

WORLD IN BRIEF

Associated Press

Oregon VA hospitals, call center get low ratings

SALEM — An assessment by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs concluded that more than 12 percent of callers to its Portland call center get tired of waiting for someone to answer and hang up.

The Statesman Journal reports that many callers have waited more than three minutes to have someone answer.

The VA also gave poor grades to Oregon's three VA hospitals. The Portland facility rated only two out of five stars when it was assessed last December, while Roseburg's got two stars in June and White City's received a single star both last December and in June.

Portland's hospital says its ratings in several areas, including inpatient performance and mortality rates, were better than the national average. Roseburg and White City released statements pointing out improvements at their facilities.

Fukushima radiation detected on Oregon shores

SALEM— Researchers say seaborne radiation from Japan's Fukushima nuclear disaster has been detected on Oregon shores.

Seawater samples from Tillamook Bay and Gold Beach indicate radiation from the nuclear disaster but at extremely low levels not harmful to humans or the environment.

Citing the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution, the Statesman Journal newspaper reports the samples were taken last winter and later analyzed.

Massive amounts of contaminated water were released from the crippled Japan nuclear plant following a 9.0 magnitude earthquake and tsunami in March 2011.

Woods Hole chemical oceanographer Ken Buesseler runs a crowd-funded, citizen-science seawater sampling project that has tracked the radiation plume as it makes its way across the Pacific Ocean.

Eastern Washington lawmakers file bill to split state

SPOKANE, Wash. — Some conservative Eastern Washington lawmakers want to split the state in two, creating a new state east of the Cascade Range known as "Liberty."

The idea is contained in House Joint Memorial 400, sponsored by Republican state Reps. Matt Shea and Bob McCaslin of Spokane Valley and David Taylor of Moxee.

The Spokesman-Review says the idea of splitting from liberal Western Washington has been proposed numerous times in past decades.

Spokane City Council President Ben Stuckart calls it a terrible idea.

The Legislature can't split the state in half. The bill asks the president and Congress to do that.

Congress hasn't created a new state out of an existing state since the Civil War, when West Virginia wanted to stay with the Union and was carved out of Virginia.

South Korean president is impeached in stunning fall

SEOUL, South Korea — South Korean lawmakers today impeached President Park Geun-hye, a stunning and swift fall for the country's first female leader amid protests that drew millions into the streets in united fury.

After the vote, parliamentary officials hand-delivered formal documents to the presidential Blue House that stripped Park of her power and allowed her No. 2, Prime Minister Hwang Kyo-ahn, to assume leadership until the country's Constitutional Court rules on whether Park must permanently step down. The court has up to six months to decide.

"I'd like to say that I'm deeply sorry to the people because the nation has to experience this turmoil because of my negligence and lack of virtue at a time when our security and economy both face difficulties," Park said at a Cabinet meeting after the vote.

Once called the "Queen of Elections" for her ability to pull off wins for her party, Park has been surrounded in the Blue House in recent weeks by millions of South Koreans who have taken to the streets in protest. They are furious over what prosecutors say was collusion by Park with a longtime friend to extort money from companies and to give that confidante extraordinary sway over government decisions.

Clinton decries rise of fake news in Capitol speech

WASHINGTON — Hillary Clinton decried the rise of fake news as an "epidemic" during a speech on Capitol Hill.

Clinton addressed fake news during a speech for retiring Nevada Sen. Harry Reid at the Capitol Thursday.

Clinton warned that "it's now clear that so-called fake news can have real-world consequences," an apparent reference to an incident involving a gunman who fired multiple shots inside a Washington pizza shop that has become the target of a fake conspiracy story.

Clinton said the issue "is not about politics or partisanship. Lives are at risk. Lives of ordinary people just trying to go about their days to do their jobs, contribute to their communities."

Police: 'Urgency is there' for more widespread counter-bias training

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before a large screen and were asked to respond, as they would on their beat, to a series of videos depicting high-tension scenes from the officer's point of view: traffic stops, a domestic disturbance, investigations of suspicious people and circumstances, and a robbery in progress.

The subjects, played by actors, vary widely, representing different races, ages, socioeconomic statuses and intoxication levels. Some carry guns or knives and pose different dangers to the officers.

And the officers had to decide whether to fire their weapon. A laser sensor in the Glock pinpoints the target.

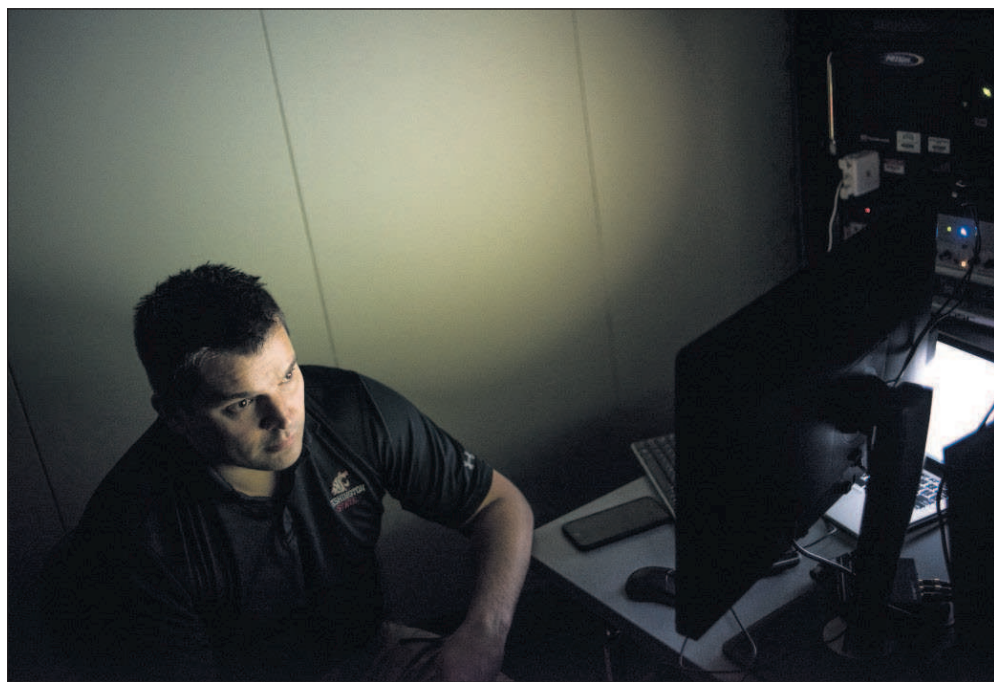
Afterward, in a debriefing, the officers reflected on how unintended biases may have guided their conduct.

"What they're looking for are those biases that affect us that we're not aware of," Johnston said, adding that, if a bias is identified, the goal is "owning it, understanding it and then changing your behavior based on it."

Every human being carries around some implicit biases, he said.

"It may not be towards race; it may be towards people with beards," he said. "But all of us prejudge people in different ways. And it's part of how we are wired as people. The key is not making it affect our behavior negatively."

Ideally, an officer is able to defend his or her decision to use deadly force solely in terms of "pre-assault indicators": furtive glances, a refusal to follow commands, tapping bulges in clothing that could be a concealed weapon, and other cues that suggest violence is imminent.



Danny Miller/The Daily Astorian

Washington State University researcher Stephen James runs training simulations with Astoria and Warrenton police officers Wednesday at the Astoria Police Department.

'Practical and tactical'

The simulation has much in common with the MILO (Multiple Interactive Learning Objectives) use-of-force training, another "shoot/don't shoot" exercise.

Lois James developed the Counter Bias Training Simulation after about nine years of experimental research on deadly force encounters, and based it on 30 years of data collected on officer-involved shootings in the U.S. Steven James manages the university's Simulated Hazardous Operational Tasks Laboratory in Spokane.

"We strongly believe, and it's our philosophy, that the act of sitting around and talking about bias is likely to do next to nothing," Lois James said. "What's important is — if any biases are influencing behavior — is addressing them in a very practical and tactical way."

Not every officer's behavior is shaped by

implicit bias, she said.

But, she told the officers, "if implicit biases are starting to creep in, and you start to notice, 'Hey, I responded to this guy a little bit differently because of the way he was dressed, or because of this or the other,' it just comes up as a talking point. We address it and move on."

Participants also got to observe the simulations as a bystander and offer feedback to their fellow officers, a task that helped them analyze the scenarios from a more dispassionate standpoint.

Astoria Detective Thomas Litwin, who underwent the simulation and served as a trainer, said, "It seems like it's going fast when you're right there in it. But when you're sitting there on the sidelines, it's a little slower, 'cause it's not you having to deal with the information at hand."

Though the simulation training focuses exclusively on use-of-force situations, the les-

sons learned can improve an officer's performance in other areas of the job, Johnston said.

Heightened sensitivity

The new tool comes during a time of heightened sensitivity and increased public discussion surrounding police shootings, particularly cases where some people believe racial bias may have played a role.

Johnston said that agencies such as the state's Department of Public Safety Standards and Training are invested in this kind of counter-bias training, and are "trying to make sure that these issues of procedural justice and police legitimacy are fully rounded, and not just words we're saying but skills we're developing."

"So I think the urgency is there to make this (counter-bias training) more accessible," he continued.

Asked if this training will become widespread, Johnston said, "I would hope so."

Armory: Delays unfortunate, not surprising

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received a \$90,000 loan for window improvements, guaranteed by the city.

Oil tanks, asbestos

Jones said Dan Stein, another Armory board member, in November discovered an abandoned oil tank buried in the lawn on the north side of the Armory. The Friends hired 3 Kings Environmental Inc., a state Department of Environmental Quality-certified contractor, to clean and decommission the 2,000-gallon tank, which showed no evidence of leaking.

While preparing to remodel the Armory and install new plumbing, Jones said, he descended through a 2-by-2-foot hatch into a cellar under the concession stand Tuesday, where he found another abandoned heating oil tank.

"We located the tank's sounding pipe under a small panel in the floor of the concession area, and determined that the tank contains approximately 20 inches of thick black oil," Jones said. "After consulting with Craft3, I immediately contacted 3 Kings Environmental, who is arranging to come test the soil and decommission the



Robyn Kous-tik, director of the Astoria Armory, left, works with volunteers from the U.S. Coast Guard, Bogh Electric, and JP Plumbing who are helping to remodel the lobby space in the Armory on Thursday.

Danny Miller/The Daily Astorian

tank in accordance with DEQ regulations."

An unused boiler room in the basement of the Armory contains the building's original boiler, which Jones said has been inactive for at least a few decades. The boiler and piping were encased in asbestos, which Jones said the Friends hired IRS Environ-

mental to remove early last month.

Jones, who was elected to the City Council in November, said that while the delays are unfortunate, they're not surprising given the building's age and use as a military facility. He compared the potential of the Armory to North Tongue Point, a former U.S.

Navy and U.S. Coast Guard base with past pollution issues passed from the military to the Port of Astoria, which leases the industrial facility.

The Friends "and Craft3 will remediate them properly to ensure that the Armory will be a vibrant source of community activities for many years to come," he said.

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