



Risk Mitigation Consulting Inc.

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INTENT

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Threats

Alleged Neo-Nazi Recruiter Investigated and Expelled from Navy – *Insider Threat*

Excerpt: The U.S. Navy has tossed out a man suspected of recruiting for the Atomwaffen Division, a neo-Nazi terrorist network that has been connected to numerous murders and planned terrorist attacks.

Until Friday, David Cole Tarkington served as a naval aviation machinist mate's apprentice with Strike Fighter Squadron VFA-41 ("Black Aces") in Lemoore, California. Enlisting in July 2019, he worked on aircraft engines, propellers and other technical duties.

However, a March 12 investigative feature published by the science and technology publication Gizmodo identified Tarkington as a "prolific Atomwaffen recruiter who is now a sailor in the U.S. Navy." Tarkington allegedly tried to recruit 12 other users into Atomwaffen using Iron March, a white supremacist forum that went defunct in 2017. He posted 224 messages and 377 posts on the site.

Analyst Comment: Atomwaffen Division was formed in 2015, announcing its existence on the Iron March forum. Initial posts by the group described it as a "very fanatical, ideological band of comrades who do both activism and militant training. Hand to hand, arms training, and various other forms of training." Atomwaffen advocates attacks on the federal government of the United States, minorities, gays, and Jews and is seen burning the United States Constitution and flag in its propaganda videos. The organization's aim is to violently overthrow the federal government of the United States via terrorism and guerrilla warfare tactics. The group's membership is mostly young, and it has also recruited new members on university campuses. Atomwaffen Division has recruited several veterans and current members of the U.S. Armed Forces who train the organization's members in the use of firearms and military tactics.

Members of the Atomwaffen Division have been held responsible for several murders, planned terrorist attacks, as well as other criminal actions. Since 2017, the organization has been linked to eight killings and several violent hate crimes, including assaults, rapes and multiple cases of kidnapping and torture. Atomwaffen Division has engaged in several mass murder plots, plans to cripple public water systems, and destroy parts of the U.S. power transmission grid. Atomwaffen has also been accused of planning to blow up nuclear plants to cause nuclear meltdowns.

Though Iron March was shut in 2017, the site's archives were leaked on the Internet Archive last year by an anonymous individual. The leak included every registered user's email address. Tarkington's email address was used to locate his Skype and social media profiles.

Though Atomwaffen seeks to overthrow the federal government of the United States, there is a long history of violent extremist organizations utilizing members of the U.S. Armed Forces as potential insider threats, recruiters, and trainers for the organization.



Source: <https://www.newsweek.com/navy-kicks-out-alleged-recruiter-neo-nazi-group-atomwaffen-division-after-investigation-1498704>

Arkansas Professor Arrested for Failing to Disclose China Ties – *Insider Threat*

Excerpt: A University of Arkansas engineering professor was charged with wire fraud for failing to disclose his close ties to the Chinese government and businesses while trying to secure federal grants from NASA, the Justice Department said Monday.

Simon Saw-Teong Ang, 63, of Fayetteville, received more than \$5 million in federal funding for research projects but violated university policy in failing to reveal his ties to Beijing. The alleged deception resulted in wire transfers being sent from NASA to the school based on his alleged fraudulent misrepresentations.

The investigation into Ang began when a library employee found an email between Ang and a Chinese researcher, the Arkansas Times reported.

"You can search the Chinese website regarding what the US will do to Thousand Talent Scholars," Ang reportedly wrote in an email. "Not many people here know I am one of them but if this leaks out, my job here will be in deep troubles."

Analyst Comment: Ang was not charged with any espionage-related charges, rather, he was charged with wire fraud for obtaining federal research funding while obscuring his apparent ties to China. Per open source media reporting, Ang's emails to Chinese colleagues were discovered after a university employee was attempting to identify the owner of a hard drive left at a lost-and-found station. Still, his allusion to the Thousand Talents program suggests potential ties to China's espionage efforts. The Thousand Talents program is a Chinese government initiative that seeks to recruit academic talent from other countries. In June 2018, a U.S. official from the Office of the Director of National Intelligence stated that programs such as Thousand Talents "facilitate the transfer of foreign technology, intellectual property and know-how to advance China's science, technology and military modernization goals."

Ang was a longtime professor of electrical engineering who performed federally funded research for government agencies to include NASA. The research he generated would certainly be appealing to foreign intelligence entities seeking military modernization, to include China.

Source: <https://www.foxnews.com/us/arkansas-professor-allegedly-hid-china-ties-to-secure-nasa-grant-money>



Trolls and Bots are Flooding Social Media with Disinformation Encouraging States to End Lockdowns – *Cyber*

Excerpt: Videos of protesters around the nation demanding their governors reopen businesses have been all over social media over the past week or so, and Donald Trump has offered pseudo-encouragement by tweeting that they need to "liberate" states like Michigan, Minnesota, and Virginia. The same rhetoric that is being used at these protests has been spreading like wildfire on social media as bots and trolls attempt to use disinformation to get states to reopen.

Christopher Bouzy, the founder of bot tracking platform Bot Sentinel, conducted a Twitter analysis for Business Insider and found bots and trolls are using hashtags like #ReOpenNC, #ReopenAmericaNow, #StopTheMadness, #ENDTHESHUTDOWN, and #OperationGridlock to spread disinformation. According to Bouzy, the bots and trolls are spreading conspiracy theories about Democrats wanting to hurt the economy to make Trump look bad, Democrats trying to take away people's civil liberties, and Democrats trying to prevent people from voting. The accounts are also using false data to underplay the threat of the coronavirus.

Analyst Comment: The accessibility of the Internet and social media platforms such as Twitter make it easy for trolls and bots to spread disinformation. These are sometimes state-sponsored actors. China, Russia, and North Korea are known to use social media to incite anger and unrest. Prior to this, the most recent and well-known campaign was conducted by Russia, which spread disinformation to destabilize the country and undermine the election campaign of former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton. Still, some users may disagree with the lockdowns, citing the damage done to the economy. They may unwittingly support home grown or state-sponsored actors fomenting unrest.

As private entities, social media platforms have struggled to balance free speech with their concerns regarding disinformation, threats, harassment, and mischief. However, major platforms have committed to policing bots and trolls. The amount of traffic on the internet forces the companies to use algorithms and machine learning to flag accounts and posts. This tactic may, unfortunately, penalize some users with unpopular opinions. The conversation about the effectiveness of a countrywide quarantine is ongoing. State-sponsored trolls, bots, and other agents of disinformation continue to complicate the issue by using the internet to elevate tensions and stoke arguments.

Source: <https://www.businessinsider.com/trolls-bots-flooding-social-media-with-anti-quarantine-disinformation-2020-4>

Iran-Linked Hackers Target U.S. Pharmaceutical Firm Gilead – *Cyber*

Excerpt: Hackers linked to Iran have targeted staff at U.S. drugmaker Gilead Sciences Inc in recent weeks, according to publicly-available web archives reviewed by Reuters and three cybersecurity researchers, as the company races to deploy a treatment for the COVID-19 virus.



In one case, a fake email login page designed to steal passwords was sent in April to a top Gilead executive involved in legal and corporate affairs, according to an archived version on a website used to scan for malicious web addresses. Reuters was not able to determine whether the attack was successful.

Ohad Zaidenberg, lead intelligence researcher at Israeli cybersecurity firm ClearSky, who closely tracks Iranian hacking activity and has investigated the attacks, said the attempt was part of an effort by an Iranian group to compromise email accounts of staff at the company using messages that impersonated journalists.

Two other cybersecurity researchers, who were not authorized to speak publicly about their analysis, confirmed that the web domains and hosting servers used in the hacking attempts were linked to Iran.

Analyst Comment: Iran has been extremely hard-hit by the global COVID-19 pandemic, with outside estimates of cases and deaths reportedly much higher than official government reporting. Therefore, it is extremely likely that Iran's recent targeting of Gilead (an American pharmaceutical firm) is an attempt to combat the viral outbreak. Gilead manufactures the antiviral drug Remdesivir, which has shown potential to treat COVID-19 patients.

Per the available reporting, there was at least one instance in which a phishing email (designed to steal login credentials) was sent to a Gilead legal/corporate affairs executive, which could indicate a "spear phishing" approach. Spear phishing is similar to phishing, although it takes a more targeted approach toward particular individuals, rather than a broader approach. Spear phishing attacks are often personalized in order to increase the chances of a successful compromise.

Similarly, the U.S. has accused China of launching a cyber campaign to steal research and information related to COVID-19 treatment from healthcare, pharmaceutical, research, and academic institutions.

Source: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-healthcare-coronavirus-gilead-iran-ex-idUSKBN22K2EV>

Shooting in Georgia Generates Protests Amidst Pandemic – Civil Disturbance

Excerpt: Georgia's attorney general on Sunday [10 May] asked the U.S. Department of Justice to investigate the handling of the killing of Ahmaud Arbery, a black man who authorities say died at the hands of two white men as he ran through a neighborhood.

Arbery was shot and killed Feb. 23. No arrests were made until this month after national outrage over the case swelled when video surfaced that appeared to show the shooting. Shortly after the video's leak, Gregory McMichael, 64, and his son Travis McMichael, 34, were arrested and charged with murder and aggravated assault. The arrests came hours after officials asked the GBI to start investigating. The inquiry was previously in the hands of local officials.



The social justice arm of Jay-Z's Roc Nation entertainment company on Sunday called on Georgia officials to take quick action in the case. Also Sunday, Georgia authorities said they had arrested a 20-year-old man after investigating an online threat against people protesting the killing of Arbery. Several hundred people had protested the case Friday in Brunswick, near the site where Arbery was fatally shot.

The GBI said state police arrested Rashawn Smith and charged him with dissemination of information relating to terroristic acts. He was taken into custody in Midway, a town about 50 miles (80 kilometers) north of Brunswick. Earlier in the day, the GBI said it had "been made aware of a Facebook post that contains a threat to future protests related to Ahmaud Arbery." Investigators later said they believe the threat was a hoax.

Analyst Comment: There have been many shootings in recent years that have generated protests across the United States. The shooting of African Americans (by police or armed civilians), school shootings, and other mass shooting events have often resulted in rallies and protests centered around racism, gun control and other systemic issues. These events, while frequently held in the city the shooting occurred in, can also generate corresponding protests in other cities across the United States. Any of these protests can generate counter protests and/or civil disturbance activity.

Amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, response to the killing of Ahmaud Arbery has been unique. While protests have been held, the size of the events have been presumably reduced. Rather than participating in in-person protests, people across the county are sharing their own statements and actions in protest of the shooting and the handling of the case by local officials. Online protests are unlikely to result in civil disturbance activity. In-person protests may continue but will face the unique challenges of social distancing. The protests that have occurred thus far have encountered a false terrorist threat, but no other apparent incidents.

Source: https://www.bakersfield.com/ap/national/georgia-officials-examine-threats-to-arbery-case-protesters/article_6d08c571-d2e3-5154-99fb-323651eabd6d.html

Armed Activists Escort Black Lawmaker to Michigan's Capitol After Coronavirus Protest Attended by White Supremacists – *Civil Disturbance*

Excerpt: A Michigan lawmaker returned to the state Capitol on Wednesday with an armed security detail following a coronavirus lockdown protest at the building last week attended by white supremacists and militia groups.

Rep. Sarah Anthony, a Democrat whose district is in the capital city, Lansing, told Yahoo News in an interview that her security detail, made up of local black and Latino activists, came together because the armed protesters bearing white supremacist symbols represented a "different level of terror."



According to Anthony, the April 30 protest was different from prior coronavirus protests that have occurred at the Capitol in recent weeks because many of the demonstrators stormed inside the building and were armed. Anthony also said some of the protesters “had Confederate flags and swastikas,” which she found “extraordinarily triggering for me as an African-American woman.”

Analyst Comment: On 30 April 2020, Michigan citizens protested the continuing stay-at-home order by Gov. Gretchen Whitmer at what they called the “American Patriot Rally on Capitol Lawn.” The order was issued to mitigate the spread of COVID-19. The protestors claimed that the restrictions placed on businesses have created economic hardship. Gov. Whitmer has extended the order to 28 May in response. Protestors caused gridlocked traffic in the area. Some entered the capitol building carrying firearms and appeared to be affiliated with self-described militias. Michigan is an open-carry state. While carrying weapons is legal, many lawmakers felt intimidated and wore bulletproof vests. Some protestors waved signs comparing Gov. Whitmer to Nazi dictator Adolf Hitler. Images of the event show several different flags, including the American flag, and a small number of Confederate battle flags. Gov. Whitmer said that some protestors were carrying nooses, but photographic evidence has yet to emerge. At least one of the militia members present has ties to a far-right group with a Facebook page.

Often, protests will attract fringe elements that seek to co-opt the event for their cause. The right of individuals with distasteful beliefs to speak is protected by the First Amendment, but their presence at the protests often distracts from the larger issues in question. There is an ongoing national debate on the necessity of state lockdowns versus the cost of stagnating the economy. Arguments fall largely along existing political divisions. The Michigan State Police has stated that its officers will escort any lawmaker into the capitol. Rep. Anthony decided to use armed civilians regardless, and on a day when there were no protestors present. The presence of fringe agitators at protests will only further the potential for civil unrest. The presence of armed civilians in an ongoing conflict may escalate it past the breaking point. Another protest occurred at the capitol on 14 May.

Source: <https://news.yahoo.com/armed-activists-escort-black-lawmaker-to-michigans-capitol-after-coronavirus-protest-attended-by-white-supremacists-184000180.html>

Police Departments Utilize Drones for Coronavirus Enforcement Efforts – UAS

Excerpt: “This is the Daytona Beach Police Department. We apologize for the inconvenience, but due to COVID-19, this park is currently closed.”

So says a drone with a loud speaker attached to its top.

The coronavirus pandemic has forced police departments in the country and around the globe to fundamentally change the way they enforce laws. Police agencies are increasingly relying on these flying contraptions to do what they have not had to do before: policing while socially distancing. Over the past month, several law enforcement agencies have unveiled drones that broadcast



announcements at parks, beaches and homeless camps to enforce stay-at-home orders and social-distancing guidelines.

Analyst Comment: The increased use of UAS by local police departments during the COVID-19 pandemic reduces human-to-human contact with regards to enforcement of social distancing guidelines. However, the increased use of UAS also raises a variety of concerns. Some individuals have noted privacy concerns with regard to drones equipped with cameras/microphones. One locality in Connecticut even planned to deploy a drone with specialized sensors to measure fever, heart rate, respiratory rate, and the capability to detect coughing and sneezing, although civil liberties concerns ultimately led to the plans being abandoned. These types of initiatives could result in protest/civil disturbance activity in the future.

Moreover, the increased use of UAS could potentially result in increased UAS-related mishaps if the drones are operated improperly, to include near-misses with aircraft or other related incidents.

Separately, Chinese drone maker DJI has donated drones to at least 43 agencies in 22 states to help with COVID-19 enforcement efforts, which has sparked concerns regarding potential intelligence gathering efforts. Several observers have alleged that the Chinese government could access DJI user data, and U.S. government entities such as the U.S. Army have banned the use of DJI drones due to these security concerns.

Source: <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/2020/05/03/coronavirus-police-use-drones-enforcement-privacy-concerns/3059073001/>



Hazards

Hurricane Season Begins with High Temperatures in the Gulf of Mexico – *Meteorological Hazards*

Excerpt: Water temperatures in the Gulf of Mexico are running more than three degrees above average, increasing the prospects for severe thunderstorms and tornadoes this spring and potentially stronger hurricane activity in the summer and fall.

The last time Gulf of Mexico waters were similarly warm in 2017, it coincided with an above-average tornado season through the spring, and then Category 4 Hurricane Harvey struck the Texas Gulf Coast at the end of summer.

The balmy gulf waters have already contributed to abnormal warmth across the Deep South, where virtually the entirety of the Interstate 10 corridor through Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama and Georgia is wrapping up one of its top five warmest Marches on record. Numerous records have toppled, with some cities soaring into the 90s.

Analyst Comment: The North Atlantic hurricane season runs from the first of June to the 30th of November. Every year, springtime heat from the Gulf of Mexico collides with winter cold from the Rockies. This temperature collision creates severe storms, hail, hurricanes, and tornados.

Multiple published studies have examined the complicated link between the sea surface temperatures of the Gulf of Mexico and severe weather. In general, warmer than average Gulf of Mexico sea surface temperatures are very likely to effect weather across the central, southern, and eastern continental United States. The heat causes an increase in both atmospheric temperature and moisture. This in turn leads to pockets of warm air colliding with chillier air overhead. These collisions are likely to result in increased severe thunderstorm and tornado chances. These storms will carry more moisture, resulting in potential rainfall and flood increases.

Additionally, the warm waters in the Gulf of Mexico are likely to fuel and increase the severity of any tropical storm that forms and reaches the Gulf. The heat, however, does not increase the likelihood a storm will form. The increased sea surface temperatures can only bolster the strength of storms that reach the Gulf. The ocean heat sustains the storm, intensifies it, and increases its rainfall.

As examined in past RMC White Papers, climate change has led to an increase in sea surface temperatures across the globe. Should current trends continue, it is likely that the sea surface temperature of the Gulf of Mexico will also continue to increase. Climate change is likely to result in extreme weather events, to include hurricanes, continuing to increase in severity.



Source: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/weather/2020/03/31/gulf-of-mexico-warm-tornadoes-hurricanes/>

“Mega-Drought” in Western U.S. – *Meteorological Hazards*

Excerpt: A group of scientists now says that the American West, including California, has been in the midst of a prolonged drought since the beginning of the century — one on par with only four mega-droughts experienced over the past 1,200 years and one capable of causing major social upheaval.

“The past two decades look a lot like how the biggest mega-droughts of the past millennium developed,” said Park Williams, bioclimatologist at Columbia University’s Lamont-Doherty Earth Observatory and lead author of the study published Thursday in the journal *Science*. “These mega-droughts are not like anything we’ve seen in recent centuries. They’re viewed as mythical beasts. There’s nothing that’s come even close to them.”

The fear is that if current dry times continue, which the paper’s authors say is more likely than not, the modern era soon will be in the grip of its first mega-drought.

Analyst Comment: The researchers found that 40 prolonged droughts occurred over the 1,200-year span, four of which they identified as mega-droughts because low soil moisture and length of the dry period. These mega-drought were in the late 800s, the mid-1100s, the 1200s and the late 1500s. Comparing the moisture levels from the four mega-droughts with moisture levels during the first 19 years of this century, the current era is off to a worse start than three of four of the mega-droughts. The current dry period also is far broader geographically than any of the previous mega-droughts, stretching from Oregon east to Montana and south to California and New Mexico. The research identified rising temperatures from climate change were responsible for about 47% of the aridity today, while past dry spells were the result of the natural variability of weather.

This past rainy season in Northern California tracked on the dry side. Despite late-season storms, many areas, including San Francisco, have received 50% or less of the average rainfall. The U.S. Drought Monitor estimates that 36% of the state is currently experiencing moderate drought conditions. A mega-drought may still experience periods of significant rainfall during their run. California’s wet winter of 2016-17 was a break among an exceptionally dry couple of decades.

Though the United States can utilize dams and other technologies to boost water supplies and massive delivery systems to share water, unlike past mega-droughts, there are also more people and more demand. Big cities are poised to face water shortages, farms may be unable to plant crops, and forests will wither, increasing both susceptibility to pests and the wildfire risk.

Source: <https://www.sfchronicle.com/environment/article/California-rest-of-the-West-sinking-into-a-rare-15205514.php>



Whistleblower to Testify ‘Window of Opportunity is Closing’ to Develop Strategy to Combat Coronavirus – *Biological Hazards*

Excerpt: Rick Bright, the former head of the federal agency charged with overseeing the rapid production of a vaccine to fight the novel coronavirus, will warn of the "darkest winter in modern history" if the United States—in his words—does not develop a coordinated approach based in science to combat the virus.

“Our window of opportunity is closing. If we fail to develop a national coordinated response, based in science, I fear the pandemic will get far worse and be prolonged, causing unprecedented illness and fatalities. While it is terrifying to acknowledge the extent of the challenge that we currently confront, the undeniable fact is there will be a resurgence of the COVID-19 this fall, greatly compounding the challenges of seasonal influenza and putting an unprecedented strain on our health care system,” Bright’s opening statement to the House Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Health reads.

“Without clear planning and implementation of the steps that I and other experts have outlined, 2020 will be darkest winter in modern history,” Bright plans to say.

Analyst Comment: Rick Bright is the former director of the Department of Health and Human Services’ Biomedical Advanced Research and Development Authority. He has stated that he was demoted to a position at the National Institute of Health over his concerns regarding the use of hydroxychloroquine, an anti-malaria drug, as a treatment for COVID-19. President Trump has promoted the drug as a treatment for the virus. The FDA has authorized its temporary use in hospital settings while clinical trials are conducted. The drug can cause abnormal heart rhythms and a rapid heart rate. The side effects are too severe to manage outside of a hospital setting.

Symptoms for COVID-19 and the seasonal flu are similar. However, the rate of infection for coronavirus is much higher. The rapid spread of the virus creates the potential for the hospital system to be overwhelmed. The reduced infection rate seen nationwide is a positive development. However, deescalating mitigation strategies, (such as masks and social distancing) too soon could potentially create another outbreak. There is an ongoing debate over maintaining statewide lockdowns versus relaxing them to benefit the economy. But if there is another outbreak, infected patients will likely fill available beds within a short timeframe. While the healthcare system has expanded rapidly since the initial outbreak, a new wave of infections could force hospitals to delay, redirect, and even triage patients seeking treatment for other illnesses. Rick Bright’s warning about a resurgence accounts for the exponential spread of COVID-19 infections.

Source: <https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/whistleblower-testify-window-opportunity-closing-develop-strategy-combat/story?id=70662966>



As China Hoarded Medical Supplies, the CIA Believes it Tried to Stop the WHO from Sounding the Alarm on the Pandemic – *Biological Hazards*

Excerpt: The CIA believes China tried to prevent the World Health Organization from sounding the alarm on the coronavirus outbreak in January—a time when Beijing was stockpiling medical supplies from around the world. A CIA report, the contents of which were confirmed to Newsweek by two U.S. intelligence officials, said China threatened the WHO that the country would stop cooperating with the agency's coronavirus investigation if the organization declared a global health emergency.

It was the second such report from a Western intelligence service and is likely to further inflame tensions between the United States and China over a pandemic that has killed 280,000 people worldwide—more than a quarter of them American.

The first report, a German intelligence assessment published by Der Spiegel last week, accused Chinese President Xi Jinping of personally applying pressure on WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus on January 21.

The WHO dismissed the notion that Xi himself intervened, but declined to address specifically the question of whether Chinese officials made any effort to delay or change the announcement of a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC).

Analyst Comment: There has been controversy over China's relationship with the WHO. The organization only serves in an advisory capacity. While it can declare a PHEIC and provide advice and assistance, it has no enforcement authority. It requires the trust and respect of its member states. President Donald Trump has positioned the WHO between the United States and China in their ongoing disputes between the two countries. China first informed the WHO about the virus on 31 December. The WHO voted to declare COVID-19 a PHEIC on 30 January. China also imported a substantial amount of PPE gear between 24 January and 29 February. This left some of the exporters with insufficient supplies for their own countries' response. China has since exported some of the PPE supplies and also provided the WHO with the genetic code of the virus, which assists in the development of treatments and vaccines. The organization has also insisted that it is politically neutral. However, other experts have criticized both China's failure to alert the world quickly enough and the WHO's failure to address the country's influence.

On 14 April 2020, President Trump halted US funding to the WHO, subject to a review of the organization's response to the pandemic. This includes his accusation that the WHO engaged in a, his words, "covering up" of the initial outbreak. The results of this review are pending. In light of the most recent intelligence, the WHO's dismissal of any influence by Chinese President Xi Jinping does not alleviate allegations of the country's influence.

Source: <https://www.newsweek.com/exclusive-cia-believes-china-tried-stop-who-alarm-pandemic-1503565>



Chinese Rocket Debris Passed Over NYC, LA as it Fell to Earth – *Accidental Events*

Excerpt: A 20-ton piece of a Chinese rocket passed over New York City and Los Angeles as it crashed to the ground earlier this week, scientists tracking its descent say.

The debris, which came from a rocket that was launched in early May, is the fifth-largest piece of space junk to plunge uncontrolled through Earth's atmosphere, according to experts who track space debris and satellites. It's the largest object in nearly three decades to plunge to Earth unexpectedly, demonstrating the potential danger of such large objects making uncontrolled reentries from low-Earth orbit.

The U.S. Space Force's 18th Space Control Squadron, which tracks space junk and reentries from the Vandenberg Air Force Base in California, confirmed that the rocket stage passed through Earth's atmosphere Monday at 11:33 a.m. ET as it was flying over the Atlantic Ocean. About 15 to 20 minutes before that, the debris sailed over New York City, according to Jonathan McDowell, an astronomer at the Harvard-Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics.

Analyst Comment: Rocket launches routinely entail some degree of falling debris as "stages" of the rocket are shed from the ascending projectile. However, rocket launches typically include planning to ensure that such debris falls into the ocean or other unpopulated areas. Smaller pieces of debris also often "burn up" as they plunge through the atmosphere at high speeds. Still, larger pieces of "space junk" occasionally do crash down to earth's surface.

In the recent launch by China, the debris reportedly passed over major metropolitan areas in the U.S. during its descent, to include New York City and Los Angeles. The debris ultimately fell in areas to include West Africa, where debris including a 40-foot-long pipe was found. However, no casualties were reported. Additionally, a 20-ton piece of the rocket was tracked during its descent, making it the fifth-largest piece of space junk ever to fall to Earth.

Source: <https://www.nbcnews.com/science/space/chinese-rocket-debris-passed-over-n-y-c-l-it-n1206311>
