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## Schools Shut in Seattle Area as Coronavirus Spreads

*March 5, 2020* wsj.com reported: "Seattle-area companies and schools began implementing contingency plans Thursday to help contain the new coronavirus in the region, where the number of confirmed cases jumped to 70 from 39 a day earlier.



New coronavirus cases continued to climb globally, and some health officials warned it would be impossible to fully contain the pathogen now that infections are spreading within many communities.

Washington, the hardest-hit U.S. state and where all but one of the country's 11 deaths have occurred, took more aggressive measures to combat the virus's spread Thursday.

Gov. Jay Inslee encouraged residents and organizations to give "serious consideration" to canceling or postponing large events as the virus spreads to new parts of the state, and advised more vulnerable populations—like elderly residents or those with underlying illnesses—to avoid large public gatherings. He also directed state insurance providers to waive copays and deductibles for anyone qualified for testing for the new coronavirus.

"We are attempting to do everything humanly possible to slow the spread of this virus," Mr. Inslee said.

"We need to accept medical reality here: this disease, this virus, is going to spread across county lines," he added." ..."

## China censored virus news for weeks, say researchers

*March 4, 2020* terradaily.com reported: "China began censoring online discussions on the new coronavirus weeks before officially acknowledging the scope of the disease, according to a report published Tuesday.

Although Chinese authorities did not publicly acknowledge the severity of the virus until January 20, censorship began as early as December 31, said researchers at the University of Toronto's Citizen Lab.

Even general terms such as 'unknown Wuhan pneumonia' and 'Wuhan Health Commission' were deemed taboo in the early weeks of the epidemic, said the report.

More than 3,100 people have died and over 90,000 have been infected worldwide by the virus.

Citizen Lab said its research showed at least one social media platform in China was blocking some virus content three weeks before the government confirmed it was spreading between people.

That 'strongly suggests that social media companies came under government pressure to censor information at early stages of the outbreak,' the report said..."

## US trying to catch up with Russia, China in hypersonics

*March 3, 2020* spacedaily.com reported: "The United States finds itself behind both Russia and China after the two countries transitioned from hypersonic technologies to working weapon systems, something the Pentagon has yet to accomplish, two officials in charge of the US Department of Defence program told reporters.

'In past decades we have been world leaders in hypersonic technology, but we have consistently made the decision to not transition that to weapon applications and build weapons systems out of hypersonic technologies', Mike White, assistant director for hypersonics, said at a briefing on Monday. 'The Russians and the Chinese quite frankly have both done that. And they have done that quite a number of years ago.' 'It's that transition to the application that got their efforts jumpstarted and that's what we are accelerating now.'

Mark Lewis attributed Russia's success to its Soviet-era legacy, while China, according to him, made 'huge investments' and used American studies published since the 1940s..."

## Tensions rise as U.S. death toll from coronavirus reaches 9

*March 3, 2020* apnews.com reported: "Tensions over how to contain the coronavirus escalated Tuesday in the United States as the death toll climbed to nine and lawmakers expressed doubts about the government's ability to ramp up testing fast enough to deal with the crisis.

All of the deaths have occurred in Washington state, and most were residents of a nursing home in suburban Seattle. The number of infections in the U.S. overall climbed past 100, scattered across at least 15 states, with 27 cases in Washington alone.

"What is happening now in the United States may be the beginning of what is happening abroad," said Dr. Nancy Messonnier of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, noting that in China, where the outbreak began more than two months ago, older and sicker people are about twice as likely to become seriously ill as those who are younger and healthier.

The nursing home outbreak apparently seeded the first case in North Carolina, authorities said. A Wake County resident who had visited the Washington state nursing home tested positive but is in isolation at home and is doing well, according to the North Carolina governor's office.

In the nation's capital, officials moved on a number of fronts. A bipartisan \$7.5 billion emergency bill to fund the government's response to the outbreak worked its way through Congress.

The Federal Reserve announced the biggest interest-rate cut in over a decade to try to fend off damage to the U.S. economy from the factory shutdowns, travel restrictions and other disruptions around the globe. On Wall Street, stocks rallied briefly on the news, then went into another steep slide, with the Dow Jones Industrial Average losing 785 points on the day, or 2.9%.

"We have seen a broader spread of the virus. So, we saw a risk to the economy and we chose to act," Fed Chairman Jerome Powell said. "..."

### **Turkey-Russia tensions soar after deadly Syria strike**

*March 2, 2020* spacewar.com reported: "The leaders of Russia and Turkey held crisis talks Friday after 33 Turkish soldiers died in an air strike in Syria, as Ankara ramped up pressure on Europe by threatening to flood in migrants.

The United States and United Nations urged an end to the Russian-backed Syrian offensive against rebel holdouts, but Turkey appeared intent on easing tensions with Moscow by pinning the blame squarely on President Bashar al-Assad's regime.

The flare-up raised fresh concerns for civilians caught up in the escalation of the horrific eight-year civil war, with the UN saying nearly a million people — half of them children — have been displaced in the bitter cold by the fighting since December.

Thirty-three Turkish troops were killed late Thursday in the air strike in the northwestern province of Idlib, in the biggest single loss of life by the Turkish military in years..."

### **North Korea fires two unidentified projectiles: South's military**

*March 2, 2020* spacewar.com reported: "North Korea fired two unidentified projectiles on Monday, the South's military said, weeks after Pyongyang declared its moratorium on long-range missile tests over.



The move comes as nuclear negotiations with the United States are at a standstill and as a unilateral deadline Pyongyang set Washington to offer it fresh concessions on sanctions relief expired.

The two devices were fired eastwards over the sea from the Wonsan area on the east coast, the South's Joint Chiefs of Staff said.

"The military is monitoring for additional launches and maintaining readiness," the statement added.

Pyongyang carried out a series of weapons tests late last year, the last of them in November, often describing them as multiple launch rocket systems, although others called them ballistic missiles.



It also carried out static engine tests, most recently in December.

At a party meeting at the end of that month, leader Kim Jong Un declared that Pyongyang no longer considered itself bound by its moratoriums on nuclear and intercontinental ballistic missile tests, and threatened a demonstration of a "new strategic weapon" soon.

North Korea has a long history of seeking to demonstrate its military capability to try to obtain concessions.

The latest launches come as Pyongyang tries to prevent a nationwide coronavirus outbreak, which analysts say would wreak havoc in the ill-equipped country.

"March is pretty reliably missile-testing season for North Korea," tweeted Ankit Panda, senior fellow at the Federation of American Scientists.

"Looks like COVID-19 hasn't changed that (or Pyongyang is determined to make it appear as if it hasn't)," he added.

North Korea has not reported a single case of the coronavirus, which has killed more than 3,000 people and infected over 88,000 in dozens of countries since it emerged in neighboring China."..."

### **Russia successfully test fires Tsirkon hypersonic cruise missile**

*February 28, 2020* spacewar.com reported: "Russia has successfully test-launched its Tsirkon hypersonic cruise missile from a ship for the first time and is planning more tests from nuclear submarines.

The missile was fired from the frigate Admiral Gorshkov in early January while it was cruising in the Barents Sea, state news agency TASS reported Thursday. It landed at a military testing range in the Northern Ural mountain range more than 300 miles away.

More Tsirkon cruise missile tests from nuclear-powered submarines are expected this year.

Russia first began work on the hypersonic weapon in 2015 and Moscow says it can reach speeds of Mach 9 – nine times the speed of sound – which enables it to evade enemy air defenses. Officials say the missile has a range of more than 600 miles..."

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