

When College Students Block Each Other In Real Life



REVIEW



AYO EDEBIRI

WSJ. MAGAZINE

What's News

Business & Finance

- ◆ **U.S. job growth slowed** slightly last month, a sign employers remained cautious about hiring amid uncertainty over tariffs and the nation's economic outlook. **A1**
- ◆ **U.S. stocks jumped**, with the S&P 500 and Dow adding 1.5% and 1.2% for the week, respectively. The Nasdaq rose 2.2%. **B11**
- ◆ **Lululemon shares** plummeted by nearly 20%, after the company said tariffs and consumer malaise would hurt its earnings this year. **B9**
- ◆ **One of Tesla's top** artificial intelligence executives, Milan Kovac, left the company, a setback for the Optimus robotics project. **B10**
- ◆ **Switzerland proposed** some of the toughest capital rules in the world on banking giant UBS, an effort to prevent another Credit Suisse-style meltdown. **B11**
- ◆ **Calpers, the country's** largest public-pension fund, is seeing positive early results from an overhaul of its private-equity program. **B11**
- ◆ **HSBC's Mark Tucker** will return to Hong Kong-based insurer AIA Group as its new group board chairman. **B11**
- ◆ **Gemini Space Station**, the crypto exchange controlled by the Winklevoss twins, said it plans to go public. **B11**

World-Wide

D-Day Vets Return to Normandy, 81 Years Later



VOICE OF EXPERIENCE: Jake Larson, a 102-year-old veteran of the D-Day landings, is greeted before a ceremony Friday at the American Cemetery in Colleville-sur-Mer, France, part of the anniversary commemorations of the Allied operation. **A9**

Their Star-Crossed Bromance Implodes in Spectacular Fashion

BY REBECCA BALLHAUS AND ALEX LEARY

It had once been a relationship so strong that even a lawsuit couldn't drive a wedge through it.

When President Trump and Elon Musk did a joint interview with Sean Hannity soon after the inauguration, sitting so close their knees nearly touched and vigorously nodding at each other's responses, the Fox News host appeared

baffled by the recent settlement of a suit Trump had brought against X, Musk's social-media platform.

"He's become one of your best friends. He's working for free for you," Hannity pointed out to Trump. "You just made him pay you \$10 million?" Then he turned to Musk. "You don't care about that?"

"No, I love the president," Musk replied. Trump said his buddy had gotten a discount. For months after Trump

won re-election, he and the world's richest man seemed infatuated with each other. Musk rarely left his side, moving into Mar-a-Lago, flying on Air Force One and trotting his young son into the Oval Office. On New Year's Eve, the two men danced together, in tuxedos, to "YMCA."

"A star is born," Trump, 78 years old, said of Musk, 53, the night he won the election, with the help of the billionaire's millions. Musk, just weeks into

his job as head of the Department of Government Efficiency, professed he loved Trump "as much as a straight man can love another man."

Seven months after the election, their bromance detonated in spectacular fashion. It was the breakup everyone saw

Please turn to page A6

◆ **What Musk and Trump risk losing.....** **A6**
◆ **Amid feud, Musk's xAI seeks to borrow \$5 billion.....** **A7**

Another Musk Problem: Cybertruck

BY BECKY PETERSON

The bromance between Elon Musk and President Trump is ending at a difficult time for Tesla. The electric-vehicle maker lost about \$150 billion of market value Thursday—its biggest ever drop—after the Tesla CEO and Trump traded insults.

Sales have slumped this year. Tariffs could disrupt the supply of key components. The sprawling Republican tax-

and-spending bill would end tax credits for EV buyers. The company is preparing to start testing its robotaxis next week. And Tesla's Cybertruck has been a disappointment.

Musk set high expectations for the Cybertruck, telling investors it would be Tesla's "best product ever." The angular, stainless steel pickup was supposed to generate buzz for Tesla by showcasing new technology and unlocking the lucrative truck market.

Instead, it has become synonymous with Musk's polarizing stint in politics, exposing some owners to graffiti or middle fingers from other drivers. And its reputation has been tarnished by recalls and manufacturing issues that have resulted in cycles of repairs.

In the U.S., the company sold fewer than 40,000 Cybertrucks in 2024—well below Musk's ultimate goal of 250,000 a year. In the first quarter of 2025, Tesla sold around 7,100 in the

U.S., according to registration data from S&P Global Mobility. Ford's F-150 Lightning pickup outsold it.

In an effort to boost sales, Tesla has rolled out lower-priced versions and started offering incentives such as 0% financing and free upgrades.

Almost as soon as the \$100,000 Cybertruck hit the

Please turn to page A7

◆ **Tesla loses Optimus robotics project head....** **B10**

Hiring Slowed Slightly In May

Unemployment rate holds steady at 4.2%, while 139,000 new jobs were added

BY TE-PING CHEN AND JUSTIN LAHART

U.S. job growth slowed slightly last month, a sign employers remained cautious about hiring amid uncertainty over tariffs and the nation's economic outlook.

The U.S. added 139,000 jobs in May, the Labor Department reported Friday, above the gain of 125,000 jobs that economists polled by The Wall Street Journal had expected to see.

The unemployment rate, which is based on a separate survey from the jobs figures, held steady at 4.2%.

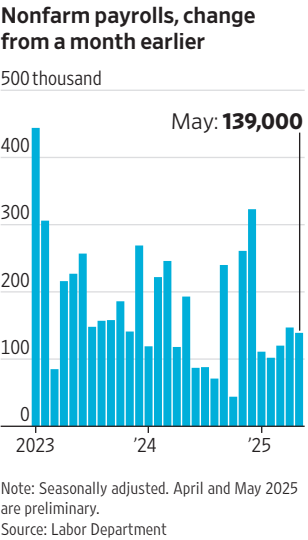
Revisions showed a job market that was much weaker earlier this year than originally thought. Employers added a combined 95,000 fewer jobs in March and April than previously estimated. The revised April jobs number was 147,000, down from the 177,000 reported a month ago.

Stocks jumped in early trading and stayed in the green throughout the day.

"The market is happy it's not worse, given everything we're dealing with in terms of uncertainty and tariffs," said Priya Misra, a portfolio manager at J.P. Morgan Asset Management. "The job market is the linchpin of the economy, and it still looks like it's chugging along—at a slower pace, but that's OK."

Multiple data points over the past week had many investors bracing for a weaker Friday report. Among them: A monthly survey from Challenger, Gray & Christmas showed that job cuts were up

Please turn to page A2



◆ **The Trump** administration has brought a man wrongly deported to El Salvador back to the U.S., where he faces federal criminal charges of unlawfully transporting unauthorized immigrants. **A3**

◆ **Russia launched** a missile-and-drone attack on Ukraine overnight into Friday, killing at least three people in Kyiv and partially shutting down its metro system. **A8**

◆ **The Trump** administration is trying to get Lindsey Graham to weaken his Russia-sanctions bill while the White House seeks to patch up its relationship with Moscow. **A8**

◆ **The Supreme Court** cleared the way for members of DOGE to access sensitive Social Security Administration records. **A2**

◆ **Five members of the** Proud Boys, once convicted of masterminding the Jan. 6, 2021, breach of the U.S. Capitol, are accusing the federal government and FBI employees of violating their rights in a new lawsuit. **A3**

◆ **Trump is expected** to sign an executive order staving off enforcement of a law banning or forcing the sale of TikTok as a deadline nears. **A4**

◆ **A federal judge** approved a \$2.6 billion settlement for college athletes that upends a century-old tenet of college sports—the notion that schools cannot pay the athletes that play for them. **A3**

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Republican sleaze, Democratic slump **A13**

CONTENTS	Obituaries..... C6
Books..... C7-12	Opinion..... A11-13
Business & Finance B9	Sports..... A14
Design & Decor D6-7	Style & Fashion D2-4
Food..... D8-9	Travel..... D10
Hoard on Street B12	U.S. News..... A2-7
Markets..... B11	World News..... A8-9



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Scientists Can't Stop Watching Seagulls Steal Your Food

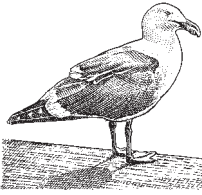
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Birds' complex and evolving eating habits are a source of fascination and bewilderment

BY NATASHA DANGOOR

A peaceful lunch on the British coast often comes with a crucial caveat: Mind the gulls!

These seaside snack thieves reign as undisputed champions of opportunistic dining. As Lorna Forbes went to take a bite out of her steak bake in Swansea, a seagull swooped in and snatched it from her hands. "I didn't even get a bite," the 38-year-old health-care assistant said.



When pigs fly

Gulls' cast-iron stomachs are capable of processing almost anything that fits within their beaks: burgers, bread, ice cream and even the regurgitated remnants of Saturday night's excesses.

The gulls' philosophy? Food is food. And unlike us delicate humans, gulls don't get sick. "Who do you think clears up after Glastonbury?" Peter Rock, a Bristol-based expert in urban gulls, said of the music festival.

Some scientists are fasci

Please turn to page A7

EXCHANGE



BOOM

Inside the effort to build the next Concorde **B1**

Pentagon Fueled UFO Mythology, Then Tried Coverup

Military let rumors fester—and sometimes promoted them

BY JOEL SCHECTMAN AND ARUNA VISWANATHA

A tiny Pentagon office had spent months investigating conspiracy theories about secret Washington UFO programs when it uncovered a shocking truth: At least one of those theories had been fueled by the Pentagon itself.

The congressionally ordered probe took investigators back to the 1980s, when

an Air Force colonel visited a bar near Area 51, a top-secret site in the Nevada desert. He gave the owner photos of what might be flying saucers. The photos went up on the walls, and into the local lore went the idea that the U.S. military was secretly testing recovered alien technology.

But the colonel was on a mission—of disinformation. The photos were doctored,

Please turn to page A10

FROM PAGE ONE



Investigator Sean Kirkpatrick, above; UFO kitsch abounds near Hiko, Nev., outside Area 51, right; an F-117 Nighthawk flies near Edwards Air Force Base, Calif., below right.

Pentagon Fueled UFO Myths

Continued from Page One

the now-retired officer confessed to the Pentagon investigators in 2023. The whole exercise was a ruse to protect what was really going on at Area 51: The Air Force was using the site to develop top-secret stealth fighters, viewed as a critical edge against the Soviet Union. Military leaders were worried that the programs might get exposed if locals somehow glimpsed a test flight of, for example, the F-117 stealth fighter, an aircraft that truly did look out of this world. Better that they believe it was a UFO.

This episode, reported now for the first time, was just one of a series of discoveries the Pentagon team made as it investigated decades of claims that Washington was hiding what it knew about extraterrestrial life. That effort culminated in a report, released last year by the Defense Department, that found claims of a government coverup to be baseless.

In fact, a Wall Street Journal investigation reveals, the report itself amounted to a coverup—but not in the way the UFO conspiracy industry would have people believe. The public disclosure left out the truth behind some of the foundational myths about UFOs: The Pentagon itself sometimes deliberately fanned the flames, in what amounted to the U.S. government targeting its own citizens with disinformation.

At the same time, an opaque bureaucracy that kept secret programs embedded within secret programs, cloaked in cover stories, created fertile ground for the myths to spread.

These findings represent a stunning new twist in the story of America’s cultural obsession with UFOs. In the decades after a 1938 radio broadcast of H.G. Wells’ “The War of the Worlds” spread panic throughout the country, speculation about alien visitors remained largely the province of supermarket tabloids, Hollywood blockbusters and costumed conferences in Las Vegas.

More recently, things took an ominous turn when a handful of former Pentagon officials went public with allegations of a government program to exploit extraterrestrial technology and hide it from Americans. Those claims led to the Pentagon’s investigation.

Now, evidence is emerging that government efforts to propagate UFO mythology date back all the way to the 1950s.

This account is based on interviews with two dozen current and former U.S. officials, scientists and military contractors involved in the inquiry, as well as thousands of pages of documents, recordings, emails and text messages.

At times, as with the deception around Area 51, military officers spread false documents to create a smokescreen for real secret-weapons programs. In other cases, officials allowed UFO myths to take root in the interest of national security—for instance, to prevent the Soviet Union from detecting vulnerabilities in the systems protecting nuclear installations. Stories tended to take on a life of their own, such as the three-decade journey of a purported piece of space metal that turned out to be nothing of the sort. And one long-run-

ning practice was more like a fraternity hazing ritual that spun wildly out of control.

Investigators are still trying to determine whether the spread of disinformation was the act of local commanders and officers or a more centralized, institutional program.

The Pentagon omitted key facts in the public version of the 2024 report that could have helped put some UFO rumors to rest, both to protect classified secrets and to avoid embarrassment, the Journal investigation found. The Air Force in particular pushed to omit some details it believed could jeopardize secret programs and damage careers.

The lack of full transparency has only given more fuel to conspiracy theories. Members of Congress have formed a caucus, composed mainly of Republicans, to examine unidentified anomalous phenomena, or UAP, in bureaucratic speak. The caucus has demanded the intelligence community disclose which agencies “are involved with UAP crash retrieval programs.”

‘Stupid enough’

Sean Kirkpatrick, a precise, bespectacled scientist who once spent years studying vibrations in laser crystals, was nearing retirement from government service when he received the call that would change his life.

By 2022 he had ascended to chief scientist at the Missile and Space Intelligence Center at the Redstone Arsenal near Huntsville, Ala. As he sat at his desk at 6:30 one morning, drinking coffee and skimming through intelligence reports that had come in overnight, his Tandberg desk phone—essentially a classified version of FaceTime—rang.

It was a deputy undersecretary from the Pentagon, who was putting on a tie as he told Kirkpatrick about a new office Congress ordered the department to set up to examine unidentified anomalous phenomena. “The undersecretary and I put together a shortlist of who could do it, and you’re at the top,” the official relayed, adding that they had settled on Kirkpatrick because he both had a scientific background and had built a half-dozen organizations within the intelligence community.

Is that the real reason, Kirkpatrick countered, “or am I the only one stupid enough to say, ‘yes?’”

In short order, Kirkpatrick had the All-domain Anomaly Resolution Office up and running. Just the latest in an alphabet soup of special government projects set up to study UFOs stretching back more



than half a century, AARO, as it is known, operated out of an unmarked office near the Pentagon, with a few dozen staffers and a classified budget.

The mission fell into two buckets. One was to collect data on sightings, particularly around military installations, and assess whether they could be explained by earthly technology. AARO linked most of the incidents to balloons, birds and the proliferation of

‘These men signed NDAs. They thought it was real,’ an official said.

drones cluttering the skies. Many pilot accounts of floating orbs were actually reflections of the sun from Starlink satellites, investigators found. They are still examining whether some unexplained events could be foreign technology, such as Chinese aircraft using next-generation cloaking methods that distorts their appearance.

The office’s second mission proved to be more peculiar: to review the historical record going back to 1945 to assess the claims made by dozens of former military employees that Washington operated a secret program that had harvested alien technology. Congress granted the office unprecedented access to America’s most highly classified programs to allow Kirkpatrick’s team to run the stories to ground.

As Kirkpatrick pursued his investigation, he started to uncover a hall of mirrors within the Pentagon, cloaked in official and unofficial cover. On one level, the secrecy was understandable. The U.S., after all, had been locked in an existential battle with the Soviet Union for decades, each side determined to win the upper hand in the race for ever-more-exotic weapons.

But Kirkpatrick soon discovered that some of the obsession with secrecy verged on the farcical. A former Air Force officer was visibly terrified when he told Kirkpatrick’s investigators that he had been briefed on a secret alien project decades earlier, and was warned that if he ever repeated the secret he could be jailed or executed. The claim would be repeated to investigators by other men who had never spoken of the matter, even with their spouses.

It turned out the witnesses had been victims of a bizarre hazing ritual.

For decades, certain new commanders of the Air Force’s most classified programs, as part of their induction briefings, would be handed a piece of paper with a photo of what looked like a flying saucer. The craft was described as an anti-gravity maneuvering vehicle. The officers were told that the program they were joining, dubbed Yankee Blue, was part of an effort to reverse-engineer the technology on

the craft. They were told never to mention it again. Kirkpatrick found the practice had begun decades before, and appeared to still continue. The defense secretary’s office sent a memo out across the service in 2023 ordering the practice to stop immediately, but the damage was done.

Investigators are still trying to determine why officers had misled subordinates, whether as some type of loyalty test, a more deliberate attempt to deceive or something else.

After that 2023 discovery, Kirkpatrick’s deputy briefed President Joe Biden’s director of national intelligence, Avril Haines, who was stunned.

Could this be the basis for the persistent belief that the U.S. has an alien program that we’ve concealed from the American people? Haines asked, according to people familiar with the matter. How extensive was it? she wanted to know.

The official responded: “Ma’am, we know it went on for decades. We are talking about hundreds and hundreds of people. These men signed NDA’s. They thought it was real.”

The finding could have been devastating to the Air Force. The service was particularly sensitive to the allegations of hazing and asked that AARO hold off on including the finding in the public report, even after Kirkpatrick had briefed lawmakers on the episode. Kirkpatrick retired before that report was finished and released.

In a statement, a Defense Department spokeswoman acknowledged that AARO had uncovered evidence of fake classified program materials relating to extraterrestrials, and had briefed lawmakers

and intelligence officials. The spokeswoman, Sue Gough, said the department didn’t include that information in its report last year because the investigation into it wasn’t completed, but expects to provide it in another report scheduled for later this year.

“The department is committed to releasing a second volume of its Historical Record Report, to include AARO’s findings on reports of potential pranks and inauthentic materials,” Gough said.

Montana bunker

Kirkpatrick investigated another mystery that stretched back 60 years.

In 1967, Robert Salas, now 84, was an Air Force captain sitting in a walk-in closet-sized bunker, manning the controls of 10 nuclear missiles in Montana.

He was prepared to launch apocalyptic strikes should Soviet Russia ever attack first, and got a call around 8 p.m. one night from the guard station above. A glowing reddish-orange oval was hovering over the front gate, Salas told Kirkpatrick’s investigators. The guards had their rifles drawn, pointed at the oval object appearing to float above the gate. A horn sounded in the bunker, signaling a problem with the missile-control system: All 10 missiles were disabled.

The next morning a helicopter was waiting to take Salas back to base. Once there he was ordered: Never discuss the incident.

Kirkpatrick’s team dug into the story and discovered a terrestrial explanation. The barriers of concrete and steel surrounding America’s nuclear missiles were thick enough to give them a chance if hit first by a Soviet strike. But scientists feared the intense storm of electromagnetic waves generated by a nuclear detonation might render the hardware needed to launch a counter strike unusable.

To test this vulnerability, the Air Force developed an exotic electromagnetic generator that simulated this pulse of disruptive energy without the need to detonate a nuclear weapon.

When activated, this device, placed on a portable platform 60 feet above the facility, would gather power until it glowed, sometimes with a blinding orange light. It would then fire a burst of energy that could resemble lightning.

To this day Salas believes he was party to an intergalactic intervention to stop nuclear war which the government has tried to hide. He is half right. The experience left the octogenarian deeply skeptical of the U.S. military and its ability to tell the truth. “There is a gigantic coverup, not only by the Air Force, but every other federal agency that has cognizance of this subject,” he said in an interview with the Journal. “We were never briefed on the activities that were going on, the Air Force shut us out of any information.”



Robert Salas, left, experienced a mysterious incident while working at a nuclear launch site in 1967; above, a guard near Area 51 in 2019.

This is the first in a two-part series.