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Inside C2

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AT&T CEO: We made 'big mistake' hiring Cohen, chief lobbyist out

(Reuters) - AT&T Inc (T.N) on Friday ousted its top lobbyist, and the No. 2 wireless carrier's chief executive said it was a "big mistake" to hire Michael Cohen, President Donald Trump's personal attorney, for advice on working with the Trump administration.

AT&T paid Essential Consultants LLC, a firm set up by Cohen, a total of \$600,000 over 2017 for the advice. Cohen and others were hired to help navigate "a wide range of issues," including its proposed \$85 billion merger with Time Warner Inc (TWX.N), CEO Randall Stephenson said in a memo seen by Reuters.

The disclosure of AT&T's relationship with Cohen has turned into a major embarrassment for the telecommunications company as it awaits a U.S. judge's decision, due June 12, on whether it can go through with the purchase of Time Warner, a deal that has been denounced by Trump.

There is no other way to say it – AT&T hiring Michael Cohen as a political consultant was a big mistake," the memo said. President Trump expressed opposition to the merger with Time Warner during the campaign and his administration ultimately chose to fight it, with the Justice Department filing suit in November to block the agreement.

In a fact sheet that accompanied the memo, AT&T said Cohen approached them about working on their behalf in the post-election transition. He was given a one-year contract at \$50,000 per month, which ran from January through December 2017, that was limited to consulting and advisory services.

AT&T never asked Cohen to set up meetings with anyone in the Trump administration, and he did not offer to do so, it said.

"To be clear, everything we did was done according to the law and entirely legitimate," Stephenson wrote in the memo. "But the fact is our past association with Cohen was a serious misjudgment."

Stephenson said he took responsibility for the Washington team's failure to vet Cohen.

AT&T's head lobbyist, Bob Quinn, who oversaw the hiring of Cohen, is retiring, according to the memo. But two sources familiar with the situation said Quinn was forced to retire.

The sources requested anonymity because they are not per-



FILE PHOTO: Chief Executive Officer of AT&T Stephenson arrives at a U.S. District Court in Washington

mitted to speak to the media. Quinn did not respond to a request for comment.

AT&T's board of directors does not hold Stephenson responsible for the lack of vetting, according to one source.

The AT&T payments were first revealed by Michael Avenatti, the lawyer for adult film actress Stormy Daniels, who also said a company owned by Russian oligarch Viktor Vekselberg and other corporations paid Essential Consultants for certain services. Avenatti would not say how he obtained the information.

Drugmaker Novartis (NOVN.S) said on Wednesday it had a \$1.2 million contract with Cohen's firm, but soon realized the agreement was a mistake.

Essential Consultants paid \$130,000 to Daniels, whose real name is Stephanie Clifford, days before the 2016 presidential election as part of a nondisclosure agreement that barred her from discussing an alleged sexual encounter with Trump. He denies any encounter took place. Shares of AT&T rose 1.2 percent to \$32.25.

Trump blasts drugmakers, middlemen for high U.S. drug prices

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - U.S. President Donald Trump on Friday blasted drugmakers and healthcare "middlemen" for making prescription drugs unaffordable for Americans, but healthcare stocks rose as experts said the administration avoided taking aggressive and direct measures to cut drug prices.

Trump said his administration would take aim at the "middlemen" in the drug industry who became "very very rich," an apparent reference to health insurers and pharmacy benefit managers. He also said the pharmaceutical industry is making an "absolute fortune" at the expense of American taxpayers.

"Everyone involved in the broken system - the drugmakers, insurance companies, distributors, pharmacy benefit managers, and many others — contribute to the problem," Trump said.Shares of the major U.S. companies in each of those sectors rose after the speech, with the S&P 500 healthcare sector .SPXHC, a broad gauge of large healthcare stocks, up 1.4 percent.

Trump also placed blame on foreign governments, which negotiate lower drug prices than in the U.S., saying they "extort" unreasonably low prices from U.S. drugmakers.

Trump was speaking as his health deputies released a series of proposals to address high drug costs.

The Department of Health and Human Services released what it called a blueprint titled "American Patients First" with details of its plan. It said the administration's immediate actions would include allowing commercial plans that administer Medicare Part D prescription drug benefits for seniors more power to negotiate prices with drugmakers.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration would evaluate requiring drugmakers to include the list prices they set on medicines in their advertising. Drugmakers argue that list prices do not reflect actual cost with discounts and rebates.

Some of the administration's longer-term priorities include restricting use of rebates, creating incentives for drugmakers to lower list prices in Medicare, and investigating tools to address foreign government practices that it said could be harming innovation and driving up U.S. prices.

Healthcare experts said Trump's plan sounded like rhetoric rather than substantive change for an industry where prices rise substantially more than inflation each year.

"There's not a big proposal here that is going to make a huge difference. There are a bunch of smaller technical changes," said Sam Richardson, Associate Professor of Economics at Boston College.Regarding forcing other countries to pay more for drugs, Richardson said: "We don't really have the policy levers to get that to happen."Health and Human Services Secretary Alex Azar said during a White House briefing that many of the actions the government was considering would not require the U.S. Congress, but could take place through executive action within months. He said it would take years to restructure the U.S. drug system. Healthcare stocks were volatile during Trump's speech, with shares of companies involved in the pharmaceutical supply chain, such as Express Scripts Holding Co (ESRX.O) and CVS Health Corp (CVS.N), hitting session lows. But those stocks quickly reversed course, with Express Scripts shares up 2.4 percent and CVS up 3 percent.

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LOCAL NEWS

Big Rivers Waterpark in New Caney hiring hundreds of workers

By Katherine Feser

Big Rivers Waterpark is in hiring mode for a new water and adventure park that will anchor the Grand Texas development in New Caney.

The park, at 23101 State Highway 242, is on target to open June 29. It is the first major attraction in Grand Texas, which is planned to include a Texas themed park and outlet mall. The park is off of U.S. 59, about 35 miles northeast of Houston.

"We are looking to fill around 300 position and are seeking employees who are focused on guest service," Monty Galland, CEO of Grand Texas, said.





Nuclear waste could be headed to West Texas under house bill

Radioactive waste from nuclear power plants across the country could be headed to West Texas under legislation passed by the House today.

The legislation, which passed 340 to 72, directs Secretary of Energy Rick Perry to find interim storage sites for the growing stockpile of waste at the nation's nuclear power plants, while also restarting the licensing process for a controversial permanent storage facility in Nevada, at the Yucca Mountain site.

Finding communities willing to take the radioactive waste has proven hugely difficult in the past, but one option available to Perry would be an existing hazardous waste site in Andrews County in West Texas, where Dallas-based Waste Control Specialists is proposing to store spent nuclear fuel until a permanent storage facility is completed.



Andrews, Texas



A caution sign surrounding the low-level radioactive waste site at Waste Control Specialists (WCS) near Andrews, Texas.









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Editor's Choice



U.S. Transportation Secretary Elaine Chao introduces herself as she attends U.S. President Donald Trump's meeting with chief executives of major U.S. and foreign automakers at the White House in Washington, U.S. May 11, 2018. REUTERS/Jonathan Ernst



U.S. President Trump delivers a speech about lowering prescription drug prices from the Rose Garden at the White House in Washington



Automaker CEOs meet with U.S. President Donald Trump at the White House in Washington



71st Cannes Film Festival - Screening of the film "Ash Is Purest White" (Jiang hu er nv) in competition - Red Carpet Arrivals - Cannes, France, May 11, 2018. Director Jia Zhang-Ke, with cast members Zhao Tao and Liao Fan arrive. REUTERS/Regis Duvignau

Duc Dinh Center

Duc Dinh中心以其學術成就和嚴謹的 夏季課程而聞名,是中國城中心的重要教育項目。 為了培養未來的國家優秀學者,也為了培養公民領袖, Duc Dinh中心暑期項目是彌補常規學校的弱點, 並為即將到來的課程提前進行提前教學。在過去 十年的每個夏天,來自休斯頓各地的父母都帶著 他們的孩子們來參加Duc Dinh中心這些享有聲望的 夏季課程。

Duc Dinh中心聘請了通過嚴格測試和培訓的最優秀、 最聰明的教育工作者。從大學教授到國家優秀學者, 每一個想與我們的學生一起工作的人都必須在他們 進入課堂之前,展示他們對教學材料的掌握。



Duc Dinh中心的暑期課程在1至8年級階段教授學生數學、閱讀、寫作和科學。Duc Dinh中心還開展幼兒教育,為進入幼兒園的兒童提供基於研究的教學方法。

Duc Dinh中心的高中課程包括教學課程,如代數1、代數2、幾何、微積分、生物、化學和物理。此外,Duc Dinh中心提供了一個獨特的 SAT/ACT項目,有200個小時的演講,課後還有200多個小時的輔導,這些都是免費的。嚴謹的學術項目有了明顯的教學效果,從2016年到2018年,多個Duc Dinh中心學生參加國家大學入學考試,一個學生獲得了ACT滿分36分和多個學生在SAT考試中得分高於1500分。那些年,眾多學生在每個年級水平STAAR考試得到滿分。在我們的大多數幼兒園二年級學生有1-1.5年的知識水平領先於同年齡的小朋友。

Duc Dinh中心主要通過口碑和個人推薦的方式,發展成為休斯頓最大的私人教育學習中心。

Duc Dinh中心想與各位家長聯系,讓他們瞭解我們的兒童學術發展計劃。一旦小孩子們可以不用尿布了,他們就開始準備學習我們的早期兒童項目。我們在小學6年級的時候就為國家優秀獎學金的學生做準備。我們的課程是按照我們中心的創始人在萊斯大學和貝勒醫學院為他的B.S./醫學博士所做的SMDEP,暑假醫療項目。我們是一個教育發展中心,許多日托中心都試圖模仿我們的計劃,但是沒有一個成功。Duc Dinh中心的學生已經成功地完成了常春藤盟校、前20所大學、新罕布希爾州菲利普斯埃克塞特學院、倫敦哈羅德學院和澳大利亞格朗語法學院的申請。既然我們瞭解瞭如何申請頂級學校,我們有責任為學生提供一個計劃,讓他們為最高水平的競爭做好準備。沒有理由說Duc Dinh中心的學生應該輸給任何其他地方的學生。

在Duc Dinh中心,我們不認為自己是導師或教育家。我們是在這里培養公民領袖的開發人員。他們既有學術上的才華,也有動力去改善他們自己的社區和整個世界。帶著成千上萬學生的成功案例,我們很自豪地邀請家長來參加我們的暑期學校

開放日: 2018年5月20日, 周日, 下午, 3:30

到Duc Dinh中心來瞭解更多關於競爭教育,我們能做的公平競爭,並最終獲得接受進入常春藤盟校和世界各地的頂尖大學。

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Anniversary



COMMUNITY

Houston Community College's \$68 million Coleman College Health Science Tower, a Texas Medical Center member institution, is the recipient of a 2018 Landmark Award from the Houston Business Journal.

Coleman College was one of 16 winners selected from a pool of 54 finalists in the annual competition that recognizes commercial real estate projects for excellence in land planning, design, construction, economics, marketing and management. Entries were judged on impact to Houston, such as job creation, innovation, best use of land, site plan, development of surrounding neighborhoods, visual plan, amenities and being



HCC's Coleman College Health Science Tower Wins Design Award

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

About HCC

Houston Community College (HCC) is composed of 15 Centers of Excellence and numerous satellite centers that serve the diverse communities in the Greater Houston area by preparing individuals to live and work in an increasingly international and technological society. HCC is one of the country's largest singly-accredited, open-admission, community colleges offering associate degrees, certificates, workforce training, and lifelong learning opportunities. To learn more, visit www.hccs.edu.



The Coleman College Health Science Tower at the Texas Medical Center



"HCC is the leader in Houston when it comes to training the medical professionals of tomorrow," said HCC Chancellor Dr. Cesar Maldonado. "Coleman College offers students a state-of-the-art academic environment that mirrors the real-life situations they will encounter in their future medical and dental careers."

The Coleman College Health Sciences Center of Excellence is a leading health science community college in the nation and the only one of its kind residing in the world-renowned Texas Medical Center. The institution offers associate degrees and certificates in over 20 health science fields in a state-of-the-art academic environment.

In addition, the school's outstanding

faculty are acknowledged by their peers for leadership and vision in the areas of nursing, patient care services and therapeutic services. The Center also supports professional licensing continuing education training requirements for incumbent health care professionals.





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We commend SEWA International for their work on family services; child, tribal and refugee welfare; women empowerment; health; and education. We especially recognize SEWA for their great effort on disaster relief and rehabilitation as reflected in their sustained involvement with Rosharon Little Cambodian community after the Harvey Hurricane.

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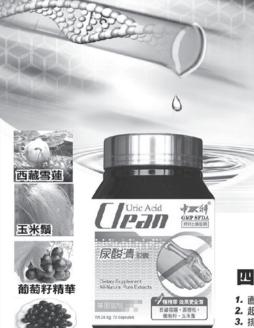
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BUSINESS

If you're wondering when you can start eating all the romaine lettuce again without fear, the answer is: hang tight.

Officials at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, along with the Food and Drug Administration, are still searching for the source of E. coli-contaminated romaine lettuce, in what has become the largest multistate outbreak since 2006. As of May 9, 149 people in 29 states have fallen ill, including one person who died in California. Of these cases, half have been hospitalized.

"Do not eat or buy romaine lettuce unless you can confirm it is not from the Yuma. Arizona, growing region," the CDC warned. Restaurants and retailers are also advised to avoid romaine if they can't confirm its origin. And that includes all types — from heads and hearts of romaine to chopped romaine and romaine in salad mixes.



People infected with the outbreak of E. coli-contaminated lettuce, by state of residence, as of May 1. (Source/CDC) But in reality, we should probably be a little wary of lettuce all the time - not just when there's a big E. coli outbreak. As sales of precut and bagged greens have boomed, one thing is becoming increasingly clear: They're now one of the most common sources of food poisoning in the

One in six Americans get sick from food — many of them from salads

Some 48 million people (one in six Americans) get sick from the food every year. Of those, about 128,000 wind up in hospitals and 3,000 die. And the foods most frequently implicated here are probably not what you think.

According to a 2015 estimate from the CDC, nearly half of all food-borne illnesses are caused by produce. Meanwhile, dairy and eggs cause 20 percent, meat and poultry are the culprits in only 22 percent of cases, and fish and shellfish just 6 perThe Latest E. Coli Outbreak In Romaine Lettuce Is Part Of A Larger Food Trend

Eating Salads Has Become A Major Source Of Food Poisoning In The US

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



A 2013 analysis by CDC of food poisoning cases between 1998 to 2008 found that salads caused a quarter of all food poisoning outbreaks. (Courtesy/Getty Images)

According to a 2015 estimate from the CDC, nearly half of all food-borne illnesses were caused by produce. (Source

A 2013 analysis by CDC of food poisoning cases between 1998 and 2008 found that leafy vegetables — salads and the like - caused almost a quarter of all food poisonings. That was more than any other food product, including dairy and poultry. Leafy vegetables were also the second most common cause of food poisoning-related hospitalizations.

Back in the '90s and early 2000s, E. coli cases linked to hamburgers represented almost all that I did," said Bill Marler, one of America's leading food safety attorneys.

"Now it's none of what I do. Now it's just

salads, raw vegetables." Michele Jay-Russell, a food safety researcher at the University of California Davis who has investigated salad-related poisoning outbreaks in the past, said the raw vegetables that are the most common culprits are basically all salad greens, but especially the chopped and bagged kind. "We really haven't seen kale and some of the other greens [with contamination] problems, at least not yet. And romaine is one of the most common lettuce products that are used in salads."

Why fresh produce is now a major source of food poisoning



A field of romaine lettuce to feed the salad boom. (Photo/Getty Images)

So more people are now sickened by leafy greens than by their hamburgers or sushi. And are a number of different drivers of this trend.

People are simply eating more fresh produce these days than they did just a few years ago. This means there's more risk of exposure to pathogens that may be hanging out in fruits and veggies. (In a Washington Post's story about the E. coli outbreak, one of the people who fell sick from the contaminated lettuce was a 16-year-old from Wilton, California, who had been eating salads every day in a bid to be healthier.) And we tend to eat most produce raw. That means "there's no kill step for the consumer to cook off the bacteria that might be lurking in our food," said Jay-Russell.

There are many different strains of E. coli, and most of them live in our guts and don't cause any harm. But the strain that's led to the outbreak now — E. coli O157 — produces toxins that are dangerous for humans, and it's a particularly virulent strain (which CDC officials say explains the high rate of hospitalizations in this outbreak). The bacteria are typically transmitted from animals to humans through animal excrement that has contaminated food or water. The symptoms of infection include cramping, vomiting, diarrhea, and, rarely, kidney failure and death.

While there are extensive procedures to prevent this kind of food poisoning from happening, and regulations on farms have gotten stricter, some contamination can still slip through.

Some of the processes farms have in place to clean salads actually trap bacteria in the plants, making them impossible to wash away. "During harvest, workers core lettuce in the field, often with a knife soiled by pathogen-laden dirt," explained Modern Farmer in an article about why lettuce keeps sickening people. "The plant then produces a milky latex that essentially traps any present pathogens in the plant."



Pre-package salads are the grocery store.

But contamination can happen "all along the spectrum of growing plants," Jay-Russell added. "There can be animal intrusions or inputs like contaminated water sources that bring the bacteria into the field."

There are also types of bacteria that you simply can't wash off, or the contamination happens in places you typically don't splash with water, like inside the core of a lettuce head. That can make it pretty hard to prevent food poisoning, even with the triple washing most bagged lettuces go through.

Our love of convenient, prepackaged salads amplifies the risk

Marler also blames Americans' love of convenience for the problem. "Mass-produced chopped, bagged lettuce that gets shipped around the US amplifies the risk of poisoning," he said.

Instead of shipping heads of lettuce or large carrot sticks that people wash, we chop them and mix them up in processing, then package them in plastic bags. In that process, Marler said, "The bacteria has a chance to grow. And a lot of people get

This prepackaging makes it harder to find the cause of a food poisoning outbreak. Different lettuces grown at different farms get mixed into bags that are distributed at supermarkets and restaurants all over the country, so food safety officials need to search for the common link among suppli-

"When it gets processed, you might have four to five farms supplying the processor on any day. So was it farmer one, two, three, or four that was contaminated?" Marler asked. It also means that when something goes awry in a batch, it can cause a very widespread problem — like the one we're seeing now.

"In a perfect world, nobody would mix and match lettuce so this problem wouldn't happen," he said. "I think the [question] is: Is the convenience worth the risk?" (Courtesy https://www.vox.com/science)

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