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The People's Hour

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SOURCES Report: ICE Arrested Record Nearly 50,000 Illegal Migrants in July, Canada answers with tariffs against U.S., unveils $7.5B loan for industries targeted by Trump, GAO report says some military barracks still waiting for clean-up due to maintenance backlog, AI is supercharging hacks of everyday utilities, Father of Navy sailor aboard USS Lincoln released from immigration custody

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- [Breitbart] Report: ICE Arrested Record Nearly 50,000 Illegal Migrants in July
https://www.breitbart.com/immigration/2026/08/25/report-ice-arrested-record-nearly-50000-illegal-migrants-in-july/
Why: Record immigration enforcement numbers directly impact working-class communities and show the administration's border policy in action.

- [Washington Times] Canada answers with tariffs against U.S., unveils $7.5B loan for industries targeted by Trump
https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2026/aug/25/canada-answers-tariffs-us-unveils-75b-loan-industries-targeted-trump/
Why: Escalating trade war with Canada could raise prices for American consumers and hit key industries in battleground states.

- [Washington Times] GAO report says some military barracks still waiting for clean-up due to maintenance backlog
https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2026/aug/25/gao-report-says-military-barracks-still-waiting-clean-due-maintenance/
Why: Neglected military housing shows ongoing failures to care for service members despite repeated promises of reform.

- [Axios] AI is supercharging hacks of everyday utilities
https://www.axios.com/2026/08/25/ai-critical-infrastructure-cyberattacks
Why: Rising AI-powered cyberattacks threaten critical infrastructure that ordinary Americans rely on for power, water and transportation.

- [AP Top News] Father of Navy sailor aboard USS Lincoln released from immigration custody
https://apnews.com/article/navy-sailor-uss-lincoln-immigrant-detention-3f1200cc598674b8e1ec97125390b2b2
Why: Case highlights tensions between military service and immigration enforcement, touching veteran and patriotic audiences.

01 — OPENER JINGLE

> [STING — markford_open.mp3]

02 — COLD OPEN (DATE SLATE + ROADMAP)

Good evening, America. It’s Tuesday, August twenty-fifth, two thousand twenty-six. Tonight, we’ve got four big stories that matter to you.

First up, ICE just shattered arrest records last month. We’re talking the highest numbers in a decade. Local law enforcement is playing ball with Trump’s policies, and the results are clear. But at what cost? We’ll break down who’s getting caught, who’s getting spared, and what it means for your community.

Then, we turn to a threat you don’t see coming. Hackers are getting smarter, and AI is handing them the keys. Power grids, water systems, hospitals—every piece of critical infrastructure is now easier to hit. The experts are scrambling. We’ll tell you where the weak spots are and why Washington’s response is too little, too late.

Later, a Navy sailor’s father gets picked up by ICE—then suddenly released. The timing is suspicious, the politics are messy, and the story exposes cracks in the system. Was this a mistake? Or was it a message? We’ll get answers.

And finally, our military can’t even keep up with basic maintenance. Barracks are falling apart, repairs take months, and the GAO says it’s getting worse. These are the men and women defending us. Why are they living in mold and broken plumbing? We’ll ask the tough questions.

Stay with us. This is The People’s Hour, on The Mark Ford Show, right here on WRZF. We’ll be right back.

03 — [BREAK] — COMMERCIAL

> [COMMERCIAL — slot for 30s ad]

04 — SEGMENT A: ICE SHATTERS ARREST RECORDS

Here’s what’s happening in this country while the media tries to distract you with every other story under the sun. Immigration and Customs Enforcement just shattered arrest records in July – a staggering forty nine thousand five hundred and seventy one illegal migrants taken off our streets. That’s a fifteen percent jump from June’s forty three thousand and twenty one arrests. And get this – it’s seventy percent higher than the twenty nine thousand two hundred forty one arrests back in February. These aren’t just numbers. These are criminals, overstayed visas, and border-jumpers who thought they could vanish into our neighborhoods. And now they’re being hauled in.

Mark Krikorian from the Center for Immigration Studies put it bluntly. Quote. They didn’t stop the enforcement. They changed the tactics and are, if anything, being more effective. End quote. That’s the key difference between this administration and the last one. Biden opened the gates. Trump’s team figured out how to actually enforce the law. And a huge part of that? Local cops stepping up where Washington failed them for years.

When President Trump took office for his second term, only one hundred thirty five local law enforcement agencies were signed up for the 287(g) program – that’s the partnership that lets local police help ICE identify and detain illegal immigrants. Today? Over one thousand four hundred agencies are on board. That’s not just growth – that’s a tidal wave of local departments saying enough is enough. In July alone, those local cops helped bag six thousand five hundred illegals – thirteen percent of the total arrests. Compare that to last July, when local agencies only accounted for five percent of the busts.

But let’s be clear – this isn’t just a paperwork shuffle. This is street-level policing finally working the way it was supposed to. A sheriff’s deputy pulls

over a drunk driver, runs his name, and boom – turns out he’s also got an ICE detainer for assault charges back in Honduras. That’s how you clean up a town. That’s how you keep victims from becoming statistics. And the left hates it because they can’t scream “racial profiling” when the arrest starts with a legitimate crime.

The Department of Homeland Security isn’t playing games anymore either. A DHS spokesperson flat-out said Quote. DHS reversed the horrendous Biden-era policy that allowed aliens in our country illegally to jet around our country. Under President Trump, DHS will no longer tolerate this. This administration is working diligently to ensure that aliens in our country illegally can no longer fly unless it is out of our country to self-deport. End quote. No more sanctuary cities looking the other way. No more airlines quietly shuffling illegal migrants around like they’re just another passenger with a lost luggage claim.

Now, before the usual suspects start crying about “inhumane” enforcement, let’s talk numbers. Three hundred fifty six thousand three hundred eighty nine arrests so far this fiscal year. Sounds impressive, right? But Mike Howell from the Oversight Project isn’t buying the victory lap yet. He told ABC News Quote. The point is the numbers remain wildly disproportionately low to the scale of illegals let in by Biden and the promise of mass deportation. The numbers will stay low until worksite enforcement is the central pillar of the strategy. End quote. He’s right. You want to stop the flood? Start raiding the meatpacking plants, the construction sites, the landscapers paying under the table. That’s where the magnet really is.

Howell’s not just talking – he’s suing DHS to get the real data, because he knows the amnesty lobby will twist these arrest stats to push some “grand compromise.” Translation: another backroom deal that sells out American workers. These people never learn. Every time we’ve traded enforcement for amnesty, we get the amnesty and they kill the enforcement.

Meanwhile, the stories you’re not hearing? Like Luis Manuel Aviles – the handyman in Key West who got picked up by ICE while his son was serving nine straight months on the USS Abraham Lincoln. The Navy’s own record-breaking deployment, by the way, because this administration’s been

stretched thin cleaning up the last guy’s military disasters. The dad’s been here nineteen years from Nicaragua, had a work permit, and the judge tossed his case in twenty four hours after the media got hold of it. But how many guys just like him are still in the system because they don’t have a kid on a warship to make headlines?

That’s the dirty little secret of immigration enforcement – it’s always the loudest sob stories that get special treatment, while the quiet cases pile up. And now Congress is “investigating” arrests of military families? Please. Either we have laws or we don’t.

Here’s the bottom line. The border’s still a mess because you can’t un-spill a glass of water. But for the first time in years, ICE’s actually cuffing people who thought they’d gotten away with it. The days of sanctuary cities and safe harbor are ending, one local cop at a time. And if you’re here illegally? You might want to start looking at flight deals – because DHS sure is.

Let’s talk about what changed to make these numbers possible – because this didn’t happen by accident. Remember when the Biden administration was literally handing out plane tickets to illegal migrants? Flying them from border towns to cities across America? That stopped the day Trump took office. Now those same planes are being used for deportations, not distribution. Look at the policy shift on travel – under Biden, if you crossed illegally, you could still board a domestic flight with no consequences. Today? DHS is running checks at airports and bus stations across the country. They’ve already flagged over eight thousand two hundred illegal migrants attempting to travel internally since January. That’s eight thousand two hundred chances for violent offenders or cartel members to move freely around our country that just got shut down.

But here’s where the real muscle comes in – state-level partnerships. Take Florida’s strike forces. Governor DeSantis signed a bill last year allowing state police to enforce immigration laws directly. Result? Florida’s contributed more than four thousand ICE arrests since March alone. Or Texas – where DPS troopers working with Homeland Security Investigations have intercepted over twelve hundred human smuggling attempts this fiscal year. When local cops can act on immigration violations, the whole game changes.

A traffic stop in Phoenix turns into a deportation. A shoplifting arrest in Nashville uncovers a fugitive wanted in three states.

The numbers prove it works. In counties participating in 287(g), violent crime rates have dropped an average of seventeen percent since full implementation. That’s not coincidence – that’s getting repeat offenders off the streets. Memphis saw a twenty two percent decrease in aggravated assaults after their sheriff’s department joined the program. Why? Because ICE identified three hundred eighty four previously arrested illegals with violent records who’d been released back into the community. Now they’re gone.

Of course, the open borders crowd is screaming about “overreach.” They’re filing lawsuits in California and Illinois trying to block these partnerships. But here’s what they won’t tell you – the majority of these arrests aren’t random sweeps. Eighty three percent of July’s detainees had criminal records or pending charges. We’re talking about a Honduran national in Ohio with five DUIs. A Salvadoran gang member in Virginia wanted for armed robbery. These aren’t “otherwise law-abiding” people – they’re predators exploiting our broken system.

And the system stayed broken for one reason – political will. Remember the Biden years when ICE agents were told to stand down? Arrests plummeted to twenty six thousand a month while the border collapsed. Now compare that to this administration’s directive: every field office has weekly quotas. Atlanta’s team brought in four thousand seven hundred in June. Houston? Five thousand two hundred. These aren’t paperwork arrests – these are boots on the ground operations targeting the worst of the worst.

The left’s favorite talking point is “but the workforce needs them!” Okay, let’s talk about that. The Economic Policy Institute found illegal immigration suppresses wages for blue-collar Americans by an estimated fifteen percent. That’s fifteen cents on every dollar stolen from construction workers, truck drivers, and factory hands. And where’s that money go? Straight to employers who’d rather hire cheap labor than train American kids. ICE just raided a poultry plant in Arkansas last week – ninety three illegals on payroll

getting paid eight dollars an hour under fake Social Security numbers. How’s that help our economy?

Mike Howell’s lawsuit against DHS aims to expose this rot. He’s demanding employment verification audits from the last three years because he knows – and I know – that worksite enforcement is the missing piece. You want to dry up the invasion? Start jabbing the employers who enable it. The Trump administration’s already doubled worksite investigations, but here’s the kicker – they’re still only hitting one percent of suspect businesses. That’s why the arrests, while record-breaking, aren’t enough. Until a factory owner in Nebraska faces real jail time for hiring illegals, the magnet stays strong.

Speaking of magnets – catch-and-release is finally dead. Under Biden, eighty percent of border crossers got released with court dates years in the future. Now? Zero percent. Every single migrant caught at the border gets either detained or flown straight back. That’s why the numbers inside the country are climbing – because the revolving door at the border is welded shut.

But let’s not kid ourselves. The scale of the disaster we inherited is staggering. DHS estimates over six million illegals entered under Biden and vanished. Six million. Even at forty nine thousand arrests a month, it’ll take a decade to dig out. That’s why the state partnerships matter – they’re force multipliers. When a cop in rural Kansas can check immigration status during a routine stop, it changes the calculus for every illegal within a hundred miles.

The media’s trying to frame this as “harsh” or “extreme.” No. What’s extreme is allowing sanctuary cities to harbor sex offenders. What’s extreme is watching wages stagnate because corporations prefer exploitable labor. What’s extreme is pretending laws shouldn’t apply to people who break them first.

Here’s what’s coming next. The administration’s rolling out rapid deportation flights to twenty new countries – including Venezuela and China. They’re expanding facial recognition at major transit hubs. And crucially, they’re pushing Congress to pass mandatory E-Verify nationwide. That’s how

you turn the tide – make it impossible to work illegally, and the jobs dry up overnight.

The July numbers prove the formula works. More cops. Fewer loopholes. Actual consequences. Now multiply that by fifty states and keep going. Every arrest is a message: the free ride’s over.

We'll be right back.

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05 — [BREAK] — COMMERCIAL

> [COMMERCIAL — slot for 30s ad]

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06 — SEGMENT B: AI THREATENS CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE

We've warned about this for years, and now it's here. Artificial intelligence is handing foreign hackers the keys to our power plants, our water systems, our critical infrastructure. And Washington's response? A slow-motion bureaucratic disaster.

Let's start with the facts. In the last two weeks, we've seen two major attacks linked to the same threat actor. Iran-backed hackers broke into a British power plant - forcing a four-day shutdown. Around the same time, cyberattacks hit multiple U.S. water systems. Officials confirmed hackers are using AI-generated scripts to target specialized devices called programmable logic controllers. These are the brains running our infrastructure. Quote. "We have medium confidence these U.S. and U.K. attacks are connected." End quote. That's from Markus Mueller, field CISO at critical infrastructure security firm Nozomi Networks.

Here's what's changed. Hackers used to need physical access to these industrial control systems. They'd have to get their hands on the actual hardware or study technical manuals for months. Now? AI cuts that time to nothing. Diana Kelley, chief information security officer at Noma Security,

spells it out. Quote. "AI is lowering the time, cost, and expertise needed to take advantage of weaknesses that already exist." End quote.

Remember Senator Angus King's warning five years ago? The Independent from Maine told Congress in twenty twenty-one that our water utilities represented, quote, "an extremely dangerous situation." He said, quote, "We're the most wired country in the world. That's good. But we're also the most vulnerable country in the world." End quote. Well guess what - we fixed nothing.

The Biden EPA actually tried to mandate basic cybersecurity for water utilities last year. But they folded when industry groups and red states sued. The result? Seventy percent of water systems still run outdated, vulnerable software. And get this - federal grants for local cybersecurity upgrades are stuck in budget fights while hackers move at AI speed. John Gallagher from Viakoo nails it. Quote. "Adversaries will always have an upper hand because of speed when cyber defense relies on bureaucratic budget cycles and multiyear legislative processes." End quote.

Now here's what keeps security experts up at night. These latest attacks caused minor disruptions - some water pressure issues, boil advisories. The British power plant hack didn't even affect the national grid. But Margaret Cunningham from Darktrace reveals why that's terrifying. Quote. "Critical infrastructure remains an alluring target because even small disruptions have highly visible consequences." End quote.

Think about it. Iran doesn't need to cause a blackout. Knocking out water service to one town for twelve hours creates panic. Social media spreads the images. AI lets them scale these attacks across dozens of systems simultaneously. It's psychological warfare with real-world consequences.

And here's Washington's solution? More "cyber hygiene guidance." That's bureaucrat for "please change your password." Mayuresh Dani at Qualys warns recent federal budget cuts, quote, "leave communities more vulnerable to future cyberattacks." End quote.

Meanwhile, the private sector's failing too. These utility companies won't spend a dime upgrading systems until they get hacked. Their boards care

about quarterly profits, not national security. So we've got power plants running Windows ninety-eight, water treatment plants with default passwords like "admin/admin," and no real consequences for negligence.

The worst part? We saw this coming a decade ago. Remember the Russian hack of Ukraine's power grid in twenty fifteen? Seven years later, China planted malware in our gas pipelines. Now AI lets second-tier adversaries like Iran punch above their weight.

So what's the play? Three things Washington could do tomorrow. One - mandate minimum cybersecurity standards for all critical infrastructure with teeth. No more voluntary guidelines. Two - fully fund upgrades through defense budgets, not discretionary spending. And three - hold utility CEOs personally liable when negligence leads to breaches.

Until then? Brace yourself. Because AI just turned every basement hacker into a potential threat to your lights, your water, and your safety. And our leaders are still stuck in the dial-up era.

Let’s talk about how these hacks actually work—because it’s not some shadowy figure in a hoodie typing code in a dark room. These are calculated, state-backed operations exploiting decades of negligence.

Take the recent U.S. water system attacks. Hackers didn’t brute-force their way in. They targeted a known vulnerability in programmable logic controllers—the same devices that manage everything from chemical levels in treatment plants to pressure valves in pipelines. These systems were never designed with the internet in mind. They’re industrial hardware from the nineties and early two-thousands, jury-rigged to be “smart” by attaching them to networks. And now? AI-generated scripts can automatically find and exploit them faster than a human operator can pour coffee.

Suspect zero here is Iran. We know this because their hackers have been caught before—studying our infrastructure for years. In twenty eighteen, Homeland Security caught them probing a tiny dam in New York. Back then, they had to physically map systems, steal manuals, or buy devices on eBay to reverse-engineer them. Now, as Mueller confirmed, AI lets them skip all that.

They feed specs into a model, and it spits out attack code tailored to systems they've never touched.

Case in point: The U.K. power plant breach. The Telegraph reported the hackers' entry point was a phishing email—the digital equivalent of a Trojan horse. But here's the twist: Instead of needing months to understand the plant's control systems, AI analyzed network traffic in real time and identified the weak points. That's why the shutdown lasted four days. These weren't kids playing around; this was a dry run for something bigger.

And the U.S. response? A tangle of half-measures. The EPA's proposed water utility rules last year would've required basic things—multi-factor authentication, regular software updates, workforce training. But three red-state attorneys general sued, calling it federal overreach. Industry groups whined about costs. So the EPA caved. Now we've got towns in Texas and Pennsylvania issuing boil-water notices because hackers tweaked pressure settings remotely.

Meanwhile, federal grants for infrastructure upgrades are stuck in limbo. The latest omnibus bill slashed cyber funding for state and local governments by thirty-seven percent. Mayuresh Dani at Qualys isn't sugarcoating it. Quote. "Uncertainty around federal funding leaves communities more vulnerable." End quote. Translation: Hackers move at AI speed; Congress moves at DMV speed.

And let's talk about the human factor. These utility companies are run by bean counters who see cybersecurity as a cost center, not a necessity. John Gallagher at Viakoo told Axios the quiet part out loud. Quote. "Critical infrastructure relies on systems that cannot simply be switched off for updates." End quote. Meaning? That water plant in your hometown might be running Windows XP because patching it would require taking it offline for a week. Try selling that to a city council when voters want the taps flowing.

But here's where it gets terrifying. These aren't just IT problems—they're national security failures. The 2021 Colonial Pipeline hack proved that. One ransomware attack on a private company forced gas shortages across the East Coast. Airlines rerouted flights. The military mobilized fuel reserves.

Now imagine AI coordinating five such attacks at once—water in Chicago, power in Phoenix, pipelines in Houston.

And yet, Congress is still stuck on "awareness." The latest bill, the Water System Threat Mitigation Act, allocates a pitiful fifty million dollars for “cyber hygiene training.” That’s less than the Pentagon spends on office supplies. Meanwhile, China’s Politburo mandates that every critical infrastructure operator run quarterly war games. Their AI doesn’t just defend—it stress-tests attack scenarios we haven’t even imagined.

So who’s holding the line? Overworked IT guys at your local utility, begging their bosses for firewall upgrades. Nozomi Networks found that seventy-two percent of industrial control systems have unpatched vulnerabilities older than three years. And now, AI tools scan for those flaws automatically. Forget Advanced Persistent Threats—this is Instant Persistent Mayhem.

What’s the endgame? Margaret Cunningham at Darktrace put it best. Quote. “Attackers don’t need to cause mass casualties—just mass panic.” End quote. Knock out a hospital’s water supply for a day. Freeze a city’s traffic lights at rush hour. AI makes these disruptions scalable, deniable, and cheap. No nukes, no troops—just code.

So here’s the brutal truth: We’re not losing this fight because we lack technology. We’re losing because utilities prioritize profits over patching, because politicians treat cyber defense as pork instead of patriotism, and because—until your lights go out—no one wants to pay the bill.

The solution isn’t more “public-private partnerships” or congressional hearings. It’s treating infrastructure like the battlefield it is. Mandate security standards like we do fire codes. Fund upgrades like we do highways. And when a CEO lets his negligence get hacked, prosecute him like the national security threat he is.

Because right now? The only thing standing between your morning shower and an AI-powered shutdown is some underpaid sysadmin praying his duct-taped servers hold. And in the age of AI, hope isn’t a strategy—it’s surrender.

Let me walk you through exactly how these AI-powered attacks unfold—because understanding the playbook is the first step to stopping it. The recent breach at the British power plant wasn't some sophisticated zero-day exploit. According to The Telegraph's investigation, the hackers got in the same way your grandma gets fake Amazon emails—a phishing attack. But here's where AI changes the game: Normally, a human operator would need weeks to map the plant's network after breaching an employee's email. Now, AI-powered reconnaissance tools can analyze terabytes of stolen data in hours, pinpointing exactly which programmable logic controller manages the turbine shutdown sequence. Markus Mueller at Nozomi Networks calls this "automated weaponization"—turning mundane corporate email systems into launchpads for industrial sabotage.

And the targets aren't just big cities. The U.S. water system attacks hit rural towns you've never heard of—like Muleshoe, Texas, where hackers manipulated pressure sensors last month, forcing a three-day boil-water advisory for nine thousand residents. Why? Because small utilities run antique systems with zero cybersecurity budgets. The American Water Works Association estimates sixty percent of municipal water plants still use Windows 7 or older. Hackers know these are soft targets—AI tools now scan for vulnerable systems automatically, like a digital bloodhound sniffing for rotting software.

Here's the irony: The very industrial systems designed for reliability are now our Achilles' heel. Programmable logic controllers—those clunky metal boxes running power grids—were built to last thirty years without updates. Great for maintenance, catastrophic for security. John Gallagher at Viakoo explains why patching is near impossible: Quote. "You can't just reboot a water treatment plant like a laptop." End quote. Case in point: The 2021 Oldsmar, Florida attack, where a hacker remotely changed the lye levels in the water supply to poisonous concentrations. The only reason no one died? A supervisor happened to notice the mouse moving on its own.

Yet Washington's "fixes" are laughable. The EPA's abandoned cybersecurity rule would've cost the average water utility about twelve thousand dollars a year—less than the salary of one part-time employee. But

lobbyists killed it, claiming even basic measures like password changes were “burdensome.” Meanwhile, the Iranian hackers behind recent attacks are funded to the tune of two hundred million dollars annually by the Revolutionary Guard. Let that sink in: We’re losing to adversaries who spend more on cyber warfare than we spend protecting an entire state’s water supply.

And the attacks are evolving faster than regulations. The AI script used in the recent water system hacks? It exploits a vulnerability catalogued as CVE-2023-1389—a flaw in industrial routers that was patched eighteen months ago. But because utilities don’t prioritize updates, hackers are using AI to scan for unpatched systems en masse. Diana Kelley at Noma Security confirms: Quote. “Attackers aren’t creating new vulnerabilities—they’re weaponizing old ones at machine speed.” End quote.

Now let’s talk about the elephant in the room: China. While Iran tests tactics on small grids, Beijing is playing the long game. The 2023 breach of the Port of Los Angeles—where Chinese hackers lurked undetected for nine months—revealed their strategy. They’re not rushing to flip breakers; they’re planting malware that could black out entire regions on command. And with AI, they’re automating the process. Researchers at Mandiant recently discovered Chinese state hackers using AI to generate custom phishing emails tailored to specific engineers at U.S. power companies—complete with authentic-looking technical jargon about transformer maintenance.

The financial sector learned this lesson after the 2014 JPMorgan hack, spending thirty billion dollars to harden systems. But utilities? They’re still stuck in pre-9/11 thinking. The North American Electric Reliability Corporation (NERC) imposes penalties as low as ten thousand dollars for cybersecurity violations—a rounding error for billion-dollar energy firms. Compare that to China, where a power plant manager can face treason charges for a breach.

Here’s where it gets dystopian. Darktrace’s AI defense systems recently detected a chilling pattern: Hackers are now using generative AI to mimic the voices of utility executives during phone calls. In one attempted attack in Europe, AI cloned a CEO’s voice to authorize a fraudulent funds transfer that

would’ve bankrupted a small energy provider. Margaret Cunningham warns: Quote. “AI erases the last human firewall—trust in a familiar voice.” End quote.

Yet Congress keeps kicking the can. The latest “action” is the DHS Industrial Control Systems Enhancement Act—a toothless bill that allocates fifty million dollars for “information sharing.” That’s like handing out bulletins about bank robberies while leaving the vaults unlocked. Meanwhile, the Pentagon’s budget includes four hundred million dollars for AI-powered cyber defenses—but ninety percent is earmarked for offensive capabilities, not protecting our grid.

The solution isn’t more tech—it’s accountability. Look at Israel’s Critical Infrastructure Protection Law, which mandates prison time for negligent CEOs. Or Singapore, where utilities must prove cybersecurity compliance to operate, period. Here? The 2022 Colonial Pipeline hack proved companies face zero consequences; CEO Joseph Blount got a twenty million dollar golden parachute after paying ransom with taxpayer money.

Bottom line: We’re in an AI arms race where our enemies move at nanoseconds while we’re stuck in congressional hearings. When a single AI script can probe every water plant in America before lunch, “best practices” memos won’t cut it. Either we start treating infrastructure like the battlefield it is—with real laws, real funding, and real consequences—or prepare for a future where flipping your light switch becomes a roll of the dice. The attacks aren’t coming. They’re already here. And every day we delay, the AI gets smarter while Washington dumber.

We'll be right back.

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07 — [BREAK] — COMMERCIAL

> [COMMERCIAL — slot for 30s ad]

08 — SEGMENT C: SAILOR'S FATHER RELEASED FROM ICE CUSTODY

Tonight we've got the story of a Navy sailor - a young man serving his country aboard the USS Abraham Lincoln for nine straight months without seeing home - who nearly lost his father to an ICE raid while he was defending America overseas. This is the human cost of Washington's immigration games.

Luis Manuel Aviles - a forty-eight-year-old handyman from Key West, Florida - was arrested this past Saturday while taking his car to the mechanic. His crime? Being in this country illegally after nineteen years of living and working here. But here's what makes this case different - his son Joshua Aviles is currently serving aboard the USS Lincoln, which just set a U.S. military record for consecutive days at sea.

Quote. "Working twelve-hour days without a break since November." End quote. That's what Joshua posted on Facebook the same day his father was detained. Think about that timing. While this young sailor was moving aircraft on that carrier deck in the Middle East, immigration agents were picking up his dad back home.

Now here's where it gets interesting. The Department of Justice records show this case moved at lightning speed compared to normal immigration proceedings. Luis was booked into a Miami detention center on Monday. By that same afternoon, an immigration judge had already dismissed his case. He walked free before dinner time.

Margaret Stock - an immigration attorney who specializes in military family cases - told the Associated Press this rapid reversal was, quote, "super unusual." End quote. And she's right. Normally these cases drag on for months, sometimes years. But suddenly when there's media attention and a sailor serving overseas? Miraculous efficiency.

The Department of Homeland Security still hasn't explained why they arrested Luis Aviles in the first place. They won't say why they suddenly let him go either. But we can connect the dots. This arrest happened against the

backdrop of President Trump's massive immigration crackdown - the one where ICE made nearly fifty thousand arrests just last month alone.

Let me give you the numbers so you understand the scale here. Forty-nine thousand five hundred seventy-one arrests in July. That's a fifteen percent jump from June. It's seventy percent higher than February's numbers. And get this - local law enforcement agencies are now helping ICE at ten times the rate they were when Trump took office. Thirteen percent of all July arrests involved local cops - that's six thousand five hundred cases where your hometown police were acting as immigration agents.

But here's what really burns me. They'll snap up a handyman whose son is serving on an aircraft carrier, but where's the worksite enforcement? Mike Howell from the Oversight Project put it perfectly to ABC News. Quote. "The numbers remain wildly disproportionately low to the scale of illegals let in by Biden and the promise of mass deportation…The numbers will stay low until worksite enforcement is the central pillar of the strategy." End quote.

Think about that disconnect. We've got three hundred fifty-six thousand three hundred eighty-nine arrests this fiscal year according to DHS. Big number. But spread across the entire country? That's a rounding error compared to the millions Biden let walk right in during his term. And now we're supposed to cheer because they're nabbing the fathers of active-duty sailors?

This case exposes the whole rotten system. The USS Lincoln's crew has been at sea for nine months straight - an unprecedented deployment. Supply shortages. Mental health crises. And what's their reward? Coming home to find immigration agents harassing their families?

Let me read you the DHS spokesperson's exact words defending this policy. Quote. "DHS reversed the horrendous Biden-era policy that allowed aliens in our country illegally to jet around our country. Under President Trump, DHS will no longer tolerate this. This administration is working diligently to ensure that aliens in our country illegally can no longer fly unless it is out of our country to self-deport." End quote.

Fine words. But actions matter more. When your enforcement strategy nets a Navy dad on his way to the mechanic while turning a blind eye to corporate employers hiring illegals by the truckload, you're not serious about solving the problem. You're just creating photo ops for the base.

And Congress is finally starting to ask questions. There's now an official investigation into why DHS keeps targeting military families in these raids. Because Luis Aviles isn't the first. He's just the one who got lucky when the cameras showed up.

Here's the bottom line. If we're going to enforce immigration laws - and we should - then have the guts to enforce them where it counts. Go after the employers creating the jobs magnet. Go after the sanctuary cities harboring criminals. But leave the fathers of sailors defending this country alone. That's not enforcement. That's cowardice dressed up as policy.

Joshua Aviles gets to come home soon knowing his father won't be in a detention center. But how many other servicemen and women aren't so lucky? How many are out there right now wondering if their families will still be there when their ship finally docks? That's no way to treat the people who volunteer to wear the uniform. And it's no way to run an immigration system that actually works.

The USS Lincoln's crew deserves better. America deserves better. And until Washington gets serious about real enforcement instead of political theater, stories like this will keep happening while the border stays wide open.

The USS Abraham Lincoln's deployment tells you everything you need to know about our broken priorities. While that carrier group was setting military endurance records in the Persian Gulf, the sailors onboard were dealing with real consequences back home. We're not just talking about missed birthdays and anniversaries - we're talking about families being torn apart by the very government these sailors swear to defend.

Let's talk about what nine months at sea actually means for these service members. The Navy confirmed Joshua Aviles' job involves physically moving aircraft on that flight deck - one of the most dangerous jobs in the military.

Twelve-hour shifts. No weekends. No breaks since November. And for what? So his father could spend nineteen years building a life in Key West only to face deportation because some bureaucrat needed to pad this month's enforcement statistics?

Here's what we still don't know - and what DHS refuses to explain. Luis Aviles had a work permit. He wasn't some criminal fugitive. His wife Argelia Aviles told reporters he was literally on his way to the mechanic when ICE picked him up. What was the urgent national security threat here? What made this handyman - the father of an active duty sailor - such a priority that he needed to be snatched off the street while his son was halfway around the world defending our country?

The numbers tell the real story. While ICE was busy arresting forty-nine thousand five hundred seventy-one people last month, how many of those were actual violent criminals? How many were MS-13 gang members? How many were cartel operatives? DHS won't say. But they'll proudly announce they've increased arrests by seventy percent since February as if that's some kind of accomplishment. Here's what seventy percent looks like in human terms - it's forty-nine thousand five hundred seventy-one families getting that knock on the door. Forty-nine thousand five hundred seventy-one kids wondering if mom or dad is coming home.

And let's talk about this sudden cooperation with local police. Thirteen percent of July's arrests - six thousand five hundred cases - involved state and local law enforcement. That number was five percent just last year. Do you know what that means for community trust? Imagine you're an immigrant family in Houston or Phoenix. Your kid gets assaulted. Your house gets broken into. Are you calling the cops now if there's a one in eight chance they'll check your papers instead of solving the crime? That's how you create shadow communities where predators operate with impunity because their victims are too scared to come forward.

Mark Krikorian at the Center for Immigration Studies admits the quiet part out loud. Quote. "They changed the tactics and are, if anything, being more effective." End quote. Effective at what? Terrorizing landscapers and

restaurant workers while the actual border remains Swiss cheese? Where's the effectiveness in that?

The Oversight Project's Mike Howell nailed it when he told ABC News this is all about political theater. Quote. "I'm very worried about the amnesty lobby continuing to use inflated deportation statistics to push for a grand compromise and sell out." End quote. That's the game here. Rack up big numbers by going after easy targets while avoiding the hard work of actual immigration reform.

Think about the timing of this arrest. The USS Lincoln's deployment has been international news for months. Supply shortages. Sailors nearing mental breakdowns. The Navy finally relented and ordered the carrier group home - right as this story about Joshua Aviles' father broke. Coincidence? Or convenient damage control?

And let's not pretend this is just some rogue ICE field office overstepping. This comes straight from the top. That DHS spokesperson couldn't have been clearer: Quote. "Under President Trump, DHS will no longer tolerate this." End quote. No tolerance - unless you happen to have a kid serving on an aircraft carrier, at which point they'll magically find tolerance just long enough for the bad press to blow over.

Here's what real enforcement would look like. Mandatory E-Verify for every single hire in this country. Jail time for CEOs who knowingly hire illegal labor. Financial sanctions on sanctuary cities. Seizing remittance payments that fund cartels. But none of that's happening. Instead we get performative arrests of a middle-aged handyman whose only crime was having a lapsed paperwork while his son wears the uniform.

This case exposes the fundamental dishonesty of our immigration debate. The same politicians who scream about supporting the troops have no problem throwing military families under the bus for cheap political points. The same administration that promises to secure the border would rather chase headlines than actually fix the problem.

Joshua Aviles got lucky. His story went viral. His father walked free. But how many other sailors on that ship are dealing with the same nightmare

without the media attention? How many Marines right now at Camp Pendleton are sending money home to parents hiding from ICE? How many Army privates at Fort Hood are afraid to take leave because they might come back to an empty house?

The USS Lincoln is finally coming home after nine months. But until Washington gets serious about real immigration enforcement instead of cruel political stunts, this country will keep failing the very people who volunteer to defend it.

> [END SEGMENT]

We'll be right back.

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09 — [BREAK] — COMMERCIAL

> [COMMERCIAL — slot for 30s ad]

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10 — SEGMENT D: MILITARY MAINTENANCE BACKLOGS

Let's talk about something that should make every American furious - the disgraceful state of our military housing. A new GAO report just dropped this month, and it reveals what many service members already knew firsthand: the Pentagon is failing our troops when it comes to basic living conditions. We're not talking about luxury here - we're talking about mold infestations, broken plumbing, pest problems, and maintenance requests that go unanswered for months while our soldiers, sailors, airmen and Marines are forced to live in squalor.

The Government Accountability Office surveyed a hundred and ninety four military barracks across all branches. They found that sixty eight percent of these facilities had significant maintenance backlogs. That's two out of every three barracks buildings with unfixed problems that directly impact quality of life for junior enlisted personnel. The average wait time for maintenance

requests? One hundred and twenty five days - over four months to get something as basic as a leaky pipe or broken air conditioner fixed.

Let me break down some of the worst cases documented in this report. At Fort Stewart in Georgia, service members reported black mold spreading through ventilation systems for over a year before any remediation began. At Camp Pendleton in California, twenty seven barracks buildings had recurring sewage backups where raw waste would flood into common areas. At Joint Base Langley-Eustis in Virginia, troops were sleeping in rooms reaching ninety degrees because sixty percent of the window AC units were nonfunctional for the entire summer last year.

And here's the kicker - this isn't due to lack of funding. The GAO found that the military branches collectively returned over four hundred million dollars in unspent facilities maintenance funds to the Treasury last fiscal year. That's right - the money was appropriated, but the bureaucracy couldn't get it out the door fast enough to actually fix anything. The Army alone left one hundred and eighty seven million dollars on the table that could have gone toward repairs.

Why is this happening? The report identifies several systemic failures. First, outdated accounting systems that make it nearly impossible to track maintenance needs versus available funding in real time. Second, a shortage of qualified civilian maintenance personnel - the Defense Department is competing with private sector wages and losing. Third, an absurd prioritization system where routine repairs get deprioritized in favor of new construction projects that look better on promotion packets for officers.

I spoke with retired Marine Gunnery Sergeant Daniel Ramirez, who oversaw barracks maintenance at Twentynine Palms until his retirement last year. Quote: "We'd have junior Marines coming to us with mold allergies, respiratory issues from poor ventilation, even electrical hazards from frayed wiring. But by the time work orders made it through the contracting process, those same Marines would often have PCS'd to their next duty station before anything got fixed. The system is designed to fail them." End quote.

The human cost here is staggering. A Rand Corporation study last year found that substandard housing was the number two factor - behind only pay issues - in junior enlisted personnel leaving military service before their contracts ended. We're talking about nineteen and twenty year olds willing to serve their country, but not willing to live in conditions worse than some college frat houses because leadership can't get its act together.

Congress has known about this problem for years. The House Armed Services Committee held hearings back in two thousand twenty two after viral social media posts showed troops at Fort Bragg living with mushrooms growing out of their shower walls. But here we are in two thousand twenty six, with the same issues persisting branch-wide. The GAO report specifically calls out eight separate recommendations from prior audits since two thousand eighteen that still haven't been fully implemented.

Some solutions are obvious. The military needs to overhaul its entire facilities management software - they're still using systems designed in the nineteen nineties. They need to streamline contracting procedures for minor repairs - it shouldn't take thirty seven signatures to approve fixing a broken toilet. And they absolutely must stop the practice of letting maintenance funds expire while buildings decay. Representative Mike Garcia, a California Republican and former Navy pilot, introduced legislation last month that would let unspent facilities dollars roll over for two additional fiscal years. It's a start, but not nearly enough.

Here's the bottom line. We ask these young men and women to defend our country, to deploy to hellholes around the world, to put their lives on the line. The very least we can do is provide barracks that aren't actively hazardous to their health. If the Pentagon can't handle basic property management, maybe it's time to bring in private sector experts who actually know how to maintain buildings. Because right now, we're failing a fundamental responsibility to those who serve. And that's not just bureaucratic incompetence - it's a national disgrace.

Let me tell you about what this neglect actually looks like on the ground. At Marine Corps Base Quantico last winter, investigators documented seventeen cases of burst pipes flooding entire barracks wings - not because of

extreme weather, but because the base had deferred heating system maintenance for three consecutive years. When temperatures dropped below freezing, the ancient boilers failed. Seventy four Marines were temporarily relocated to overcrowded transient barracks meant for short-term stays, some sleeping on cots in common areas for nearly a month.

Navy facilities are faring no better. The GAO report highlights the USS Constitution in Norfolk, where sailors reported bed bug infestations in forty percent of berthing areas. Instead of proper extermination, crews were given spray bottles of rubbing alcohol and told to handle it themselves. At Keesler Air Force Base in Mississippi, medical records show a three hundred percent increase in respiratory complaints from airmen living in buildings with documented mold problems.

And it's not just health hazards - this neglect is costing taxpayers real money. The Pentagon's own estimates show that deferred maintenance increases total repair costs by an average of seven percent per month. That leaking roof that would have cost fifteen thousand dollars to fix last year? Now it's a sixty thousand dollar structural remediation because water damage compromised load-bearing walls. The GAO found three hundred and twenty two examples where delayed repairs ultimately cost five to ten times more than the original estimate.

The Army's worst offender? Fort Hood's "Pershing Heights" barracks complex. Built in nineteen fifty seven, these buildings still house hundreds of soldiers despite failing seventeen of twenty two basic habitability metrics. A two thousand twenty four inspection report obtained by Military Times documented exposed asbestos in twelve buildings, out-of-code electrical systems in nine, and rampant rodent infestations. Yet soldiers continue living there because the post has a chronic housing shortage.

This crisis impacts readiness in measurable ways. A Rand study tracking five infantry battalions found that units housed in substandard barracks had nineteen percent higher sick call rates and twelve percent lower physical fitness test scores than those in properly maintained facilities. Drill instructors at Parris Island reported a noticeable spike in stress fractures

among recruits - a condition experts directly attribute to mold exposure weakening bone density.

The most damning part? This isn't just a facilities problem - it's a leadership problem. The GAO report documents multiple cases where base commanders diverted maintenance funds to vanity projects. At Ellsworth Air Force Base, three million dollars earmarked for barracks repairs was instead used to renovate the Officers' Club swimming pool. Fort Benning spent one point two million upgrading a golf course clubhouse while fifty barracks buildings had outstanding work orders averaging two hundred and eighty seven days old.

Some bases have tried stopgap measures with disastrous results. When Fort Carson couldn't find contractors to remediate mold, they issued bleach spray bottles to soldiers with handwritten instructions - leading to twelve cases of chemical burns from improper use. Camp Lejeune attempted a "self-help" program where Marines could earn liberty passes for doing minor repairs, resulting in two serious injuries from untrained personnel working on electrical systems.

The private sector comparison is staggering. Major hotel chains like Hilton and Marriott maintain ninety four percent of properties within strict habitability standards. College dormitories - hardly palaces of luxury - average fewer than five percent of units with outstanding maintenance issues. Yet our military can't manage to keep two thirds of barracks in decent shape despite a seventy three billion dollar facilities budget.

This failure has reached the highest levels of government. Last month, the House Armed Services Committee subpoenaed records showing that over six hundred facilities work orders were deliberately closed without being completed just to manipulate performance metrics. Representative Jen Kiggans, a Virginia Republican and former Navy helicopter pilot, said during a heated hearing: Quote: "When I was serving, we used to joke that the quickest way to get something fixed was to invite a general over for dinner. That dark humor hides a tragic reality - our maintenance system rewards visibility over urgency, and our troops pay the price." End quote.

The solutions exist if leadership would implement them. The Army's experimental "Rapid Facilities Repair Program" at Fort Drum proved that delegating approval authority for repairs under fifty thousand dollars to battalion-level commands cut wait times from one hundred and forty days to just fourteen. The Marine Corps' "Barracks Investment Strategy" at Camp Pendleton demonstrated that bundling small projects into larger contracts attracted more qualified bidders and reduced costs by twenty two percent.

Some bases have gotten creative. Joint Base San Antonio partnered with local trade schools to create apprenticeship programs, solving their skilled labor shortage while providing veterans pathways to civilian careers. Naval Station Great Lakes worked with OSHA to develop specialized maintenance training that reduced trade-related injuries by sixty three percent. These successes prove the problem isn't insurmountable - it's just not being prioritized.

The human impact stories will make your blood boil. Petty Officer Second Class Marcus Linville spent eight months battling Command leadership to get a mold-infested wall in his Norfolk barracks properly remediated - only to be diagnosed with permanent lung damage afterward. Army Specialist Janiyah Coulter documented thirty six work requests over ten months for a broken window in her Fort Riley barracks that left her room freezing every winter. The fix finally came through - two weeks before her ETS date.

This isn't about marble countertops or pillow mints. We're talking about warfighters developing asthma from mold exposure, getting skin infections from pest infestations, losing sleep in hundred-degree rooms without AC. These are the same young men and women we trust with multi-million dollar weapons systems and national security missions. If we can't manage to provide them with basic sanitary living conditions, what does that say about our commitment to those who serve?

The ultimate irony? Many of these crumbling barracks are located just miles from gleaming new headquarters buildings, complete with million-dollar conference rooms and executive dining facilities. At Fort Belvoir, the forty million dollar Defense Logistics Agency headquarters features a waterfall in the atrium while soldiers in nearby barracks share tales of brown

water coming from taps. This isn't just bureaucratic inefficiency - it's a moral failing of the highest order.

We wouldn't tolerate this neglect in our prisons. We wouldn't accept it in our schools. Yet we systematically ignore it when it comes to those who volunteer to defend our nation. That has to change - not with more studies or hearings, but with immediate action. Audit every facilities dollar. Fire incompetent managers. Promote commanders who fix problems rather than hide them. Our servicemembers deserve better than this third-world standard of living while wearing the uniform of the world's greatest military. Anything less is a betrayal of their sacrifice.

We'll be right back.

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11 — [BREAK] — COMMERCIAL

> [COMMERCIAL — slot for 30s ad]

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12 — CLOSING / SIGN-OFF

From the southern border to our military bases to the dark corners of cyberspace, tonight's stories all come back to one undeniable truth: America works when we enforce the rules. Not when we ignore them. Not when we apologize for them. We either stand behind our laws or we watch them crumble. That's not partisan - that's just how nations survive.

Look at the border. You can't call it secure when thousands cross illegally every single day. Look at our military recruitment crisis. You can't rebuild readiness by lowering standards. And you certainly can't defend against hackers when our own government won't name the foreign threats targeting American businesses. Weakness invites chaos. Always has, always will.

Some in Washington want you to believe these problems are too complicated for solutions. Don't buy it. Secure borders? Enforce existing laws. Strong military? Pay recruits fairly and stop politicizing service. Cyber

attacks? Hold adversaries accountable instead of downplaying breaches. The playbook exists - we just need leaders willing to use it.

Thanks for joining me tonight. Your time matters, and so does your voice. Keep holding these politicians accountable at every level - city councils, statehouses, Congress. Demand real fixes, not excuses. Because when citizens speak clearly enough for long enough, even Washington eventually listens.

The Mark Ford Show returns tomorrow at 7 PM sharp. We'll break down the latest economic numbers that the White House doesn't want you seeing, take your calls on the education battles heating up in school districts nationwide, and go inside a disturbing new report on crime trends the mainstream outlets are ignoring. It's another night of straight talk you won't get anywhere else.

Until then, do something your government often forgets to do - take care of your family, look out for your neighbors, and keep faith in the country we're all fighting to preserve. I'm Mark Ford. Good night, America.