

Food chain infrastructure must be secured

Like many people, we weren't aware until recently that the nation's meatpacking industry was so technologically sophisticated and dependent that it could be hacked and shut down by bad actors.

The apparent vulnerability in these systems calls into question the security of the food supply chain in the United States — a clear and present danger if we've ever heard one.

On May 31, JBS USA, a subsidiary of JBS, the world's largest meat processing company, announced the company had been hit by an "organized cybersecurity attack" over the previous weekend.

According to the company's statement, JBS determined it was the target of a ransomware attack affecting some servers in its North American and Australian IT systems.

In response to the attack, JBS says it took immediate action, suspending all affected systems and calling on third-party experts to help resolve the problem. It also later admitted that it paid \$11 million in bitcoin to its system's captors.

The damage, however brief, was real. Ranchers with regularly scheduled deliveries to JBS had to scramble to sell their livestock to other processors, at lower prices, and distributors with active orders

had to buy from other vendors at a premium. So, another case where people selling live animals were short-changed and people buying processed product upstream had to pay higher prices.

JBS isn't the only large meat processing company that depends on computer technology. They all do. The problem is magnified because just a handful of companies control most of the production.

The truth is that just about everything in the food supply chain is controlled in one way or another by computers, wonderfully useful technology that very few of the people who use it really understand.

The more complicated the plumbing, the easier it is to plug it up. The incident with JBS demonstrates how vulnerable vital infrastructure is to hacking.

After the hack, Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack said food chain security was one of the things USDA would address with its share of President Biden's \$1 trillion infrastructure proposal. We would hope so, but no specifics were provided.

The federal government and the companies that depend on computer technology have to take security seriously, and must make the necessary investment to secure the infrastructure. If it is not safe, we are not safe.



"The signing bonus and stock options are fine... my agent will call you about the country club membership..."

FARMER'S FATE

A symbol of national unity

We celebrated National Flag Week last month! An entire week devoted to flying our beautiful Stars and Stripes. Instead of thinking about the things that divide us, it delights me that we have an entire week set aside for us to think about the things that unite us: our national anthem, the Constitution, our flag.

Ronald Reagan once said: "We're blessed with the opportunity to stand for something — for liberty and freedom and fairness. And these are things worth fighting for, worth devoting our lives to."

So to do our part to show our love of country, we spent an afternoon fastening American flags to our tractors and equipment. When we were finished, it looked as if we were ready for a parade. The red and white stripes billowing in the breeze reached deep into my soul and ignited that spark of pride for country, loyalty and patriotism. Watching those flags evoked a passionate emotion of being united to something bigger than me, bigger than my family, my town, my state. Being connected to people across the ages — people who have fought under her stripes, loved under her stars and have been buried under her linen. Adrian Cronauer, a U.S. Air Force sergeant and radio personality whose experiences inspired the 1987 film "Good Morning, Vietnam," once said, "Our flag is not just one of many political points of view. Rather, the flag is a symbol of our national unity."

A symbol of our national unity — Americans united under Old Glory. My reverie was broken as a sideways glance revealed both of my sons staring reverently up at the waving flags. In that moment, they were not likely thinking about the Constitution, our Founding Fathers or the liberty that they provided for us, but they still stood in reverent awe as the Stars and Strips waved jauntily over the tops of the tractors. The federal flag code says the flag is a living symbol. And in that moment there seemed no doubt



Brianna Walker

it touched us on a spiritual level. The moment seemed to call for something more. Clergyman Gerald Stanley Lee (1862-1944) said, "America is a tune. It must be sung together." With the

help of YouTube, we listened to Lee Greenwood sing about those broad stripes and bright stars in the land of the free, while we admired the patriotic machinery.

Later, in the swather, my 5-year-old watched the flag whipping in the wind. He especially enjoyed turning at the end of the rows, because the flag stood straight out. As young kids often do, he began asking questions about the flag. Why is it red, white and blue? How is it special? What is Flag Day for? Some questions I could answer; others I didn't know — but it presented a beautiful opportunity to learn some history about our nation's beautiful flag with my children.

Flag Day is a celebration of the American flag that occurs each year on the anniversary of the flag's official adoption — June 14, 1777. During the Revolutionary War, colonial troops fought under many different flags with various symbols — rattlesnakes, pine trees and eagles — using slogans such as "Don't Tread on Me," "Liberty or Death" and "Conquer or Die."

When the Second Continental Congress met to create a unified colonial army, they also adopted a uniting flag with the following resolution: "The flag of the United States shall be thirteen stripes, alternate red and white, with a union of thirteen stars of white on a blue field representing a new Constellation"

George Washington is reported to have said about the new flag: "We take the stars from heaven, the red from our mother country, separating it by white stripes, thus showing that we have separated from her and the white stripes shall go down in posterity, rep-

"WHEN WE HONOR OUR FLAG, WE HONOR WHAT WE STAND FOR AS A NATION — FREEDOM, EQUALITY, JUSTICE AND HOPE."

—Ronald Reagan

resenting our liberty."

One of the first designs had the stars arranged in a circle based on the idea that all the colonies were equal. In 1818, after a few design changes, the U.S. Congress decided to retain the flag's original 13 stripes and add new stars to reflect each new state that entered the union. The Continental Congress left no record as to why it chose red, white and blue. However, in 1782, when the Congress of the Articles of Confederation chose the colors for the Great Seal of the United States they stated: white for purity and innocence; red for valor and hardness; and blue for vigilance, perseverance and justice.

While its adoption happened in 1777, Flag Day wasn't officially established until 1916 by Woodrow Wilson. In 1949, Harry Truman signed legislation that made it into a national day set aside to honor the powerful symbol of freedom, hope and opportunity that we call Old Glory.

So as I head back to the tractor to proudly fly my Stars and Stripes, let me leave you with one of my favorite Mark Twain quotes on patriotism:

"Patriotism is supporting your country all the time — and your government when it deserves it." — Mark Twain

Brianna Walker occasionally writes about the Farmer's Fate for the Blue Mountain Eagle.



WHERE TO WRITE

- GRANT COUNTY**
- Grant County Courthouse** — 201 S. Humbolt St., Suite 280, Canyon City 97820. Phone: 541-575-0059. Fax: 541-575-2248.
 - Canyon City** — P.O. Box 276, Canyon City 97820. Phone: 541-575-0509. Fax: 541-575-0515. Email: tocc1862@centurylink.net.
 - Dayville** — P.O. Box 321, Dayville 97825. Phone: 541-987-2188. Fax: 541-987-2187. Email: dville@ortelco.net
 - John Day** — 450 E. Main St, John Day, 97845. Phone: 541-575-0028. Fax: 541-575-1721. Email: cityjd@centurytel.net.
 - Long Creek** — P.O. Box 489, Long Creek 97856. Phone: 541-421-3601. Fax: 541-421-3075. Email: info@cityoflongcreek.com.
 - Monument** — P.O. Box 426, Monument 97864. Phone and fax: 541-934-2025. Email: cityofmonument@centurytel.net.
 - Mt. Vernon** — P.O. Box 647, Mt. Vernon 97865. Phone: 541-932-4688. Fax: 541-932-4222. Email: cmtv@ortelco.net.
 - Prairie City** — P.O. Box 370, Prairie City 97869. Phone: 541-820-3605. Fax: 820-3566. Email: pchall@ortelco.net.
 - Seneca** — P.O. Box 208, Seneca 97873. Phone and fax: 541-542-2161. Email: senecaoregon@gmail.com.
- SALEM**
- Gov. Kate Brown, D** — 254 State Capitol, Salem 97310. Phone: 503-378-3111. Fax: 503-378-6827. Website: governor.state.or.us/governor.html.
 - Oregon Legislature** — State Capitol, Salem, 97310. Phone: 503-986-1180. Website: leg.state.or.us (includes Oregon Constitution and Oregon Revised Statutes).
 - Oregon Legislative Information** — (For updates on bills, services, capitol or messages for legislators) — 800-332-2313, oregonlegislature.gov.
 - Sen. Lynn Findley, R-Valle** — 900 Court St.

- NE, S-301, Salem 97301. Phone: 503-986-1730. Website: oregonlegislature.gov/findley. Email: sen.lynnfindley@oregonlegislature.gov.
- Rep. Mark Owens, R-Crane** — 900 Court St. NE, H-475, Salem 97301. Phone: 503-986-1460. District address: 258 S. Oregon St., Ontario OR 97914. District phone: 541-889-8866. Website: oregonlegislature.gov/findley. Email: rep.markowens@oregonlegislature.gov.
- WASHINGTON, D.C.**
- The White House**, 1600 Pennsylvania Ave. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20500; Phone: 202-456-1111; Switchboard: 202-456-1414.
 - U.S. Sen. Ron Wyden, D** — 516 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington D.C. 20510. Phone: 202-224-5244. Email: wayne_kinney@wyden.senate.gov. Website: http://wyden.senate.gov. Fax: 202-228-2717.
 - U.S. Sen. Jeff Merkley, D** — 313 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington D.C. 20510. Phone: 202-224-3753. Email: senator@merkley.senate.gov. Fax: 202-228-3997. Oregon offices include One World Trade Center, 121 S.W. Salmon St., Suite 1250, Portland, OR 97204; and 310 S.E. Second St., Suite 105, Pendleton, OR 97801. Phone: 503-326-3386; 541-278-1129. Fax: 503-326-2990.
 - U.S. Rep. Cliff Bentz, R** — (Second District) 1239 Longworth Building, Washington D.C. 20515. Phone: 202-225-6730. No direct email because of spam. Website: walden.house.gov. Fax: 202-225-5774. Ontario office: 2430 SW Fourth Ave., Suite 2, Ontario, OR 97914. Phone: 541-709-2040. Medford office: 14 N. Central Ave., Suite 112, Medford, OR 97501. Phone: 541-776-4646. Fax: 541-779-0204.
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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

'Shared threats demand shared solutions'

To the Editor:

In his opening remarks to the security panel at the April 22 Leaders Summit on Climate, U.S. Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin stated: "Today, no nation can find lasting security without addressing the climate crisis. ... (R)ising temperatures and more frequent and intense extreme weather events in Africa and Central America threaten millions with drought, hunger and displacement. As families risk their lives in search of safety and security, mass migration leaves them vulnerable to exploitation and radicalization, all of which undermine stability."

In the Northern Triangle coun-

tries of El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras, warming oceans are damaging coral reefs and fisheries, while severe drought is causing families to abandon their farms. To quote climate scientist Edwin Castellanos of the Universidad del Valle de Guatemala: "Extreme poverty may be the primary reason people leave. But climate change is intensifying all the existing factors."

Many of the consequences of our carbon dioxide emissions were foreseen. In a 1977 presentation to Exxon management on the greenhouse effect, company science advisor J.F. Black warned that warming the planet would be likely to affect the distribution of the world's rainfall. According to Black, "Some countries would benefit, but others could have their agricultural output reduced or destroyed."

Remarkably, in a 2012 interview, then Exxon CEO Rex Tiller-

son claimed: "Changes to weather patterns that move crop production areas around — we'll adapt to that." However, when people leave a place that global warming is rendering uninhabitable, moving is their adaptation. And desperate migrants are often demonized for this.

In light of partisan differences on including climate provisions in the infrastructure bill, and with high profile visits taking place at the southern border, the United States stands at a crossroads. As the greatest cumulative emitter, what role will our nation play in helping to heal our increasingly hotter and inhospitable world?

Let's heed the closing words of Defense Secretary Austin: "None of us can tackle this problem alone. We share this planet, and shared threats demand shared solutions."

Terry Hansen
Hales Corners, Wisconsin

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Grant County's Weekly Newspaper

- Editor & General Manager** Sean Hart, editor@bmeagle.com
- Reporter** Steven Mitchell, steven@bmeagle.com
- Sports** sports@bmeagle.com
- Multimedia** Alex Wittwer, awittwer@eomediagroup.com
- Marketing Rep** Kim Kell, ads@bmeagle.com
- Office Assistant** Alixandra Hand, office@bmeagle.com

- SUBSCRIPTION RATES**
(including online access)
- One year \$51
 - Monthly autopay \$4.25

Subscriptions must be paid prior to delivery

Periodicals Postage Paid at John Day and additional mailing offices.

POSTMASTER
send address changes to:
Blue Mountain Eagle
195 N. Canyon Blvd.
John Day, OR 97845-1187
USPS 226-340

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