9, 2024

SUSPICIOUS ACTIVITY & INCIDENT REPORTS

Police: Male Dies Following Altercation At Charlotte Transit Center

QCity Metro, 12/8/2024

[Charlotte, North Carolina] Homicide detectives on Sunday were investigating the death of a male who was involved in an altercation at the Charlotte Transit Center in Uptown Charlotte. The investigation began shortly before 4 p.m. when officers were called to the 300 block of E. Trade Street. When they got there, they found an unconscious male, who was pronounced dead at a hospital. "Preliminary information indicates that an altercation occurred involving the subject, Strategic Security employees and other nearby civilians," the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department said in a statement. Strategic Security Corp. is a private contractor at the Transit Center. <https://qcitymetro.com/2024/12/08/homicide-investigation-charlotte-transit-center/>

MTA Worker Accused Of Slashing Man In Brooklyn Subway Station

ABC 7, 12/9/2024

[Brooklyn, New York] Police have taken an MTA employee into custody after he allegedly slashed a man while cleaning a Downtown Brooklyn subway station. The worker apparently got into a dispute with a 47-year-old man sleeping on a bench. It happened on a southbound D and R trains platform at the Atlantic Avenue-Barclays Center station at around 1:45 a.m. The 62-year-old MTA worker was cleaning the area with bleach when the incident occurred. At some point, the two began arguing after the man objected the worker's cleaning efforts. The dispute escalated with worker slashing the man above the left eye. He was treated for injuries at New York-Presbyterian Brooklyn Methodist Hospital. <https://abc7ny.com/post/nyc-subway-slashing-mta-worker-arrested-after-sleeping-man-slashed-following-verbal-altercation/15630072/>

TERRORISM & EXTREMISM

Australian Synagogue Fire Declared Terrorism In A Decision That Increases Investigation Resources

Associated Press, 12/8/2024

[Australia] Australian law enforcement authorities on Monday declared an arson attack on a synagogue last week a terrorist act in a decision that increases resources available to the investigation. Arson squad

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OVER THE ROAD BUS,
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detectives have been investigating the blaze that extensively damaged the Adass Israel Synagogue in Melbourne on Friday. But the investigation was taken over on Monday by the Joint Counter-Terrorism Team which involves Victoria state Police and Australian Federal Police as well as the Australian Security Intelligence Organization, the nation's main domestic spy agency. "The decision ... to transition the Adass Israel Synagogue fire attack to the Victorian Joint Counter-Terrorism Team is a crucial turning point in this investigation," Australian Federal Police Deputy Commissioner Krissy Barrett told reporters.

<https://apnews.com/article/australia-synagogue-fire-melbourne-terrorism-a9b3940618560648504ce48b02fdcd36>

Religious Charities Are Promoting Islamic Extremism 'With Impunity', Warn Campaigners

Telegraph, 12/7/2024

[United Kingdom] The charity watchdog could be given new powers to rein in extremism after the Home Office was warned charities are promoting Islamist ideology with "impunity". The Charity Commission is understood to be in talks with government officials about how to strengthen its ability to curtail the activities of both extremist individuals and organisations under its remit. It follows warnings that the watchdog has been "toothless and ineffective" at dealing with the issue. A briefing note, presented to senior officials at the charity regulator as well as the Home Office, claims "out of date" charity laws are "enabling religious charities to promote extremist ideology with impunity". The document, drawn up by the National Secular Society (NSS), a British campaigning organisation, lists dozens of examples in which charities have been "promoting or condoning" extremism but accuses the charity watchdog of "sometimes refusing to take any action at all". It notes that many of the cases relate to recently registered charities, adding "that so many of these charities are new reveals that this problem is ongoing, and that the regulators do little or no vetting or charities' output before registering them".

<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2024/12/07/religious-charities-promoting-islamic-extremist-ideology/>

SECURITY & SAFETY AWARENESS

Drugs, Fires, And Threats: Safety Concerns Persist For South Tejon Park-N-Ride

KOAA, 12/9/2024

[Colorado Springs, Colorado] Bus passengers and operators expressed enough concern about their safety at the South Tejon Park-n-Ride in Colorado Springs that the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) ended its bus service from the stop altogether. That announcement came less than two weeks ago. CDOT said it was terminating its service at the bus stop located underneath I-25 between Tejon and Nevada as of Dec. 1, saying it's become an "unsafe environment." "Aggressive behavior, including threatening behavior to both passengers and bus operators by some people populating the site, along with drug use, and open fires are just some of the safety hazards that have been documented," said an email from Bob Wilson, statewide communications manager for CDOT's Bustang. ... A large group of unhoused individuals populate the area in and around the Tejon Park-n-Ride. The parking lot and bus stop are often littered with trash and debris. CDOT said unless something

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drastically changes to make it safe again, they have no immediate plans to return bus operations in the near future. CDOT owns the property and said it'll continue as a park-n-ride for carpoolers.

<https://www.koaa.com/seeking-solutions/drugs-fires-and-threats-safety-concerns-persist-for-south-tejon-park-n-ride>

Driver Shortage Leads To Headaches For Metro Mobility Clients In East Metro

Pioneer Press, 12/9/2024

[Minnesota] ... A shortage in drivers led the contractor who covers Metro Mobility's east zone to cancel pick ups last week outside the "ADA zone" between 2 p.m. and 5 p.m., he said. The Americans with Disabilities Act guidelines require that the Metropolitan Council provide Metro Mobility service within ¼-mile of any all-day, local, regular-route service: the federally-mandated ADA service area. The state requires that Metro Mobility serve the Transit Taxing District — the state's mandated service area. ... Metro Mobility contracts its east zone coverage to a company called Transdev; Transdev officials did not return a phone call on Friday seeking comment. Transdev officials made the "operational decision" to move non-ADA zone rides out of the peak-time period — 2 p.m. and 5 p.m. — to address a driver shortage, said Andy Streasick, assistant director for Metro Mobility.

<https://www.twincities.com/2024/12/09/driver-shortage-leads-to-headaches-for-metro-mobility-clients-in-east-metro/>

Transit Workers Say MTA Too Slow to Protect Subway Cabs

The City, 12/9/2024

[New York] Nearly a year after the MTA pledged to make quick fixes to prevent vandals from breaking into train crew cabs, subway cars on only three lines have upgraded locks on worker compartments, according to the agency. Agency numbers reveal that among the entire subway fleet of more than 6,400 train cars, only those that run on the 1, 3 and 6 lines have upgraded locks for train operator and conductor cabs. Meanwhile, lock upgrades for worker cabs on the troubled No. 7 are undergoing a "continued review" in the wake of recent incidents along the line, said Kayla Shults, an MTA spokesperson. There are 506 cars along the No. 7 line that extends between Flushing, Queens and 34th Street-Hudson Yards in Manhattan. ... The union is pressing the MTA to immediately install additional deadbolt locks on all subway train crew cabs in the wake of a November video that showed a transit troublemaker on a No. 7 line platform swiping a conductor's keys through an open window as the worker tried to stop another vandal from forcing his way into her cab.

<https://www.thecity.nyc/2024/12/09/transit-workers-subway-conductor-cab-safety/>

Slaying Of UnitedHealthcare CEO Puts Focus On Executive Protection

Freight Waves, 12/6/2024

For CEOs who are the public face of their companies, the slaying of UnitedHealthcare's Brian Thompson in New York was a tragic reminder of the importance of executive protection. Thompson was in

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Manhattan for a presentation to investors when he was shot early Wednesday morning by a masked gunman outside the New York Hilton hotel. The gunman escaped and remains at large. There's an old saying that when transportation is in the headlines, it's rarely good news. That means that CEOs in the supply chain industry have to work harder at being out in public conveying a corporate message than they do sitting behind a desk. "When you are the head of a large corporation, and your name is out in public and you're all over social media, you need to reassess your security needs," said Glen Kucera, president of Enhanced Protection Services for Allied Universal, which provides security services for 400 of the Fortune 500 companies. <https://www.freightwaves.com/news/slaying-of-unitedhealthcare-ceo-puts-focus-on-executive-protection>

ANALYST COMMENTARY: On 4 December 2024, Brian Thompson, the CEO of UnitedHealthcare, was shot and killed during a targeted attack while he was walking to UnitedHealthcare's annual investor conference at a Hilton Hotel in Midtown, New York. The perpetrator was masked and armed with a suppressed firearm, and the evidence indicates that they planned their attack well in advance. The killer has not been identified or located, and while the motive behind the killing has not been confirmed, officials have speculated that Thompson was specifically targeted due to his role within the healthcare insurance industry. The killer shot Thompson multiple times during the incident before fleeing, and investigators found the words "deny," "defend," and "depose" on the spent casings left behind at the scene of the crime. Experts have noted that the words are "remarkably similar" to a phrase commonly used to describe insurer tactics to avoid paying claims – "delay, deny, defend." Following the shooting, the gunman fled one block on foot, then four blocks on an e-bike, and disappeared into New York's Central Park where he is believed to have changed clothes. Investigators have claimed that the assailant entered New York City on 24 November – 10 days prior to the shooting – and used a fake ID to check into a hostel. They have also said the shooter wore a mask for the majority of his stay, and they believe he has since fled the city. In the hours following Thompson's murder, two family homes owned by Thompson were also targeted with hoax bomb threats during a swatting attempt on his family. According to the New York Times, executive security costs have been increasing among Fortune 500 companies even before the incident. They claim that "median amount spent on executive security among the S&P 500 companies that disclose such information doubled from 2021 to 2023," and that "about 20 percent of S&P 500 companies disclose at least some of the security services they provide their CEOs." The killing has sparked thousands of hateful posts online, many of which praise the killer and advocate for further violence against CEOs, particularly those in the health insurance field. On 9 December, law enforcement reported that one person had been detained in Altoona, Pennsylvania in connection with the shooting.

Climate Change Is Making Canada's Ice Roads Hard To Navigate

The Conversation, 12/5/2024

Walking on the ice of the Great Bear Lake in the N.W.T. is a truly unforgettable experience. It is simply one of Canada's most breathtaking (and also largest) lakes. However, it is also facing challenges. On my

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OVER THE ROAD BUS,
& SURFACE TRANSPORTATION



most recent trip to the lake, the sound of the ice cracking underfoot was pronounced. This sound was both unnerving and prompted reflection upon the future of this lake as a vital winter route. In winter, the ice thickens to bear weights of up to 60,000 kilograms. At this thickness, the ice enables the transportation of essential supplies to isolated communities. The town of Délı̨ne, N.W.T., is especially dependent upon these icy highways. Situated 544 kilometres northwest of Yellowknife, Délı̨ne lacks permanent road access. Instead, each winter, hundreds of transport trucks rely on the frozen lake to deliver critical supplies like food, fuel and household goods. <https://theconversation.com/climate-change-is-making-canadas-ice-roads-hard-to-navigate-242569>

ANALYST COMMENTARY: Climate related incidents and disasters often disrupt the public and surface transportation sectors, stress and damage transportation infrastructure, and pose safety risks to sector personnel and equipment. Due to their expansive nature, roads, bridges, and railroads across the U.S. are constantly subjected to a wide array of damages from climate-related incidents like storms, floods, wildfires, landslides, and earthquakes. According to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) National Centers for Environmental Information (NCEI), "There were 28 weather and climate disasters in 2023, surpassing the previous record of 22 in 2020, tallying a price tag of at least \$92.9 billion," and 2023 was the fourth consecutive year "in which 18 or more separate billion-dollar disaster events have impacted the U.S., marking a consistent pattern that is becoming the new normal." So far in 2024, NOAA has tracked 24 such incidents with billion-dollar price tags attached to them. More information regarding billion dollar weather related disasters, and the trends being tracked by NOAA, can be found at: <https://www.ncei.noaa.gov/access/billions/>

CYBERSECURITY

Spyloan Android Malware On Google Play Installed 8 Million Times

Bleeping Computer, 11/30/2024

A new set of 15 SpyLoan Android malware apps with over 8 million installs was discovered on Google Play, targeting primarily users from South America, Southeast Asia, and Africa. The apps were discovered by McAfee, a member of the 'App Defense Alliance,' and have now been removed from Android's official app store. However, their presence on Google Play is indicative of the threat actors' persistence, as even recent law enforcement actions against SpyLoan operators have not curbed the issue, says McAfee. The last major "SpyLoan cleanup" on Google Play was in December 2023, when over a dozen apps that had amassed 12 million downloads were removed. SpyLoan apps are tools promoted as financial tools that offer users loans through a fast-track approval process under deceptive and often false terms. <https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/spyloan-android-malware-on-google-play-installed-8-million-times/>

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ANALYST COMMENTARY: The discovery of 15 SpyLoan malware apps on Google Play that had cumulatively amassed over 8 million installs exposes the persistent threat posed by deceptive financial tools. Despite Google's ongoing efforts to enforce app review policies, attackers continue to exploit loopholes, targeting vulnerable users in South America, Southeast Asia, and Africa. These apps lure victims with promises of quick loans but ultimately harvest sensitive data through aggressive permissions abuse, including SMS, contacts, call logs, and even GPS details. This data is weaponized for extortion and harassment, often involving the victim's family and contacts. SpyLoan's tactics, such as OTP verification for regional targeting and the demand for sensitive documents, demonstrate a calculated approach to victimizing users. The stolen data facilitates coercive repayment schemes with exorbitant interest rates, underscoring the financial and emotional toll on victims. Despite prior removals of similar apps, their resurgence shows the adaptability of these threat actors and the challenges of securing app marketplaces. To mitigate risks, users should adopt proactive measures: scrutinizing app reviews, avoiding excessive permissions, enabling Google Play Protect, and being cautious of apps with too-good-to-be-true offers. Developers and platforms must strengthen detection mechanisms, and law enforcement must intensify efforts to disrupt these operations. The persistence of SpyLoan apps serves as a reminder of the need for a multi-layered defense approach against evolving mobile threats.

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