

Nearly 80 Die As Blast Strikes Somali Capital

Truck Bomb Fuels Fear of Rising Insurgency

This article is by **Hussein Mohamed, Abdi Latif Dahir and Eric Schmitt.**

MOGADISHU, Somalia — An explosives-laden truck blew up at a busy intersection in the Somali capital on Saturday and killed at least 79 people, the latest sign of resurgent militant activity in a country plagued by an enduring strain of violent extremism.

A bus carrying university students to their campus was struck by the blast, which left the streets littered with bodies and the mangled frames of vehicles. The attack, which the government said also injured 149 people, was the worst in Somalia in more than two years.

There was no immediate claim of responsibility, but suspicion immediately fell on the Shabab, a terrorist group linked to Al Qaeda which controls large parts of the country and raises considerable funds through local taxation and extortion. Despite intensified American airstrikes and a long-running African Union offensive, the group has carried out deadly attacks not only in Somalia but also in neighboring Kenya and Uganda.

"Unfortunately, it doesn't appear that much progress has been made against combating what has become a very resilient and deadly insurgency," said Murithi Mutiga, the Horn of Africa project director at the International Crisis Group, a research organization.

The attack — one of several this year in Mogadishu including a gun battle two weeks ago that killed five people at a well-known hotel — added to concerns about the abilities of Somali forces as African Union troops begin to withdraw.

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Children heading to school in Hotan, in the Xinjiang region, where Beijing is seeking to assimilate and indoctrinate Muslim children.

As It Detains Parents, China Weans Children From Islam

By **AMY QIN**

HOTAN, China — The first grader was a good student and beloved by her classmates, but she was inconsolable, and it was no mystery to her teacher why.

"The most heartbreaking thing is that the girl is often slumped over on the table alone and crying," he wrote on his blog. "When I asked around, I learned that it was because she missed her mother."

The mother, he noted, had been sent to a detention camp for Muslim ethnic minorities. The girl's father had passed away, he added.

But instead of letting other relatives raise her, the authorities put her in a state-run boarding school — one of hundreds of such facilities that have opened in China's far western Xinjiang region.

As many as a million ethnic Uighurs, Kazakhs and others have been sent to internment camps and prisons in Xinjiang over the past three years, an indiscriminate clampdown aimed at weakening the population's devotion to Islam. Even as these mass detentions have provoked global outrage, though, the Chinese government

New Boarding Schools Redirect Faith From Religion to Party

is pressing ahead with a parallel effort targeting the region's children.

Nearly a half million children have been separated from their families and placed in boarding schools so far, according to a planning document published on a

government website, and the ruling Communist Party has set a goal of operating one to two such schools in each of Xinjiang's 800-plus townships by the end of next year.

The party has presented the schools as a way to fight poverty, arguing that they make it easier for children to attend classes if their parents live or work in remote areas or are unable to care for them. And it is true that many rural families are eager to send their children to these schools, especially when they are older.

But the schools are also designed to assimilate and indoctrinate children at an early age, away from the influence of their families, according to the planning document, published in 2017. Students are often forced to enroll because the authorities have detained their parents and other relatives, ordered them to take jobs far from home or judged them unfit guardians.

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In Mississippi, ICE Raids Jolt Chicken Plants

By **RICHARD FAUSSET**

MORTON, Miss. — Juan Grant strode into the Koch Foods chicken processing plant for his new job on a Wednesday morning, joining many other African-Americans in a procession of rubber

IMPERFECT UNION

Arrests Mean Job Openings

boots, hairnets and last cigarettes before the grind.

At 20, Mr. Grant was too young to remember the days of a nearly all-white work force in Mississippi's poultry industry, or the civil rights boycotts and protests that followed. He was too young to have seen how white workers largely moved on after that, leaving the business of killing, cutting and packing to African-Americans.

He did not know the time before Hispanic workers began arriving in the heart of chicken country by the thousands, recruited by plant managers looking to fill low-paying jobs in an expanding industry. But Mr. Grant clearly remembered Aug. 7, the day the Trump administration performed sweeping immigration raids on seven chicken plants in central Mississippi. He remembered the news

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Attendees at an Arizona Trump festival viewed the president as their champion in a cultural fight.

Where the Far Right Sees Doom Without Trump

By **ASTEAD W. HERNDON**

GOLDEN VALLEY, Ariz. — Great American Pizza & Subs, on a highway about 100 miles southeast of Las Vegas, was busier and Trumpier than usual. On any given day it serves "M.A.G.A. Subs" and "Liberty Bell Lasagna." The "Second Amendment" pizza comes "loaded" with pepperoni and sausage. The dining room is covered in regalia praising President Trump.

But this October morning was Trumpstock, a small festival celebrating the president. The speakers included the local Republican congressman, Paul Gosar, and lesser-known conservative personalities. There was a fringe 2020 Senate candidate in Arizona who ran a website that published sexually explicit photos of women without their consent; a pro-Trump rapper whose lyrics include a racist slur aimed at Barack

Obama; and a North Carolina activist who once said of Muslims, "I will kill every one of them before they get to me."

All were welcome, except liberals.

"They label us white nationalists, or white supremacists," volunteered Guy Taiho Decker, who drove from California to the event. A right-wing protester, he has previously been arrested on charges of making terrorist threats.

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Happily Married for 60 Years. Then Alzheimer's. And a Gun.

By **CORINA KNOLL**

It began almost playfully, like tiny hiccups in her mind. She would forget she had already changed the sheets and change them again, or repeat a thought in the same breath.

Then the illness amplified. She grew confused by everyday tasks. Became convinced her parents were still alive and insisted upon a visit. At social gatherings, she was anxious and fearful. She forgot how to sew and cross-stitch. Forgot the faces of her children.

She did remember her name. Alma Shaver. But not her age. Eighty.

And sometimes, she did not know her husband.

He was Richard Shaver, a man whose wife of 60 years had been found by dementia, that thief that robs the minds of 50 million people worldwide. So common, yet so personally cruel — it comes with no road map for those tending to the afflicted.



Alma and Richard Shaver had known each other since childhood, in Shadyside, Ohio.

For a while, Mr. Shaver managed. He would sit next to his wife and rub her hand, her knee, to try to calm the unease. He left notes explaining simple tasks. If she was stuck repeating herself, he asked yes or no questions to break

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Bank Helped Shah Find Haven

Newly released documents illustrate a secret effort by Chase Manhattan to get the deposed Iranian ruler admitted to the United States in 1979.

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SUNDAY BUSINESS

Now Served at Rikers: Lattes

A barista training program at the New York jail complex aims to give inmates a chance for a better future. And a taste of life post-prison.

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NATIONAL 4,14-23

Knife Attack at Rabbi's Home

An intruder with a knife stormed into the home of a Hasidic rabbi in a New York suburb, stabbing and wounding five people, officials said.

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SPORTSSUNDAY

Title Tilt: Clemson vs. L.S.U.

Clemson returned to the college football title game with a 29-23 win over Ohio State, and will face Louisiana State, a 63-28 victor against Oklahoma.

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SUNDAY REVIEW

Michiko Kakutani

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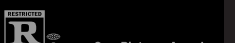


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FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION

A.O. SCOTT *The New York Times*

"Once Upon A Time...in Hollywood" is not going anywhere. It will stand as a source of delight for as long as we care about movies. And it wants us to care."



Trump Eroding Role of Science in Government

From Page 1

Hundreds of scientists, many of whom say they are dismayed at seeing their work undone, are departing.

Among them is Matthew Davis, a biologist whose research on the health risks of mercury to children underpinned the first rules cutting mercury emissions from coal power plants. But last year, with a new baby of his own, he was asked to help support a rollback of those same rules. "I am now part of defending this darker, dirtier future," he said.

This year, after a decade at the Environmental Protection Agency, Mr. Davis left.

"Regulations come and go, but the thinning out of scientific capacity in the government will take a long time to get back," said Joel Clement, a former top climate-policy expert at the Interior Department who quit in 2017 after being reassigned to a job collecting oil and gas royalties. He is now at the Union of Concerned Scientists, an advocacy group.

Mr. Trump has consistently said that government regulations have stifled businesses and thwarted some of the administration's core goals, such as increasing fossil-fuel production. Many of the starkest confrontations with federal scientists have involved issues like environmental oversight and energy extraction — areas where industry groups have argued that regulators have gone too far.

"Businesses are finally being freed of Washington's overreach, and the American economy is flourishing as a result," a White House statement said last year. Asked about the role of science in policy-making, officials from the White House declined to comment on the record.

The administration's efforts to cut certain research projects also reflect a long-standing conservative position that some scientific work can be performed cost-effectively by the private sector, and taxpayers shouldn't be asked to foot the bill. "Eliminating wasteful spending, some of which has nothing to do with studying the science at all, is smart management, not an attack on science," two analysts at the conservative Heritage Foundation wrote in 2017 of the adminis-

are the result of the kinds of government research now under pressure.

"When we decapitate the government's ability to use science in a professional way, that increases the risk that we start making bad decisions, that we start missing new public health risks," said Wendy E. Wagner, a professor at the University of Texas at Austin who studies the use of science by policymakers.

Skirmishes over the use of science in making policy occur in all administrations: Industries routinely push back against health studies that could justify stricter pollution rules, for example. And scientists often gripe about inadequate budgets for their work. But many experts say that current efforts to challenge research findings go well beyond what has been done previously.

In an article published in the journal *Science* last year, Ms. Wagner wrote that some of the Trump administration's moves, like a policy to restrict certain academics from the E.P.A.'s Science Advisory Board or the proposal to limit the types of research that can be considered by environmental regulators, "mark a sharp departure with the past." Rather than isolated battles between political officials and career experts, she said, these moves are an attempt to legally constrain how federal agencies use science in the first place.

Some clashes with scientists have sparked public backlash, as when Trump officials pressured the nation's weather forecasting agency to support the president's erroneous assertion this year that Hurricane Dorian threatened Alabama.

But others have garnered little notice despite their significance.

This year, for instance, the National Park Service's principal climate change scientist, Patrick Gonzalez, received a "cease and desist" letter from supervisors after testifying to Congress about the risks that global warming posed to national parks.

"I saw it as attempted intimidation," said Dr. Gonzalez, who added that he was speaking in his capacity as an associate adjunct professor at the University of California, Berkeley, a position he also holds. "It's interference with science and hinders our work."

Cutting Scientific Programs

Even though Congress hasn't gone along with Mr. Trump's proposals for budget cuts at scientific agencies, the administration has still found ways to advance its goals.

One strategy: eliminate individual research projects not explicitly protected by Congress.

For example, just months after Mr. Trump's election, the Commerce Department disbanded a 15-person scientific committee that had explored how to make National Climate Assessments, the congressionally mandated studies of the risks of climate change, more useful to local officials. It also closed its Office of the Chief Economist, which for decades had conducted wide-ranging research on topics like the economic effects of natural disasters. Similarly, the Interior Department has withdrawn funding for its Landscape Conservation Cooperatives, 22 regional research centers that tackled issues like habitat loss and wildfire management. While California and Alaska used state money to keep their centers open, 16 of 22 remain in limbo.

A Commerce Department official said the climate committee it discontinued had not produced a report, and highlighted other efforts to promote science, such as a major upgrade of the nation's weather models.

An Interior Department official said the agency's decisions "are solely based on the facts and grounded in the law," and that the agency would continue to pursue other partnerships to advance conservation science.

Research that potentially posed an obstacle to Mr. Trump's promise to expand fossil-fuel production was halted, too. In 2017, Interior officials canceled a \$1 million study by the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine on the health risks of "mountaintop removal" coal mining.

Mountaintop removal is as dramatic as it sounds — a hillside is blasted with explosives and the remains are excavated — but the health consequences still aren't fully understood. The process can kick up coal dust and send heavy metals into waterways, and studies have suggested links to health problems like kidney disease and birth defects.

"The industry was pushing back on these studies," said Joseph Pizarchik, an Obama-era mining regulator who commissioned the now-defunct study. "We didn't know what the answer would be," he said, "but we needed to know: Was the government permitting coal mining that was poisoning people, or not?"

While coal mining has declined in recent years, satellite data shows that at least 60 square miles in Appalachia have been newly mined since 2016. "The study is still as important today as it was five years ago," Mr. Pizarchik said.

The Cost of Lost Research

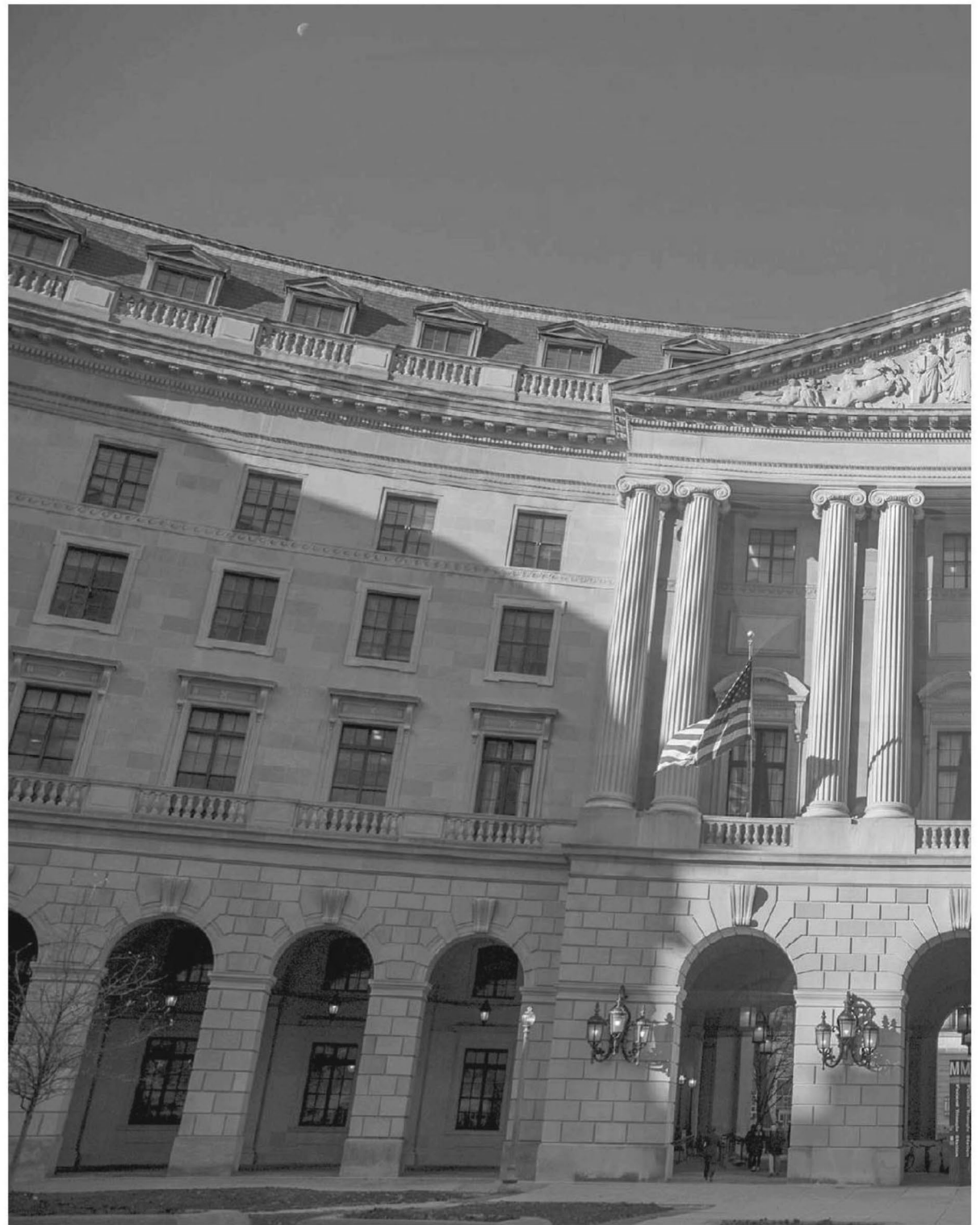
The cuts can add up to significant research setbacks.

For years, the E.P.A. and the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences had jointly funded 13 children's health centers nationwide that studied, among other things, the effects of pollution on children's development. This year, the E.P.A. ended its funding.

At the University of California, San Francisco, one such center has been studying how industrial chemicals such as flame retardants in furniture could affect placenta and fetal development. Key aspects of the research have stopped.

"The longer we go without funding, the harder it is to start that research back up," said Tracey Woodruff, who directs the center.

In a statement, the E.P.A. said it antici-



ERIN SCHAFF/THE NEW YORK TIMES



ALYSSA SCHUKAR FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Matthew Davis, a biologist who quit after a decade at the E.P.A.

tration's proposals to cut various climate change and clean energy programs.

Industry groups have expressed support for some of the moves, including a contentious E.P.A. proposal to put new constraints on the use of scientific studies in the name of transparency. The American Chemistry Council, a chemical trade group, praised the proposal by saying, "The goal of providing more transparency in government and using the best available science in the regulatory process should be ideals we all embrace."

In some cases, the administration's efforts to roll back government science have been thwarted. Each year, Mr. Trump has proposed sweeping budget cuts at a variety of federal agencies like the National Institutes of Health, the Department of Energy and the National Science Foundation. But Congress has the final say over budget levels and lawmakers from both sides of the aisle have rejected the cuts.

For instance, in supporting funding for the Department of Energy's national laboratories, Senator Lamar Alexander, Republican of Tennessee, recently said, "it allows us to take advantage of the United States' secret weapon, our extraordinary capacity for basic research."

As a result, many science programs continue to thrive, including space exploration at NASA and medical research at the National Institutes of Health, where the budget has increased more than 12 percent since Mr. Trump took office and where researchers continue to make advances in areas like molecular biology and genetics.

Nevertheless, in other areas, the administration has managed to chip away at federal science.

At the E.P.A., for instance, staffing has fallen to its lowest levels in at least a decade. More than two-thirds of respondents to a survey of federal scientists across 16 agencies said that hiring freezes and departures made it harder to conduct scientific work. And in June, the White House ordered agencies to cut by one-third the number of federal advisory boards that provide technical advice.

The White House said it aimed to eliminate committees that were no longer necessary. Panels cut so far had focused on issues including invasive species and electric grid innovation.

At a time when the United States is pulling back from world leadership in other areas like human rights or diplomatic accords, experts warn that the retreat from science is no less significant. Many of the achievements of the past century that helped make the United States an envied global power, including gains in life expectancy, lowered air pollution and increased farm productivity

ated future opportunities to fund children's health research.

At the Department of Agriculture, Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue announced in June he would relocate two key research agencies to Kansas City from Washington: The National Institute of Food and Agriculture, a scientific agency that funds university research on topics like how to breed cattle and corn that can better tolerate drought conditions, and the Economic Research Service, whose economists produce studies for policymakers on farming trends, trade and rural America.

Nearly 600 employees had less than four months to decide whether to uproot and move. Most couldn't or wouldn't, and two-thirds of those facing transfer left their jobs.

In August, Mr. Mulvaney, the acting White House chief of staff, appeared to celebrate the departures.

"It's nearly impossible to fire a federal worker," he said in videotaped remarks at a Republican Party gala in South Carolina. "But by simply saying to people, 'You know what, we're going to take you outside the bubble, outside the Beltway, outside this liberal haven of Washington, D.C., and move you out in the real part of the country,' and they quit. What a wonderful way to sort of streamline government and do what we haven't been able to do for a long time."

The White House declined to comment on Mr. Mulvaney's speech.

The exodus has led to upheaval. At the Economic Research Service, dozens of planned studies into topics like

dairy industry consolidation and pesticide use have been delayed or disrupted. "You can name any topic in agriculture and we've lost an expert," said Laura Dodson, an economist and acting vice president of the union representing agency employees.

The National Institute of Food and Agriculture manages \$1.7 billion in grants that fund research on issues like food safety or techniques that help farmers improve their productivity. The staff loss, employees say, has held up hundreds of millions of dollars in funding, such as planned research into pests and diseases afflicting grapes, sweet potatoes and fruit trees.

Mr. Perdue said the moves would save money and put the offices closer to farmers. "We did not undertake these reloca-



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Fonda Brings Hollywood To Capital For Protests

By ELIZABETH WILLIAMSON

WASHINGTON — This holiday weekend found Jane Fonda and Lily Tomlin standing in front of an empty Capitol building, debating the environmental hazards of fresh-cut Christmas trees.

Ms. Fonda and Ms. Tomlin star in Netflix's "Grace and Frankie" where they play two women in their 70s whose husbands have run off together. The two women have been a buddy act since the 1980 film "9 to 5," and on Friday they teamed up for Fire Drill Friday.

The weekly protest against congressional inaction on climate change began 12 weeks ago, billed as something of an adult "atta girl" celebrity cheering section for the youth climate strikes of Greta Thunberg. Ms. Fonda was told that Congress is rarely in session on Friday afternoons, but she stuck to the schedule because throughout the world, youth climate actions are also on Fridays.

And though Congress has almost never taken in one of Ms. Fonda's curtain calls, her Fire Drill Fridays have become something of a place to see and be seen in Washington, a challenge to the adage that the nation's capital is "Hollywood for ugly people." Ms. Fonda, in fact, has been bringing Hollywood to Washington. One week it's Ted Danson and the next, Catherine Keener. I'll see your Diane Lane and raise you a Sam Waterston. Oh, look, there's Sally Field.

There are teach-ins, and birthday parties, and lunches at fashionable Washington restaurants for the climate activists and celebrity friends drawn into Ms. Fonda's orbit, all of whom have the routine down pat: rally, get arrested, get released, and repeat.

The focus of Friday's fire drill — "The Way Climate Change Affects Our Forests, the 'Lungs of the World'" — featured experts address-

The celebrity routine: Rally, get arrested, get released and repeat.

ing the dire state of rain forests and the plight of indigenous people dying in clashes over their native lands.

Ms. Tomlin took the stage. "Indigenous people and their supporters chained themselves to their trees to block bulldozers," she said. "They have saved many fragile forests in Canada from new pipelines. Together with the oceans, the trees are lungs. We must save them." "No more petro-fertilizers!" a woman shouted.

"Yeah and no cutting down Christmas trees, even!" Ms. Tomlin urged. "Don't cut any more down! You want to be able to go and pull out that fake tree and put it right up, wouldn't you, with ornaments on it and everything? That's what we do in our house. It's too late for moderation!"

Ms. Fonda hugged her friend, then took the microphone.

"Let me just say a few things about meat and Christmas trees," Ms. Fonda said. She and other activists "had a discussion last night at the teach-in about the issue of Christmas trees. It's O.K., because tree farms for the most part are put in kind of degraded land."

Turning to Ms. Tomlin, "You're wrong!" she said, to laughter.

This week's fire drill — the year's last — was sparsely attended. Congress is gone until next month and President Trump — who has helped publicize the events by publicly jeering Ms. Fonda — is in Florida. A couple of hundred people turned up for the rally, including tourists in packable puffer coats.

More than 100 participants have been arrested at previous Fire Drills. But on Friday only a dozen people volunteered to kick off a holiday weekend in handcuffs, and Ms. Fonda was not among them.

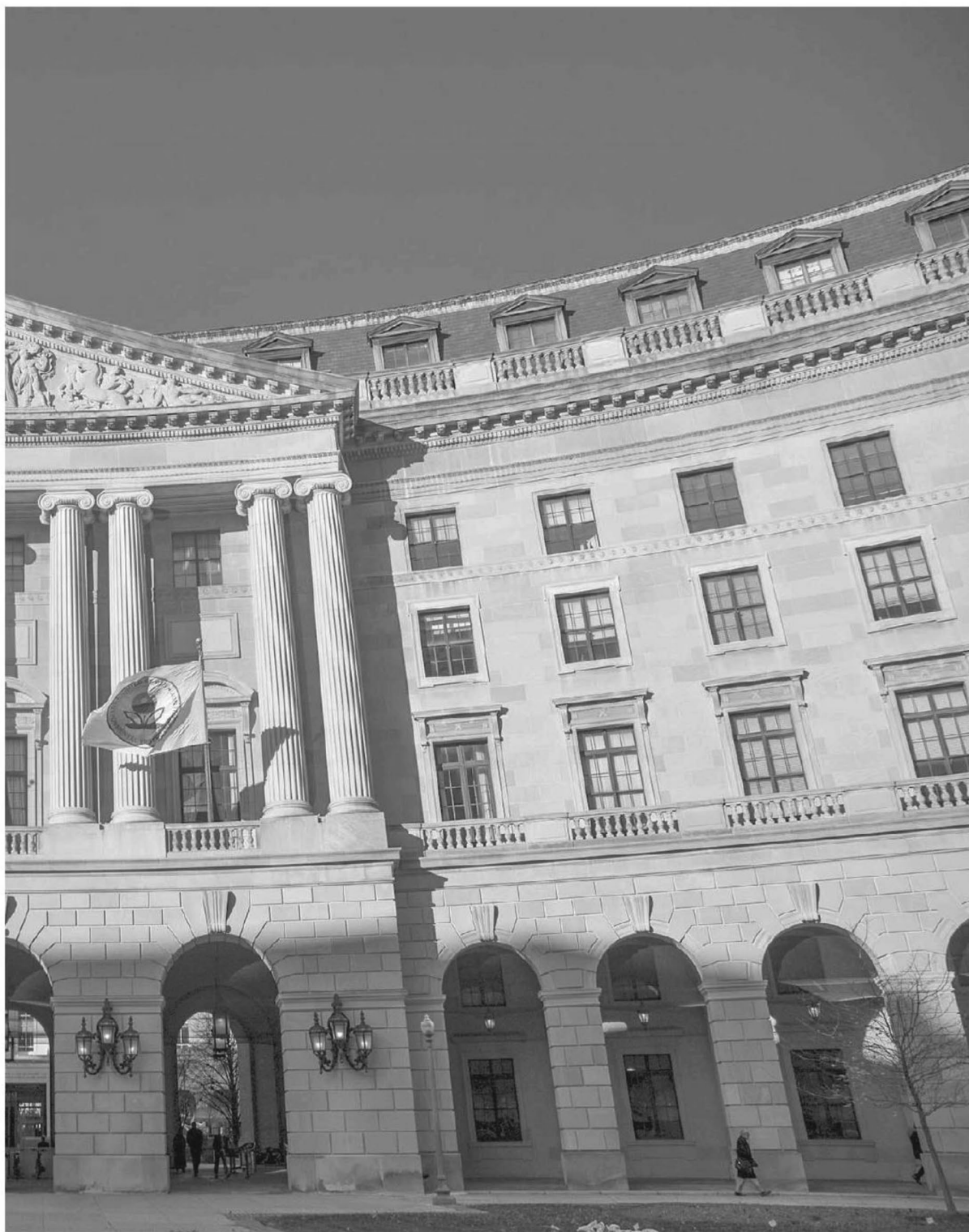
"She's not going to get arrested this time," said Ira Arlook, a veteran spokesman for grass-roots causes and promoter of the event who has protested with Ms. Fonda since 1972. After five previous arrests, Ms. Fonda was concerned about the jail time that might come with a sixth. She starts shooting the last season of "Grace and Frankie" on Jan. 11.

Ms. Tomlin had a shorter rap sheet, so she volunteered to be Friday's celebrity bust.

Mr. Arlook expressed his appreciation for the Capitol Police's efficiency in making arrests. In comparison, the city's Metropolitan Police and the Secret Service are waiting people out," he said. "So you end up spending two and a half, three hours standing around and nothing happens."

On Friday, the police offered two warnings by bullhorn. After the second, a weary-sounding officer at the top of the steps said, "All right, guys, if you're not looking to get locked up, you're going to want to proceed down the stairs to the outer perimeter." After a few more selfies, most in the group obliged.

The police had brought with them a couple of buses, but Friday's detainees fit comfortably in a minivan.



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scope is wider. Many top government positions, including at the E.P.A. and the Interior Department, are now occupied by former lobbyists connected to the industries that those agencies oversee.

Scientists and health experts have singled out two moves they find particularly concerning. Since 2017, the E.P.A. has moved to restrict certain academics from sitting on its Science Advisory Board, which provides scrutiny of agency science, and has instead increased the number of appointees connected with industry.

And, in a potentially far-reaching move, the E.P.A. has proposed a rule to limit regulators from using scientific research unless the underlying raw data can be made public. Industry groups like the Chamber of Commerce have argued that some agency rules are based on science that can't be fully scrutinized by outsiders. But dozens of scientific organizations have warned that the proposal in its current form could prevent the E.P.A. from considering a vast array of research on issues like the dangers of air pollution if, for instance, they are based on confidential health data.

"The problem is that rather than allowing agency scientists to use their judgment and weigh the best available evidence, this could put political constraints on how science enters the decision-making process in the first place," said Ms. Wagner, the University of Texas law professor.

The E.P.A. says its proposed rule is intended to make the science that underpins potentially costly regulations more transparent. "By requiring transparency," said Mr. Abboud, the agency spokesman, "scientists will be required to publish hypothesis and experimental data for other scientists to review and discuss, requiring the science to withstand skepticism and peer review."

An Exodus of Expertise

"In the past, when we had an administration that was not very pro-environment, we could still just lay low and do our work," said Betsy Smith, a climate scientist with more than 20 years at the E.P.A. who in 2017 saw her long-running study of the effects of climate change on major ports get canceled.

"Now we feel like the E.P.A. is being run by the fossil fuel industry," she said. "It feels like a wholesale attack."

After her project was killed, Dr. Smith resigned.

The loss of experienced scientists can erase years or decades of "institutional memory," said Robert J. Kavlock, a toxicologist who retired in October 2017 after working at the E.P.A. for 40 years, most recently as acting assistant administrator for the agency's Office of Research and Development.

His former office, which researches topics like air pollution and chemical testing, has lost 250 scientists and technical staff members since Mr. Trump came to office, while hiring 124. Those who have remained in the office of roughly 1,500 people continue to do their work, Dr. Kavlock said, but are not going out of their way to promote findings on lightning-rod topics like climate change.

"You can see that they're trying not to ruffle any feathers," Dr. Kavlock said.

The same can't be said of Patrick Gonzalez, the National Park Service climate change scientist, whose work involves helping national parks protect against damage from rising temperatures.

In February, Dr. Gonzalez testified before Congress about the risks of global warming, saying he was speaking in his capacity as an associate adjunct professor at the University of California, Berkeley. He is also using his Berkeley affiliation to participate as a co-author on a coming report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, a United Nations body that synthesizes climate science for world leaders.

But in March, shortly after testifying, Dr. Gonzalez's supervisor at the National Park Service sent the cease-and-desist letter warning him that his Berkeley affiliation was not separate from his government work and that his actions were violating agency policy. Dr. Gonzalez said he viewed the letter as an attempt to deter him from speaking out.

The Interior Department said the letter did not indicate an intent to sanction Dr. Gonzalez and that he was free to speak as a private citizen.

Dr. Gonzalez, with the support of Berkeley, continues to warn about the dangers of climate change and work with the United Nations climate change panel using his vacation time, and he spoke again to Congress in June. "I'd like to provide a positive example for other scientists," he said.

Still, he noted that not everyone may be in a position to be outspoken. "How many others are not speaking up?" Dr. Gonzalez said.



BRENDAN SMIALOWSKI/AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE — GETTY IMAGES



TING SHEN/REUTERS

At the Environmental Protection Agency, top, staffing has fallen to its lowest levels in a decade. "Now we feel like the E.P.A. is being run by the fossil fuel industry," said Betsy Smith, a longtime climate scientist. The nation's weather agency also was pressured this year to back the president's false assertion, at left, that a hurricane threatened Alabama.

tions lightly," he said in a statement. A Department of Agriculture official added that both agencies were pushing to continue their work, but acknowledged that some grants could be delayed by months.

Questioning the Science Itself

In addition to shutting down programs, there have been instances where the administration has challenged established scientific research. Early on, as it started rolling back regulations on industry, administration officials began questioning research findings underpinning those regulations.

In 2017, aides to Scott Pruitt, the E.P.A. administrator at the time, told the agency's economists to redo an analysis of wetlands protections that had been used to help defend an Obama-era clean-water rule. Instead of concluding that the protections would provide more than \$500 million in economic benefits, they were told to list the benefits as unquantifiable, according to Elizabeth Souther-

land, who retired in 2017 from a 30-year career at the E.P.A., finishing as a senior official in its water office.

"It's not unusual for a new administration to come in and change policy direction," Dr. Southerland said. "But typically you would look for new studies and carefully redo the analysis. Instead they were sending a message that all the economists, scientists, career staff in the agency were irrelevant."

Internal documents show that political officials at the E.P.A. have overruled the agency's career experts on several occasions, including in a move to regulate asbestos more lightly, in a decision not to ban the pesticide chlorpyrifos and in a determination that parts of Wisconsin were in compliance with smog standards. The Interior Department sidelined its own legal and environmental analyses in advancing a proposal to raise the Shasta Dam in California.

Michael Abboud, an E.P.A. spokesman, disputed Dr. Southerland's account in an email, saying "It is not true."

The E.P.A. is now finalizing a narrower version of the Obama-era water rule, which in its earlier form had prompted outrage from thousands of farmers and ranchers across the country who saw it as overly restrictive.

"E.P.A. under President Trump has worked to put forward the strongest regulations to protect human health and the environment," Mr. Abboud said, noting that several Obama administration rules had been held up in court and needed revision. "As required by law E.P.A. has always and will continue to use the best available science when developing rules, regardless of the claims of a few federal employees."

Past administrations have, to varying degrees, disregarded scientific findings that conflicted with their priorities. In 2011, President Obama's top health official overruled experts at the Food and Drug Administration who had concluded that over-the-counter emergency contraceptives were safe for minors.

But in the Trump administration, the



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From far left: At the Commerce Department, a 15-person scientific committee on climate change was disbanded; at the Department of Agriculture, two research agencies were gutted; at the Interior Department a \$1 million study on the health risks of coal mining was canceled.