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Facebook, Amazon and Alphabet take center stage on Wall Street



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# Southern DAILY

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## Trump tells black lawmaker to clean up 'disgusting, rat and rodent infested' district

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - President Donald Trump hit out at a prominent African-American critic on Saturday, calling him a "brutal bully" who should concentrate on cleaning up his "disgusting, rat and rodent infested" Baltimore district rather than criticizing the work of U.S. immigration officers on the Mexican border.

Trump's target in a series of early morning tweets was U.S. Representative Elijah Cummings, the Democratic chairman of the House of Representatives Oversight Committee, who has called Trump a racist and sharply criticized his immigration policies.

Democratic House Speaker Nancy Pelosi responded to Trump by calling Cummings a champion for civil rights and economic justice and added in a tweet: "We all reject racist attacks against him and support his steadfast leadership."

On Thursday, the committee voted 23-16 along party lines to allow Cummings to issue subpoenas to White House officials, including Trump's daughter Ivanka Trump and son-in-law Jared Kushner, deepening a probe into potential violations of government record-keeping laws.

In his tweet, Trump, a Republican, took aim at Cummings' criticism of his administration's Mexican border policies.

"Rep, Elijah Cummings has been a brutal bully, shouting and screaming at the great men & women of Border Patrol about conditions at the Southern Border, when actually his Baltimore district is FAR WORSE and more dangerous. His district is considered the Worst in the USA....." Trump tweeted.

"(T)he Border is clean, efficient & well run, just very crowded. Cumming District is a disgusting, rat and rodent infested mess. If he spent more time in Baltimore, maybe he could help clean up this very dangerous & filthy place," he said.

In a third tweet, Trump questioned why so much money was spent on Cummings' district, which covers the downtown area of the city of Baltimore, about 40 miles (64 km) northeast of Washington, "when it is considered the worst run and most dangerous anywhere in the United States."

"No human being would want to live there. Where is all this money going? How much is stolen? Investigate this corrupt mess immediately," Trump wrote.



FILE PHOTO: U.S. President Donald Trump speaks to the news media in the Oval Office of the White House in Washington, U.S., July 26, 2019. REUTERS/Leah Millis

## U.S. to deny tariff relief for Apple Mac Pro parts from China:

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - U.S. President Donald Trump on Friday said his administration would not grant Apple Inc any relief for tariffs on parts made in China for its Mac Pro computer and later added he thought the firm would build a plant in Texas.

"Apple will not be given Tariff waiver, or relief, for Mac Pro parts that are made in China. Make them in the USA, no Tariffs!" Trump tweeted.

On July 18, Apple asked the U.S. Trade Representative's office to waive 25% tariffs on 15 parts, including ones for the Mac Pro desktop computer. The public comment period for those requests closes on Aug. 1.

Trump later told reporters he thought Apple would build a plant in Texas, without elaborating on exactly what he was referring to or how he knew.

"I want Apple to build their plants in the United States. I don't want them to build them in China. So when I heard they were going to build it in China, I said, 'No, that's OK, you can build it in China but when you send your product into the United States we're going to tariff you,'" he said.

"We'll work it out," he said. "I think they're going to announce that they're going to build a plant in Texas. And if they do that, I'm starting to get very happy."

The Wall Street Journal reported in June that Apple is shifting manufacturing of its new Mac Pro desktop computer to China from Texas.

Apple issued a statement at the time that "like all of our products, the new Mac Pro is designed and engineered in California and includes components from several countries including the United States" and emphasized that "final assembly is only one part of the manufacturing process."

Representatives for Apple had no immediate comment on either the tariff or



Texas plant comments on Friday. Shares of the company sharply pared their gains after the tweets.

Apple CEO Tim Cook in December 2013 announced the company was building the Mac Pro in Texas after coming under criticism for assembling most of its products in lower-wage countries.

Apple does not disclose sales figures for its Mac Pro, but analysts do not believe it is a high-volume seller for the company compared to the iPhone. Priced at \$6,000 and up,

it is aimed at professional users such as movie and music studios.

Trump has previously made claims about Apple's plans to build new U.S. plants, which have not materialized.

Apple did say in December it would build a second campus in Austin, Texas. The company is also spending \$390 million with supplier Finisar Corp that helped the chipmaker re-open a 700,000-square-foot factory in Texas.

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# U.S. homebuilding near two-year low; permits extend decline

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - U.S. homebuilding dropped to a near two-year low pulled down by persistent weakness in the single-family unit segment, suggesting the housing market continued to struggle despite falling mortgage rates. The second straight monthly decline in homebuilding reported by the Commerce Department on Friday probably reflected in part massive flooding in the Midwest, with housing starts in the region plunging to levels last seen in early 2015.

The weak report bucked a recent tide of upbeat data, including retail sales, trade and construction spending, that indicated the economy regained speed late in the first quarter after appearing to stumble at the turn of the year.

"Waiting for construction activity to pick up after a sharp drop in mortgage rates is like waiting for Godot," said Chris Rupkey, chief economist at MUFJ in New York. "It is hard to know what is ailing the home construction industry."

Housing starts fell 0.3 percent to a seasonally adjusted annual rate of 1.139 million units last month, the lowest level since May 2017. Data for February was revised down to show homebuilding tumbling to a pace of 1.142 million units instead of the previously reported 1.162 million-unit rate.

Housing starts in the Midwest, which was devastated by floods during the month, dropped 17.6 percent. Homebuilding also fell in the Northeast and South, but surged in the West.

Economists polled by Reuters had forecast housing starts increasing to a pace of 1.230 million units in March. The dollar was trading lower against a basket of currencies. U.S. stock and bond markets were closed for the Good Friday holiday.

A sharp pickup in home construction appears unlikely. Building permits fell 1.7 percent to

a rate of 1.269 million units in March, the lowest in five months. It was the third straight monthly decrease in permits.

The prolonged weakness in homebuilding is likely the result of land and labor shortages, as well as expensive building materials. A survey on Tuesday showed that though builders reported strong demand for new homes, they continued to highlight "affordability concerns stemming from a chronic shortage of construction workers and buildable lots."

These factors are constraining builders' ability to construct homes in the lower price segment of the market, which continues to experience a shortage of homes for sale. The housing market hit a soft patch last year, with investment in homebuilding contracting 0.3 percent, the weakest performance since 2010.

### FUNDAMENTALS IMPROVING

Despite the weakness in homebuilding, the fundamentals for the housing market are improving. The 30-year fixed mortgage rate has dropped from a peak of about 4.94 percent in November to around 4.12 percent, according to data from mortgage finance agency Freddie Mac. Wage growth is also strengthening. Declining mortgage rates follow a recent decision by the Federal Reserve to suspend its three-year monetary policy tightening campaign.

While housing continues to be soft, the other segments of the economy have rebounded from earlier weakness. Retail sales surged in March and trade, inventory and construction spending data have also been bullish, leading economists to upgrade their gross domestic product growth estimates for the first quarter.



FILE PHOTO: A construction worker builds a single family home in San Diego, California, U.S. February 15, 2017. Picture taken REUTERS/Mike Blake



FILE PHOTO: Single family homes being built by KB Homes are shown under construction in San Diego

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# Editor's Choice



Soccer Football - Women's World Cup - Group E - Canada v New Zealand - Stade des Alpes, Grenoble, France - General view of fan holding France 2019 Women's World Cup flag inside the stadium before the match REUTERS/ Denis Balibouse



Venezuelan migrants turn themselves in to law enforcement to seek asylum after illegally crossing the Rio Grande near Mission



Protest against the recent violence in Yuen Long, at Hong Kong airport



U.S. Democratic presidential candidate and U.S. Senator Kamala Harris joins with striking McDonalds workers in Las Vegas



Venezuelan children sleep at the Binational Border Service Center of Peru in Tumbes



A person smiles during the Gay Pride Parade in Rome, Italy, June 8, 2019. REUTERS/ Yara Nardi TPX IMAGES OF THE DAY



A view of North Korea's missile launch on Thursday, in this undated picture released by North Korea's Central News Agency (KCNA) on July 26, 2019.



A reveller takes part in the LGBT Rainbow Parade during the EuroPride in Vienna, Austria June 15, 2019. REUTERS/Lisi Niesner TPX IMAGES OF THE DAY

***Houston Store Will Be Located In The Galleria Mall***

**Life After Liquidation: Toys R Us Stores Will Be Back This Holiday Season, But Now With A Tech Partner**



The first two Toys R Us locations are slated to open before the holidays. One will be at Simon Property Group's Galleria mall in Houston. The other will be at Unibail-Rodamco-Westfield's Garden State Plaza mall in Paramus, New Jersey.

**Overview**

Toys R Us is opening two permanent stores in November — at Simon Property Group's Galleria mall in Houston and at Unibail-Rodamco-Westfield's Garden State Plaza mall in Paramus, New Jersey.

The stores are product of a joint venture between software retailer b8ta and Tru Kids, the company that is helping to manage the brand names left in the wake of Toys R Us' liquidation last year.

The partnership with b8ta gives Tru Kids a negotiating tool as it tries to woo back brands that felt burned by the Toys R Us bankruptcy to sell in its stores.

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

This holiday season, some shoppers will once again be able to shop in a Toys R Us store.

The retailer will open two permanent stores in November — at Simon Property Group's Galleria mall in Houston and at Unibail-Rodamco-Westfield's Garden State Plaza mall in Paramus, New Jersey.

The stores are product of a joint venture between software retailer b8ta and Tru Kids, the company that is helping to manage the brand names left in the wake of Toys R Us' liquidation last year.

After the company shuttered its 800 U.S. stores, lenders including Solus Alternative Asset Management and the Angelo

Gordon investment firm took control of the company's Toys R Us, Babies R Us and Geoffrey brand names.

The revived Toys R Us brand is hoping to avoid past wrongs. Critics have pointed to several factors that led to Toys R Us' downfall: crippling debt load, competition from Amazon, overconfidence, failure to invest in stores and the rise of big-box retailers like Walmart that slashed toy prices to help lure shoppers. Toys R Us, like many retailers, struggled to revamp its enormous business as quickly as the retail landscape was changing around it.



"I don't think there's many times where you can take such a great storied brand as Toys R Us and get a chance to repaint the canvas," said Richard Barry, president of Tru Kids and the former chief merchandising officer of Toys R Us.

The company hopes to open 10 stores around the U.S. in 2020, possibly including a larger flagship in New York or California. The new stores will be smaller, spanning 6,500 to 10,000 square feet, compared with the 40,000 they used to take up.

"While we have a smaller footprint, we believe we will present a super exciting set of experiences in the store and products," said Barry.

B8ta, which has more than a dozen of its own stores in malls around the country, including the new Hudson Yards in New York, will help take care of those experiences. Its in-house technology platform, which is also powering pop-up marketplaces within some Macy's stores, will work with the toy brands to help them create their own mini shops within the spaces. B8ta also says it will contribute its retail as a service platform to help

those brands simultaneously grow online sales.

Toys R Us infamously relaunched its website during its crucial — and ultimately failed — 2017 holiday season in bankruptcy that subsequently forced its liquidation.



**A B8ta retail outlet.**

B8ta will also be giving Tru Kids access to data and analytics to track things like foot traffic in and out of the stores to allow the company to make smarter decisions, according to Phillip Raub, b8ta co-founder and president. "This year is going to be an opportunity for us to test and learn."

The partnership with b8ta gives Tru Kids a negotiating tool as it tries to woo back brands to sell in its stores. Part of what made Toys R Us unique was its access to the best and sometimes exclusive products. But the relationship between toy brands and the retailer was frayed in its liquidation, which led to companies big and small losing money in the process.

Barry said talks with toy and entertainment companies have been "very positive."

He added the brands are giving the company "credit for innovation," and they like getting a chance to control their own brand experience in the stores.

The new Toys R Us will be announcing the brands that are going to be sold in its stores in "short order," Barry said.

While toys will be available for purchase, all sales will go directly to manufacturers, without Tru Kids acting as a middleman. Instead, the company will make money from manufacturers paying a fee to sell goods in Toys R Us loca-

tions.



**"We're Back..."**

"We don't make any money off of the sale of the goods," Phillip Raub told Business Insider.

Raub is the cofounder and president of b8ta, an experiential retailer that entered into a joint venture with Tru Kids to open the Toys R Us stores. The new Toys R Us stores will follow b8ta's business model, marketing themselves as an appealing spot for manufacturers by offering tech, data, and insights, as well as high-traffic locations in malls and other busy urban centers.

"What b8ta is bringing to the table is going to be our b8ta business model, really thinking kind of more subscription based, placement within the stores, being able to provide rich data analytics for makers," Raub said.

Customers will be able to see and interact with every toy for sale in the store, which will be from both big-name brands and smaller companies. Kiosks available in stores will allow customers to order from a wider assortment of products online.

Tru Kids and b8ta plan to open 10 more Toys R Us locations in 2020 with a slightly larger format of around 10,000 square feet. Richard Barry, the CEO of Tru Kids Brands and Toys R Us' former chief marketing officer, said the company was anticipating it could take "some education" for customers to get used to the new format.

"But we believe that the new elements of the store that we've added are so overwhelmingly positive that customers are going to love it," Barry added. (Courtesy

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Dr. Lai is a board-certified pediatrician who earned her medical degree from The University of Texas School of Medicine in San Antonio and completed her pediatric internship and residency at The University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston. She is a member of the American Academy of Pediatrics. Her special clinical interests include General Pediatrics, caring for newborns, and managing autism, and childhood obesity. She cares for young patients at Kelsey-Seybold's Tanglewood Clinic, near the Galleria.

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MOSCOW/SEOUL (Reuters) - Russia carried out what it said was its first long-range joint air patrol in the Asia-Pacific region with China on Tuesday, a mission that triggered hundreds of warning shots, according to South Korean officials, and a strong protest from Japan.

The flight by two Russian Tu-95 strategic bombers and two Chinese H-6 bombers, backed up by a Russian A-50 early warning plane and its Chinese counterpart, a KJ-2000, marks a notable ramping-up of military cooperation between Beijing and Moscow.

While troops and naval ships from Russia and China have taken part in joint war games before, they have not, according to Russia's Ministry of Defence, conducted such air patrols in the Asia-Pacific region together until Tuesday.



**A Russian TU-95 bomber flies over East China Sea in this handout picture taken by Japan Air Self-Defence Force and released by the Joint Staff Office of the Defense Ministry of Japan July 23, 2019. Joint Staff Office of the Defense Ministry of Japan/HANDOUT via REUTERS**

"The joint patrol was carried out with the aim of deepening Russian-Chinese relations within our all-encompassing partnership, of further increasing cooperation between our armed forces, and of perfecting their capabilities to carry out joint actions, and of strengthening global strategic security," the ministry said in a statement.

Seoul and Tokyo, who both scrambled jets to intercept the Russo-Chinese mission, accused Russia and China of violating their airspaces, an allegation Moscow and Beijing denied.

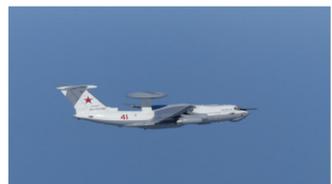
South Korean warplanes fired hundreds of warning shots toward the Russian A-50 military aircraft, defense officials in Seoul said, saying it was the first time a Russian military aircraft had violated South Korean

## First Russian-Chinese Air Patrol In Asia-Pacific Region Draws Live Fire From South Korea



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

airspace. Moscow denied all of those assertions. In Washington, the Pentagon said it supported South Korea and Japan's responses. "The United States strongly supports our ROK and Japanese allies and their responses to air space incursions by Chinese and Russian aircraft," Pentagon spokesman Lieutenant Colonel Dave Eastburn said. "The (Defense Department) is in close coordination with our ROK and Japanese allies about these events, and will continue to monitor activities as they follow up with their Russian and Chinese counterparts in diplomatic channels," Eastburn said.



Lieutenant-General Sergei Kobylash, commander of Russia's Long-Range Aviation, said in televised comments that the Russian planes had been airborne for 11 hours and covered around 9,000 km (5592 miles). Foreign fighter jets had escorted them on 11 separate occasions, he added. The South Korean defense ministry said the Russian and Chinese bombers had entered the Korea Air Defence Identification Zone (KADIZ) together early on Tuesday. The separate Russian A-50 airborne early warning and control aircraft later twice violated South Korean airspace over Dokdo - an island that is controlled by Seoul and claimed by both South Korea and Japan, which calls it Takeshima - just after 9 a.m. (midnight GMT Monday), according to the South Korean military.

### DIPLOMATIC PROTESTS

Russia's Defence Ministry said it did not recognize South Korea's KADIZ, while the Chinese Foreign Ministry said the area was not territorial airspace and that all countries enjoyed freedom of movement in it. It accused the two South Korean F-16 fighter planes of carrying out "unprofessional maneuvers," of crossing the path of the

Russian bombers, and of not communicating with them. If the Russian pilots had felt any threat to their safety, their response would have been swift, it added.



Russia has handed South Korea's military attache in Moscow a note protesting what it called "the illegal and dangerous actions" of Seoul's pilots, Kobylash said.

A South Korean defense ministry spokesman did not directly address the Russian accusation of reckless behavior.

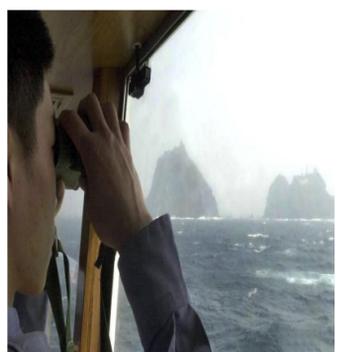
South Korea's top security adviser, Chung Eui-yong, lodged a strong objection with Nikolai Patrushev, secretary of Russia's Se-

curity Council, asking the council to assess the incident and take appropriate action, South Korea's presidential office said. "We take a very grave view of this situation and, if it is repeated, we will take even stronger action," Chung said, according to South Korea's presidential office.

South Korea's Foreign Ministry summoned Russian Deputy Chief of Mission Maxim Volkov and Chinese Ambassador Qiu Guohong to lodge a stern protest and strongly urge them to prevent a recurrence, said ministry spokesman Kim In-chul.

Separately, Japan, which said it had also scrambled fighter aircraft to intercept the Russian and Chinese planes, lodged a complaint with both South Korea and Russia over the incident, Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga said.

Tokyo criticized South Korea for taking action against a Russian plane over what Japan says is its airspace.



"In light of Japan's stance regarding sovereignty over Takeshima, the fact that the South Korean military aircraft carried out warning shots is totally unacceptable and extremely regrettable," Suga told reporters. The South Korean jets loosed about 360 rounds of ammunition during the incident, an official at South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) said.

"The South Korean military took tactical action including dropping flares and firing warning shots," the South Korean Defence Ministry said. (Courtesy reuters.com)

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