

Three cases of measles confirmed in Harris County

By Todd Ackerman

Three cases of the measles have been confirmed in Harris County, the county health department announced Monday. The patients are two boys under the age of 2 and a woman between the ages of 25 and 35. All three patients reside in northwest part of the county.

'TEXAS WALKS DANGEROUS PATH.' Houston's current vaccination rate is appalling, editorial board says

Texas becomes the tenth state to report a measles case in the past year. The most, at least 209 cases since October, have occurred in New York, an outbreak linked to unvaccinated children's travel to Israel. There have also been 48 cases reported this year in the state of Washington, which has declared a state of emergency. A vast majority of those who came down with measles were not vaccinated against the disease, health officials there report.

It was unclear Monday whether the individuals in Harris County were vaccinated.

The last confirmed report of a measles case in Harris County was by the City of Houston in 2018. This year, there are currently six confirmed reports of measles cases in the state of Texas.

There are no current measles cases in Houston.

"Measles is a highly contagious respiratory disease caused by a virus, which spreads to others through coughing and sneezing," said Dr. Umair A. Shah, executive director for Harris County Public Health.



"However, it is easily preventable. Parents and caregivers have the power to protect their children and themselves from this disease by getting vaccinated."

Other states that have reported measles cases this year are Hawaii, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Connecticut, Colorado, California and Georgia.

Millions in artwork, jewelry stolen from Buzbee's home, police say

Police are investigating a burglary at the home of Tony Buzbee, a millionaire lawyer running for mayor of Houston. Buzbee, who hosted a Super Bowl party Sunday at his River Oaks mansion, awoke at 6 a.m. Monday and found someone in his home, he said in a Facebook post.

The suspect made off with several million dollars' worth of artwork and jewelry, a Houston police spokesperson said. Buzbee was armed and attempted to shoot the burglar, he said, but

his gun misfired. Buzbee's two children were home at the time, but nobody was injured.

"I'm a bit shaken up by this, and as I'm sure anyone knows who has went through this, don't feel exactly safe in my own home," he wrote.

Lawyer Tony Buzbee, shown here during a news conference last month, says he awoke to robbers in his River Oak home early Monday.



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Editor's Choice



Balloon vendor is pictured on the eve of the Lunar New Year of the Pig in Singapore



People rush to plant the first joss stick of the Lunar New Year of the Pig at the stroke of midnight at the Kwan Im Thong Hood Cho temple in Singapore



Man prays with joss sticks at the Kwan Im Thong Hood Cho temple on the eve of the Lunar New Year of the Pig in Singapore



People wait to plant the first joss stick of the Lunar New Year of the Pig at the stroke of midnight at the Kwan Im Thong Hood Cho temple in Singapore



People walk inside a Chinese temple during the celebration of the Lunar New Year in Chinatown in Bangkok



A woman smiles in front of a stand selling paper lamps during the celebration of the Lunar New Year in Chinatown in Bangkok



A woman lights incense while praying in a Chinese temple during the celebration of the Lunar New Year in the Chinatown in Bangkok



A man sells crocodile BBQ at a temporary night market to mark Chinese New Year in Bangkok

Hung Le's face lit up when his 7-year-old daughter came home from school Friday. She took off her shoes with a wide grin on her face and skipped over to her father, who was sitting in the kitchen of her aunt's Spring home. He gave her a side hug, the arm of his wheelchair creating a barrier between the two.

"There's no living if I go back to Vietnam, only death," Le said after she left the room. He was referring to his fate if the Trump administration's latest immigration policy proposal goes into effect.

The U.S. and Vietnamese governments met last Monday to discuss dissolving a 2008 repatriation agreement, according to immigration advocacy groups and multiple media outlets. The memorandum of understanding between the countries barred the deportation of Vietnamese immigrants with final removal orders who arrived in the United States prior to July 12, 1995 — the date Vietnam and the United States re-established diplomatic relations.



Donald Trump and Homeland Security Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen speak at a meeting in February 2018.

If Vietnam caves to pressure from the U.S. to back out of the agreement set to renew in January, an estimated 9,000 Vietnamese immigrants nationwide — and roughly 1,500 in Texas — would be subject to deportation at the start of the new year. With a criminal record from the late 1990s, Le could be one of them.

The move, immigration advocates and lawyers say, would be a devastating and unfair blow to a vulnerable population. Many came to the United States to flee the Vietnam War only to be placed in struggling neighborhoods with little or no resources. As a result, some may have looked to gangs for support they couldn't find in their homes, schools and communities.

"The original agreement for us has been tremendously important in providing humanitarian relief and protection for Vietnamese-Americans who came over as refugees... and unfortunately committed crimes they have served through sentences, many of them a decade old," said Quyen Dinh, executive

director of the Washington, D.C.-based Southeast Asian Resource Action Center.

inh added that the government considers a criminal act by a noncitizen problematic in and of itself, thanks to major immigration law reforms passed in 1996. Those reforms "expanded the definition of what is considered a felony by so many criteria, that even small crimes that are misdemeanors can be classified as aggravated felonies," Dinh said.

There has been a surge in immigration arrests of people living in the United States under the President Trump, Those who entered the country illegally prior

to 1995, or who overstayed temporary visas would also potentially be affected by the policy change, said Khanh Pham, attorney for the refugee and asylum advocacy group Boat People SOS.

Policy shifts The Trump administration started shifting gears on the 2008 agreement in the spring of 2017, stating that it does not protect Vietnamese immigrants convicted of criminal offenses from deportation. Vietnamese immigrants with final deportation orders started getting detained by Immigration and Customs Enforcement when they stopped by for their routine check-ins with the agency, and Vietnam accepted only about a dozen repatriates before hardening its stance again, Pham and Dinh said.

With nowhere to send the rest of the newly-detained immigrants, the administration was then sued by civil rights groups who claimed it was violating the ruling in Zadvydas v. Davis, a 2001 Supreme Court decision that deemed it illegal to hold immigrants in detention indefinitely.

However, the resource action committee released a report on Dec. 8 that the two governments were meeting to reconsider renewing the repatriation agreement. The Atlantic reported last week that a State Department spokesperson confirmed that officials with the Department of Homeland Security met with representatives of the Vietnamese embassy in Washington, D.C., but declined to provide details of when the talks took place or what was discussed.

Phuoc Thang, his wife Kat and their two daughters Audrina, 17 months, and Mia 3 spend time together at home in San Jose, Calif., on Friday, July 20, 2018. Thang is among roughly 200 Cambodian & Vietnamese immigrants who, for the first time, are under threat of deportation for old crimes many of them committed as teenagers. (Photo Bay Area News Group)

Neither Homeland Security nor the Vietnamese embassy in Washington responded to requests for comment from the Houston Chronicle.

Experts say this is the Trump administration's latest move showing its hardened stance on immigration. Between 1998 and 2016, Vietnam accepted about 30 deported repatriates each year, Dinh said. That number more than doubled to 71 people in 2017.

"It's very disturbing to me, targeting our community, because Vietnamese Ameri-

cans have contributed significantly to the vibrant, diverse and strong communities here in Houston and in the U.S. with so many achievements and contributions," said community organizer Anhlanh Nguyen. "America is a great place for the melting pot — I feel like we're going backward."

Preparing for the worst Houston Mayor Sylvester Turner released a statement Monday in opposition to the potential policy change, saying that Houston's 91,000 Vietnamese immigrants "have enriched the economic, cultural, religious and intellectual fabric of our city."

"Potentially deporting thousands of these refugees strikes at the heart of Houston and the soul of America," Turner continued. "To say to them now that they must return to a place where they suffered many years ago, and where they no longer have a home, is wrong."

A U.S. soldier guards Vietnamese refugees on ship heading to the U.S. in the 1960's. Dinh said people have been coming to the resource center in a panic, unsure if they would be affected by the policy change and separated from their families.

"We don't know if the agreement has been changed at all, but we're preparing families for the worst-case scenario," she said.

The organization has been recommending people find immigration attorneys to reopen and examine their cases, and to seek pardons from state governors for past convictions.

For Le, being deported would separate him from his daughter, who he still calls his baby — a heartbreaking possibility for the single dad.

It would also mean risking his life, Le said. Two years ago, he was paralyzed from the chest down during a car accident. Le says that going back to Vietnam would mean death.

"In my condition, there's no living if I'm to go back," he said. "I have to take medication for the rest of my life, have to use equipment to go pee, I can't live normally. Maximum for me — four months." (Courtesy houston-chronicle.com)

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Those who entered the country illegally prior

9,000 Vietnamese Immigrants Nationwide And Close To 1,500 In Texas Could Be Affected Vietnamese Refugees, Immigrants Across U.S. Face Deportation Under Proposed Trump Policy

Compiled And Edited By John T. Robbins, Southern Daily Editor



Khanh Hung Le, 47, thinks about what would happen to him and his 7-year-old daughter if he is deported back to Vietnam. Le and his daughter live at his sister's house in Spring. Le legally moved to the United States in the 1990s and has criminal records from when he was young. A car accident a few years ago left him paralyzed from the chest down.

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Photo above shows new biometric scanning technology at Terminal F in Hartsfield-Jackson International Airport in Atlanta, Georgia. (Photo/Delta Air Lines).

Imagine looking at a screen for two seconds and then check in for your flight? Then you glance at a screen for another two seconds to drop off your bags at a luggage station? How easy would it be to merely look at another screen to breeze through ID checks at TSA security check-points or the departure gate? All this, without having to use your passport.

Now all this is reality. Atlanta's Hartsfield Jackson International Airport and Delta Air Lines have opened the nation's first curb-to-gate biometric terminal, which promises to improve aviation security while moving travelers faster through screening.

"Atlanta airport -- the busiest airport in the world, our largest hub -- is the first airport in the US to roll this out," Delta Chief Operating Officer Gil West told CNN at the terminal's opening on November 29. "It saves nine minutes on the ground for the boarding process which is time that our customers won't be spending in lines waiting to board the aircraft."

The biometric ID technology being used here is facial recognition. It's a camera-based system that compares scans of travelers' faces to a database of verified ID photos curated by US Customs and Border Protection (CBP).

Passengers use a facial recognition screen to verify their identities before boarding a Delta Air Lines flight from Atlanta to Mexico City on Thursday.



USA's 'First Biometric Terminal' In Operation At Atlanta Airport

Compiled And Edited By John T. Robbins, Southern Daily Editor

Delta's competitors -- including JetBlue, American Airlines and Southwest Airlines -- have started pilot facial recognition programs at a handful of US airports for international boarding. But so far, Delta says Atlanta is the only airport to also offer biometrics for check-in, luggage and TSA ID checks.

CBP says America's air travel industry is on a path toward widespread adoption of facial recognition verification at all US airports with international flights and eventually, say industry leaders, domestic flights too.

It's the "next leap in airport security," says Matt Cornelius, vice president of Airports Council International, North America. Although Cornelius is confident in the technology and it "continues to evolve very rapidly," he says it "still has a lot of development to go."

It's more secure Using the system is totally optional. Passengers who don't feel comfortable using it can opt to go through traditional ID verification using their passports.

Privacy groups say they're worried facial recognition databases are subject to limited accountability and vulnerable to government abuse or lack of oversight. Experts and authorities believe biometric ID technology will make airports and air travel safer in an era when aviation is targeted by criminals and terrorists.

"Facial recognition is much better from a security perspective than a paper, barcode scan," said John Selden, Atlanta airport's new general manager who spent four years as deputy general manager at New York's JFK International Airport. "This technology is leading the way in improving security."

Your face can be your passport In a nutshell, here's how it works: If you're unfamiliar, facial recognition technology uses a complex algorithm that recognizes each person's unique facial characteristics -- including shapes of eyes, noses, mouths, proportional relationships and other factors.



Delta Air Lines offers customers in Atlanta the option of using facial recognition technology to check in for international flights.

-- Passengers enter their passport numbers into their frequent flier airline profiles.

-- Check in to your flight at one of several kiosks in the international terminal by pressing a touch-screen tab labeled "LOOK: Facial Recognition" and looking into the screen. The image is compared to the image on file in the CBP database.

-- Drop your luggage at the nearby airline baggage drop station by looking into a camera.

-- At the TSA screening area, look into a scanner screen and show your boarding pass. No need to pull out your passport or driver's license.

A typical stop at a TSA ID check station can take 11-20 seconds. With this -- in less than three seconds -- boom, you're cleared to continue on through the TSA passenger and carry-on baggage screening lanes.

Next year at Atlanta's international terminal, TSA plans to use facial recognition so participating travelers won't have to show a boarding pass either.

It has a 98% success rate Finally, at your departure gate, instead of having to pull out your passport before you board your international flight, just briefly stare into a screen set up at the jetway entrance. In 2 seconds, you're cleared and bouncing down the jetway to your seat. An airline gate agent is staffing the screen to take care of any technical hiccups.

Yep, once in a while, the screen doesn't recognize a face.

In fact, about 1% or 2% of the time, face scans aren't able to verify passengers, said John Wagner, CBP deputy assistant commissioner. He blames that on bad scan images -- poor lighting

conditions, for example. "If you do get rejected, all you do is present your passport and your boarding pass."

TSA facial recognition screens are now available for biometric ID verification at Atlanta Hartsfield-Jackson International Airport. Wagner says the technology will be continually improved with a goal of 100% effectiveness.

When it does work, the CBP's facial recognition database can help authorities nab travelers who use false passports. Recently three airline passengers at Washington's Dulles International Airport were caught over a period of 40 days, according to CBP.

Privacy questions When authorities have your facial image in a database, you're giving up control over how the government can use it, said Jeramie Scott at the Electronic Privacy Information Center, a Washington-based organization aimed at protecting privacy.

The CBP says facial images of US citizens scanned at airports are deleted from their database shortly after confirmation. Facial images of non-citizens who arrive in the US are stored for 75 years, the CBP website says, and departure photos of non-citizens are deleted after 14 days.

Biometric facial recognition cameras have been installed at Delta Air Lines' baggage drop station at Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport. Delta's West said the airline never has control of the CBP database -- "only the ability to access it to verify identity."

Privacy advocates are calling on lawmakers to create legal safeguards to prevent the abuse of these kinds of databases. As for passengers, Keary King of Dothan,

Alabama, said he was willing to try the CBP system. "We have no privacy concerns," he said, waiting with his family to board Delta Flight 365 to Mexico City.

"Maybe it makes the boarding a little quicker," King said. "That would be good, not only for me but for all the passengers."

Most of the flight's 124 passengers who originated in Atlanta used the facial scanner and boarded the Boeing 737-700 on time in about 10 minutes. Only a few had to show their passports because the system rejected their scanned images.

It's expanding to other airports Outside the US, airports such as Singapore's Changi, Amsterdam's Schiphol and Aruba International Airport reportedly already offer biometric check-in and boarding capability at some gates and terminals.

Airports in Japan reportedly are rolling out facial recognition boarding facilities at several airports this year. China's Hongqiao International Airport is also using facial recognition for security screening, according to The Independent, and is in the process of expanding to a full curb-to-gate facial recognition system.

London's Heathrow plans to start testing an end-to-end facial recognition program next year. Meanwhile, Delta is expanding its biometric program. "We'll look to scale this at all our hubs internationally, and aspirationally, throughout our entire operations," West said, implying the addition of US domestic travelers. Delta plans to kickoff a facial recognition option for customers flying internationally out of Detroit in mid-December.

Passengers should always have the ability to opt out of any facial recognition system, Cornelius said. Full implementation is "a number of years away," Cornelius said. Wagner said the CBP hopes to have facial recognition boarding at all US airports serving international flights within 3 or 4 years.

Right now, airports' main concern is getting these systems up to speed, Cornelius said. If all goes as planned, airports believe facial recognition can reduce those annoying bottlenecks at security lines and make air travel safer for all of us. (Courtesy cnn.com)

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It's expanding to other airports Outside the US, airports such as Singapore's Changi, Amsterdam's Schiphol and Aruba International Airport reportedly already offer biometric check-in and boarding capability at some gates and terminals.

Advertisement for 雲天燒腊麵食家 (Cloud Sky BBQ Noodle House). Features a menu with items like 京都肉排, 葱油鯧魚, 北菇雞, etc. Includes contact info: (713) 988-5745 and address: 9380 Bellaire Blvd, Houston, TX 77036.

Advertisement for 中美酒樓 (Chinese American Restaurant). Features a menu with items like 四人份, 八人份, 十人份. Includes contact info: 281-498-1280 and address: 11317 Bissonnet, Houston, TX 77099.

Large advertisement for Adolphus Rice. Features the Adolphus Rice logo, a bag of rice, and text: "US #1 Quality Select Variety Arroz de Grano Largo LONG GRAIN Enriched RICE". Includes contact info for American Rice, Inc. and website: www.aronline.com.