

Researchers fret as info lags on pot effects on older adults

By KRISTEN WYATT
Associated Press

DENVER — Surveys show a small but growing number of older adults are using marijuana — a trend that worries researchers who say not enough information exists about how pot affects older users.

Abundant research has been done on how the drug impacts developing brains, but little is known about the potential consequences on older users — even as recreation pot has been legalized in a number of states.

Researchers at New York University say pot could pose health challenges to older users ranging from memory loss to risk of falling.

The researchers reviewed data from the National Survey on Drug Use and Health and found a big increase in adults over 50 reporting they had used pot in the past year.

About 2.8 percent of those surveyed said they had used pot a decade ago. Six years later in 2013, the rate was about 4.8 percent — a 71 percent jump.

“Historically older people haven’t had high rates of substance use, but this is changing,” said Dr. Benjamin Han, a geriatrician at NYU who led the study published this week in the journal *Addiction*. “As baby boomers age, we’re going to see more and more of this.”

Older adults are still much less likely than younger people to use pot. In the 2013 survey, about 19 percent of people 18 to 25 reported using marijuana in the previous month.

Doctors have little to go on when treating older people who use pot, Han said.

“When it comes to, for instance, alcohol, there have been a lot of studies about effects on older populations, guidelines on how much older people should be consuming,” Han said. “But when it comes to marijuana, we have nothing.”

The study drew no conclusions about whether older pot users are using the drug as medicine or for fun.

U.S. Surgeon General Dr. Vivek Murthy said last year that marijuana can be helpful for treating certain ailments, but he added that medical marijuana research is preliminary and he called for more research.

Federal drug law considers marijuana a drug with no medical use.

Marijuana legalization debates center on the drug’s consequences for kids, perhaps leaving adults to think there’s no downside to using it.

“Before the liberalization of marijuana policy, lots of young people used marijuana and then as they got jobs and kids and mortgages, they stopped,” said Jonathan Caulkins, a professor of public policy at Carnegie-Mellon University who was not involved in the NYU study.

“It seems that as the social stigmatization has decreased, more users are continuing into adulthood.”

Refrigerator potential source of deadly fire

OAKLAND, Calif. (AP) — The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives says it is looking at the possibility that a refrigerator or other appliance was the source of a warehouse fire that killed 36 people.

Jill Snyder, the special agent in charge of the ATF’s San Francisco office, said it’s too early to say for sure a refrigerator caused the blaze, but she said it was a potential source of ignition. Snyder said investigators are looking at anything electrical on the first floor of the warehouse near where the fire started.

The fire broke out during a dance party Friday night. Crews have searched 90 percent of the building for bodies. Sheriff’s officials said they don’t think additional bodies will be found.

Associated Press Q&A

Trump and Air Force One



AP Photo/Jose Luis Magana

In this Nov. 6, 2016 file photo, military personnel salute as Air Force One, with President Barack Obama aboard, departs at Andrews Air Force Base, Md. President-elect Donald Trump wants the government’s contract for a new Air Force One canceled.

President-elect threatens to cancel \$4B order for new Boeing planes

By DARLENE SUPERVILLE
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President-elect Donald Trump suggested Tuesday that he would cancel Boeing’s contract to build a new fleet of presidential aircraft to replace the aging models that shuttle the president around the world. He cited “out of control” costs of more than \$4 billion in a tweet that ended with “Cancel order!”

The New York businessman, who flies on his own Boeing plane, later told reporters the cost to the government was “ridiculous,” though he appeared to be citing more than just the bare acquisition costs. Trump said he wanted the aircraft manufacturer to make money, “but not that much.”

Here’s a look at Trump’s claims about Air Force One, one of the most recognized symbols of the American presidency.

How much will the project cost? The Government Accountability Office, the government’s auditing arm, in March of this year estimated total program costs at more than \$3.2 billion, much of it for research and development, through the 2020 federal budget year. Separately, Defense Department and Air Force officials put the cost for two new aircraft at around Trump’s figure of \$4 billion. That estimate includes the cost of research and development, construction and future maintenance, according to the officials who were not authorized to comment publicly about the sensitive military project and spoke on condition of anonymity.

Why does the government want new planes? Doesn’t the current Air Force One work just fine? That’s true, but the two modified Boeing 747s the president uses for the bulk of his travels are getting older and breaking down more often, officials say. They were built in the 1980s and began flying in the early 1990s. One flew President Barack Obama to MacDill Air Force in Tampa, Florida, on Tuesday.

The distinctive blue-and-white plane with the U.S. flag on its tail and the presidential

Money for Trump Tower security part of stopgap spending bill

WASHINGTON (AP) — Lawmakers are tacking on money for security around Trump Tower in New York and funds for health care for retired coal miners to a stopgap spending bill that would avoid a government shutdown at week’s end.

The temporary budget bill is scheduled to be unveiled Tuesday. It would keep federal agencies functioning into next spring, giving the new Congress and incoming president Donald Trump time to approve more than \$1 trillion to fund federal agencies through the current government budget year, which ends Sept. 30.

Current spending expires at midnight Friday. Since the measure is the only must-do bill before Congress adjourns, it’s likely to carry several add-ons, including flood relief, money for overseas military operations and help for Flint, Michigan, to fix its lead-tainted water system.

Democrats like House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi of California swung against a proposal to help speed a congressional waiver required next year to confirm retired Gen. James Mattis as secretary of defense, who would otherwise be ineligible to serve

because of a law that requires a seven-year wait for former members of the military to serve as secretary of defense.

“Brushing aside the law that enshrines civilian control of the military — without discussion, in a massive must-pass funding bill — would set a terrible precedent,” Pelosi said.

One major dispute centered on protecting health care benefits for about 16,000 retired coal miners facing the loss of coverage on Dec. 31.

The measure had divided coal-state Republicans. Several supported longer-term legislation tackling the loss of health care, but GOP leaders — including Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell of Kentucky — were wary of bailing out unionized workers.

McConnell said Tuesday that the temporary health care help for miners would be part of the spending bill, though Sen. Joe Manchin, D-W.Va., protested that McConnell’s fix would only last for a few months vowed to push for a permanent solution.

Manchin vowed to block any Senate effort to move quickly on unrelated legislation until the miners’ fight was settled.



Trump

seal on its belly is basically a flying office for the president, complete with sophisticated communications, military and other capabilities. Safety of the president is paramount, and the government started the process to replace the aging aircraft with younger versions that incorporate updated capabilities and technological advances.

Air Force One is unlike most aircraft. It can be refueled in the air and, with an unlimited range,

can take the president wherever he needs to go. Its electrical systems are hardened to protect against an electromagnetic pulse, and the plane has advanced, secure communications equipment that will allow it to function as mobile command center in the event of an attack on the United States, according to the White House.

The president and most of those who fly with him enjoy 4,000 square feet of floor space

on three levels, including a suite for the president with an office and a conference room. A medical suite can function as an operating room in an emergency, and a doctor is always on board. The plane has quarters for those who regularly accompany the president on trips, including White House staff, Secret Service agents, traveling journalists and other guests.

What is Boeing’s role? The Air Force has spent about \$170 million on three contracts to begin to identify the types of military and specialized systems that would have to be added to a commercial plane to adapt it for use by the president. Boeing has that contract, and also would build the replacement Air Force One.

Under the deal, the Air Force would buy the 747-8 aircraft, a newer version of those currently in use as Air Force One. The new aircraft wouldn’t be ready until around 2023 or 2024, the end of Trump’s second term, should he seek and win re-election.

In a statement, Boeing said it looks forward to working with the Air Force “to deliver the best planes for the president at the best value for the American taxpayer.”

Could Trump ask another company to build the new aircraft? It’s unclear. Trump did not elaborate, either on Twitter or during a brief appearance before reporters Tuesday. Presidents have flown on Boeing aircraft for more than seven decades and the Chicago-based company is the only American maker of these types of planes. Its closest rival would be French aircraft manufacturer Airbus.

Didn’t Obama cancel the contract for a new presidential helicopter? White House press secretary Josh Earnest said Obama didn’t scrap the project entirely, but ordered the military to restart it to bring the cost projections under control. The Marine One project was further along in the process than the Air Force One upgrade, and with costs much greater than originally expected.

Can Trump cancel the project? Yes, but not before he is sworn in to office on Jan. 20.

Critics worry after Trump security chief fuels conspiracies

By STEVE PEOPLES
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — On issues of national security and intelligence, no one is likely to have more influence in Donald Trump’s White House than retired Gen. Michael T. Flynn.

Yet Flynn, Trump’s incoming national security adviser, has gained prominence in Republican politics by fueling conspiracy theories and Islamophobic rhetoric that critics warn could create serious distractions — or alienate allies and embolden enemies — if it continues.

“His job is to ensure that the White House is focused at all times on all of the threats that the United States faces abroad,” said Julianne Smith, a former deputy national security adviser to Vice President



AP Photo/Andrew Harnik

Michael Flynn, President-elect Donald Trump’s nominee for National Security adviser takes a selfie with Sukhwinder Sangha of Vancouver, Canada, left, at Trump Tower, Monday in New York.

Joe Biden. She said she was “deeply troubled” by a Flynn tendency to promote fake news stories on his Twitter feed.

“You don’t want to have a distracted national security

adviser,” said Smith, who now directs the strategy and statecraft program at the Center for a New American Security.

She was among several national security experts who raised concerns Tuesday about

Flynn’s willingness to share bad intelligence on a social media feed as he prepares to move to the West Wing.

Flynn served until 2014 as the head of U.S. military intelligence. Although he left that job over disputes with the Obama administration over policy and his management of the Defense Intelligence Agency, he is widely regarded as a top intelligence officer, a job that requires an understanding of the power of disinformation.

The issue of sharing fake news was highlighted when Flynn’s son, Michael G. Flynn, tweeted about the false idea that prompted a shooting at a Washington, D.C., pizza parlor. He had been promoting a conspiracy theory that Hillary Clinton’s allies had been operating a secret pedophilia ring in the restaurant and noted

it would remain a story until “proven to be false.”

Vice President-elect Mike Pence acknowledged Tuesday that the younger Flynn was helping his father with scheduling and administrative items during the presidential transition but told CNN “that’s no longer the case.”

Asked repeatedly whether a security clearance was requested, Pence refused to answer directly. “Whatever the appropriate paperwork was to assist him in that regard, Jake, I’m sure was taking place,” he said.

Trump’s team did not clarify whether Michael Flynn Jr.’s departure from Trump’s transition team was related to the tweets.

Less than a week before the election, the elder Flynn tweeted a link to a story that falsely claimed Clinton emails

contained proof of money laundering and sex crimes with children, among other illegal activities. The incoming national security adviser called the baseless story a “must read” and instructed his followers: “U decide.”

Flynn also promoted conspiracy theorists, some of them white supremacists, throughout the campaign even as he emerged as Trump’s highest profile national security adviser.

He encouraged his followers to read a book by Mike Cernovich, whose website has suggested Clinton’s campaign chairman was part of a “sex cult with connections to human trafficking.” Flynn also tagged white nationalist Jared Wyand, whose website is popular with “alt-right” followers.