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U.S. says it 'hacked the hackers' to bring down ransomware gang, helping 300 victims

WASHINGTON, Jan 26 (Reuters) - The FBI revealed on Thursday it had secretly hacked and disrupted a prolific ransomware gang called Hive, a maneuver that allowed the bureau to thwart the group from collecting more than \$130 million in ransomware demands from more than 300 victims.

At a news conference, U.S. Attorney General Merrick Garland, FBI Director Christopher Wray, and Deputy U.S. Attorney General Lisa Monaco said government hackers broke into Hive's network and put the gang under surveillance, surreptitiously stealing the digital keys the group used to unlock victim organizations' data.

They were then able to alert victims in advance so they could take steps to protect their systems before Hive demanded the payments.

"Using lawful means, we hacked the hackers," Monaco told reporters. "We turned the tables on Hive."

News of the takedown first leaked on Thursday morning when Hive's website was replaced with a flashing message that said: "The Federal Bureau of Investigation seized this site as part of coordinated law enforcement action taken against Hive Ransomware."

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Hive's servers were also seized by the German Federal Criminal Police and the Dutch National High Tech Crime Unit.

"Intensive cooperation across national borders and continents, characterized by mutual trust, is the key to fighting serious cybercrime effectively," said German police commissioner Udo Vogel in a statement from police and prosecutors in the state of Baden-Wuerttemberg, who assisted in the probe.

Reuters was not immediately able to locate contact details for Hive. It is unclear where they were geographically based.

The takedown of Hive is distinct from some of the other high-profile ransomware cases the U.S. Justice Department has announced in recent years, such as a cyber attack in 2021 against the Colonial Pipeline Co.

In that case, the Justice Department seized some \$2.3 million in cryptocurrency ransom after the company had already paid the hackers.



The J. Edgar Hoover Federal Bureau of Investigation Building is seen in Washington
The J. Edgar Hoover Federal Bureau of Investigation Building is seen in Washington, U.S., February 2, 2018. REUTERS/Aaron P. Bernstein
Here, there were no seizures because investigators intervened before Hive demanded the payments. The undercover infiltration, which started in July 2022, went undetected by the gang until now.

OVER \$100 MLN IN RANSOM
Hive was one the most prolific among a wide range of cybercriminal groups that extort international businesses by encrypting their data and demanding massive cryptocurrency payments in return.

The Justice Department said that over the years, Hive has targeted more than 1,500 victims in 80 different countries, and has collected more than \$100 million in ransomware payments.

Although there were no arrests announced on Wednesday, one department official told reporters to "stay tuned."

Canadian researcher Brett Callow, of cybersecurity company Emsisoft, said that Hive was responsible for at least 11 incidents involving U.S. government organizations, schools, and healthcare providers last year.

"Hive is one of the most active groups around, if not the

most active," he said in an email.

Attorney General Merrick Garland said the FBI's operation helped a wide range of victims, including a Texas school district.

"The bureau provided decryption keys to the school district, saving it from making a \$5 million ransom payment," he said. A Louisiana hospital, meanwhile, was spared \$3 million.

Garland said the department's investigation remains ongoing



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LOCAL NEWS

China plays down COVID outbreak with holiday rush at full tilt

WASHINGTON/LONDON, Oct 7(Reuters) - The OPEC+ organization's decision this week to cut oil production despite stiff U.S. opposition has further strained already tense relations between President Joe Biden's White House and Saudi Arabia's royal family, once one of Washington's staunchest Middle East allies, according to interviews with about a dozen government officials and experts in Washington and the Gulf.

The White House pushed hard to prevent the OPEC output cut, these sources said. Biden hopes to keep U.S. gasoline prices from spiking again ahead of midterm elections in which his Democratic party is struggling to maintain control of the U.S. Congress. Washington also wants to limit Russia's energy revenue during the Ukraine war.

The U.S. administration lobbied OPEC+ for weeks. In recent days, senior U.S. officials from energy, foreign policy and economic teams urged their foreign counterparts to vote against an output cut, according to two sources familiar with the discussions.

Amos Hochstein, Biden's top energy envoy, along with national security official Brett McGurk and the administration's special envoy to Yemen Tim Lenderking, traveled to Saudi Arabia last month to discuss energy issues, including the OPEC+ decision.

NYC mayor declares state of emergency amid migrant busing crisis Analysis: Defeats in Ukraine stoke crisis for Vladimir Putin Putin orders Russia to seize Exxon-led Sakhalin 1 oil and gas project They failed to prevent an output cut, just as Biden did after his own July visit.

US officials "tried to position it as 'us versus Russia,'" said one source briefed on the discussions, telling Saudi officials they needed to make a choice.

That argument failed, the source said, adding that the Saudis said that if the United States wanted more oil on the markets, it should start producing more of its own. The United States is the world's No. 1 oil producer and also its top consumer, according to data from the U.S. Energy Information Administration.

The Saudi government media office CIC did not respond to Reuters emailed requests for comment about the discussions.



"We are concerned first and foremost with the interests of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and then the interests of the countries that trusted us and are members of OPEC and the OPEC + alliance," Energy Minister Prince Abdulaziz told Saudi TV Wednesday.

OPEC weighs its interests with "those of the world because we have an interest in supporting the growth of the global economy and providing energy supplies in the best way," he said.

Washington's handling of the Iran nuclear deal and withdrawal of support for a Saudi-led coalition's offensive military operations in Yemen have upset Saudi officials, as have actions against Russia after the February 2022 invasion of Ukraine.

A U.S. push for a price cap on Russian oil is causing uncertainty, Energy Minister Prince Abdulaziz bin Salman told Bloomberg TV after the OPEC cut, noting the "lack of details and the lack of clarity" about how it will be implemented.

A source briefed by Saudi officials said the kingdom views it as "a non-market price-control mechanism, that could be used by a cartel of consumers against producers."

A Biden-directed sale of 180 million barrels of oil in March from the U.S. Strategic Petroleum Reserve put downward pressure on oil prices. In March, OPEC+ said it would stop using data from the International Energy Agency (IEA), a Western oil watchdog, due to Saudi-led concerns the United States had too much influence.

On Thursday, Biden called the Saudi decision "a disappointment", adding Washington could take further action in the oil market.

Editor's Choice



A model presents a creation by designer Giorgio Armani as part of his Haute Couture Spring/Summer 2023 collection show for fashion house Giorgio Armani Prive in Paris, France. REUTERS/Sarah Meyssonier



Music fans attend a public memorial for singer Lisa Marie Presley, the only daughter of the "King of Rock 'n' Roll," Elvis Presley, at Graceland Mansion in Memphis, Tennessee. REUTERS/Nikki Boertman



Afghan boys stand on a snow-covered street on the TV mountain in Kabul, Afghanistan. REUTERS/Ali Khara



A Ukrainian military helicopter is seen, amid Russia's attack on Ukraine, in Donbas region, Ukraine. REUTERS/Oleksandr Ratushniak



A worker uses a crane to lift a statue of Eleanor Rigby, a character immortalized in a Beatles song of the same name after it was damaged in recent cold weather in Liverpool, Britain. REUTERS/Phil Noble



A worker uses a crane to lift a statue of Eleanor Rigby, a character immortalized in a Beatles song of the same name after it was damaged in recent cold weather in Liverpool, Britain. REUTERS/Phil Noble

Southern DAILY Make Today Different

BUSINESS

We'll Be Dealing With Covid-Related Fallout As Long As There Is The Possibility Of New Variants

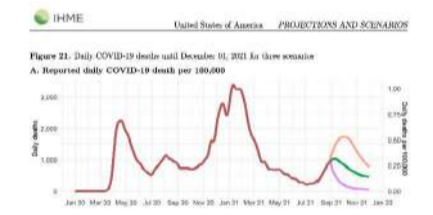
The 'New World' After The Pandemic - What's In Store?



Covid-19 Testing Site On The Streets Of New York City, January 2022. Compiled And Edited By John T. Robbins, Southern Daily Editor

As a virus-weary world limps through the third year of the outbreak, experts are sending out a warning signal: Don't expect omicron to be the last variant we have to contend with...

previous strains, but it is wildly infectious, pushing new case counts to once unimaginable records. Meanwhile, evidence is emerging that the variant may not be as innocuous as early data suggest.



Before any of that, the world has to get past the current wave. Omicron may appear to cause less severe disease than

It seems like we are constantly trying to catch up with the virus," she said. It's sobering for a world that's been trying to move on from the virus with a new intensity in recent months. But the outlook isn't all gloom. Anti-viral medicines are hitting the market, vaccines are more readily available and tests that can be self-administered in minutes are now easy and cheap to obtain in many places.



A medical worker waits for antigen test results at the Erez Crossing on the Israel-Gaza border in December. (Photo/ Kobi Wolf/Bloomberg)

In six months' time, many richer countries will have made the transition from pandemic to endemic. But that doesn't mean masks will be a thing of the past. We'll need to grapple with our approach to booster shots, as well as the pandemic's economic and political scars.

Is Covid-19 Here to Stay? "There is a lot of happy talk that goes along the lines that omicron is a mild virus and it's effectively functioning as an attenuated live vaccine that's going to create massive herd immunity across the globe," said Peter Hotez, dean of the National School of Tropical Medicine at Baylor College of Medicine in Houston.

The sheer size of the current outbreak means more hospitalizations, deaths and virus mutations are all but inevitable. Many people who are infected aren't making it into the official statistics, either because a home test result isn't formally recorded or because the infected person never gets tested at all.

With daily cases peaking at an average

of more than 800,000 in mid-January, the number of underlying infections may have exceeded 3 million a day — or nearly 1% of the U.S. population, Bedford estimates. Since it takes five to 10 days to recover, as much as 10% of people in the country may have been infected at any one time.



Long lines Queues at a testing station in Seoul on Feb. 6. (Photo/SeongJoon Cho/Bloomberg)

He's not alone in projecting astronomical numbers. At the current infection rate, computer modelling indicates more than half of Europe will have contracted omicron by mid-March, according to Hans Kluge, a regional director for the World Health Organization.

Meanwhile, a sub-variant known as BA.2 is spreading rapidly in South Africa. It appears to be even more transmissible than the original strain and may cause a second surge in the current wave, one of the country's top scientists said.

And just because you've already had the virus doesn't mean you won't get re-infected since Covid doesn't confer lasting immunity.

New evidence suggests that delta infections didn't help avert omicron, even in

vaccinated people. That would explain why places like the U.K. and South Africa experienced such significant outbreaks even after being decimated by delta. Reinfection is also substantially more common with omicron than previous variants.

"With omicron, because it has more of an upper respiratory component, it's even less likely to result in durable immunity" than previous variants, Hotez said. "On that basis, it's incorrect thinking to believe that this is somehow going to be the end of the pandemic."

Preparing for the next Covid strains is critical.

"As long as there are areas of the world where the virus could be evolving, and new mutants arriving, we all will be susceptible to these new variants," said Glenda Gray, chief executive officer of the South African Medical Research Council.



A child receives a vaccine shot in San Francisco on Jan. 10. (Photo/ David Paul Morris/Bloomberg)

Lockdowns and travel curbs aren't going away, even if they are becoming less restrictive on the whole.

"The things that will matter there are whether we are able to respond when there is a local surge," said Mark McClellan, former director of the U.S. Food and Drug Administration and director of the Duke-Margolis Center for Health Policy. "Maybe going back to putting on more masks or being a little bit more cautious about distancing."

Inoculation is still the world's primary line of defense against Covid. More than 62% of people around the globe have gotten at least one dose, with overall rates in wealthy countries vastly higher than in developing ones. At the current pace, it will take another five months until 75% of the world's population has received their first shot.

(Article Continues Below)

Southern DAILY Make Today Different

COMMUNITY

(Article Continues From Above)

The 'New World' After The Pandemic - What's In Store?

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

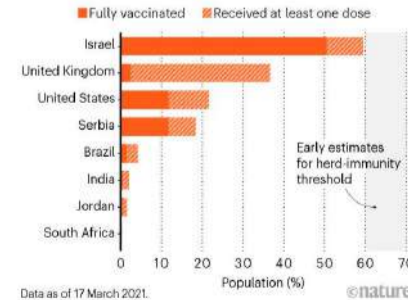


Results of trials on a daily pill to treat COVID-19 could be available within months. (Image/Unsplash/Halacious)

Uneven Access to Vaccines

DISPARITIES IN DISTRIBUTION

The worldwide roll-out of COVID-19 vaccinations is uneven, as shown by this selection of countries. Even as some nations approach a theoretical threshold for herd immunity, quashing the spread of the virus will prove difficult.

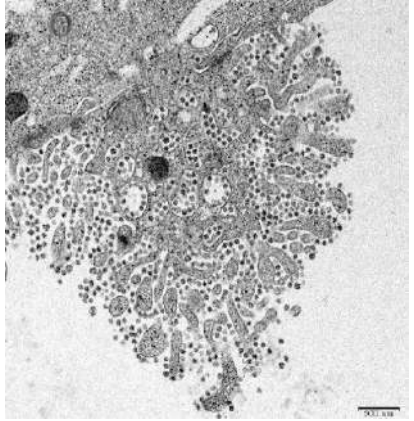


But studies show one or two injections don't ward off the pathogen. The best bet at this point is a booster shot, which triggers the production of neutralizing antibodies and a deeper immune response. People inoculated with more traditional inactivated vaccines, such as the widely used shots from China's Sinovac Biotech Ltd., will need at least two boosters — preferably with different vaccines — to control the virus, Yale's Iwasaki said.

How We'll Know When the Covid-19 Crisis Is Over

While the virus won't be overwhelming hospitals and triggering restrictions forever, it's still unclear when — or how — it will become safe to leave on the back burner.

Experts Bloomberg News spoke to agree that in developed countries including the U.S. and much of Europe, the virus could be well in hand by mid-2022. There will be better access to pills such as Pfizer Inc.'s Paxlovid, rapid antigen tests will be more readily available and people will have become accustomed to the idea that Covid is here to stay.



Transmission electron micrograph of a green monkey kidney cells 24 hours

after infection by the SARS-CoV-2 virus. (Source/The University of Hong Kong)

Robert Wachter, chair of medicine at the University of California, San Francisco, puts the odds at 10-to-one that by the end of February, most parts of the U.S. and the developed world will no longer be struggling with severe outbreaks. Vaccinations and new treatments, widespread testing and immunity as a result of previous infections are helping. Countries like Denmark are getting rid of all pandemic restrictions despite ongoing outbreaks.

"That is a world that feels fundamentally different from the world of the last two years," he said. "We get to come back to something resembling normal." "I don't think it's irrational for politicians to embrace that, for policies to reflect that."

When Will the Pandemic End?

Elsewhere in the world, the pandemic will be far from over.

The threat of new variants is highest in less wealthy countries, particularly those where immune conditions are more common. The delta mutation was first identified in India while omicron emerged in southern Africa, apparently during a chronic Covid infection in an immunocompromised HIV patient.

"As long as we refuse to vaccinate the world, we will continue to see new waves," Hotez said. "We are going to continue to have pretty dangerous variants coming out of low- and middle-income countries. That's where the battleground is."



A "door-to-door" vaccination team inoculates residents at a village in the Budgam district of Jammu and Kashmir, India, in August 2021. (Photo/Sumit Dayal/Bloomberg)

Amesh Adalja, senior scholar at the Johns Hopkins University Center for Health Security in Baltimore, sees the pandemic continuing into 2023 for parts of the developing world.

"For me, the transition from pandemic

to endemic is when you're not worried about hospitals getting crushed," he said. "That will happen in most Western countries in 2022, and it will take a little bit longer for the rest of the world."

In parts of Asia, public health officials aren't even willing to consider calling the end of the pandemic.

While most of the world now seeks to live alongside Covid, China and Hong Kong are still trying to eliminate it. After spending much of 2021 virtually virus-free, both places are currently dealing with outbreaks.

"We do not possess the prerequisites for living with the virus because the vaccination rate is not good, especially amongst the elderly," said Hong Kong Chief Executive Carrie Lam. "I could not stand seeing a lot of old people dying in my hospitals."

Harsh virus restrictions including border closures and quarantines may well be in place until the end of 2022, though the higher contagiousness of the new variants is making that harder to maintain, as Hong Kong's current challenges show. Walling out the virus completely, like a swathe of countries did early in the pandemic, may no longer be possible.

With so much of the world still mired in the pandemic, virus-related dislocations will continue everywhere.



Covid-19 testing outside a building placed under lockdown at the City Garden housing estate in Hong Kong, in Jan. 2022. (Photo/Louise Delmotte/Bloomberg)

The immense strain on global supply chains is only worsened by workers sickened or forced to quarantine as a result of omicron. The problem is especially acute in Asia, where much of the world's manufacturing takes place, and means global concerns about soaring consumer prices are unlikely to disappear any time soon. China's increasingly vehement moves to keep quashing Covid are also becoming disruptive.

With many countries only partially open to visitors, international travel is still very far from what we considered normal in 2019. Hospitals and health care

systems around the world face a long, slow recovery after two years of monumental pressure.

And for some individuals, the virus may be a life sentence. Long Covid sufferers have now been experiencing severe fatigue, muscle aches and even brain, heart and organ damage for months.

How long will we be dealing with the long-term ramifications of the virus? "That's the million-dollar question," South Africa's Gray said. "Hopefully we can control this in the next two years, but the issues of long Covid will persist. We will see a huge burden of people suffering from it."



A temporary Covid treatment facility at the Commonwealth Games Village Sports Complex in New Delhi on Jan. 5. (Photo/T. Narayan/Bloomberg)

Life After the Pandemic Over the coming months, a sense of what living permanently with Covid really looks like should take shape. Some places may forget about the virus almost entirely, until a flareup means classes are cancelled for a day or companies struggle with workers calling in sick. Other countries may rely on masking up indoors each winter, and an annual Covid vaccine is likely to be offered in conjunction with the flu shot.

To persist, the virus will need to evolve to evade the immunity that's hitting high levels in many parts of the world. "There could be many scenarios," Yale's Iwasaki said. "One is that the next variant is going to be quite transmissible, but less virulent. It's getting closer and closer to the common cold kind of virus."

If that evolution takes a more toxic path, we will end up with a more severe disease.

"I just hope we don't have to keep making new boosters every so often," she added. "We can't just vaccinate everyone around the world four times a year." "It's really hard to predict."

(Courtesy Bloomberg.com)

完整修車廠《修車師姐》徐云專欄27 汽車廢氣淨化

汽車廢氣淨化(Catalytic Converter)指的是將汽車廢氣中的有害成分轉化成無害的物質。汽車排出的廢氣中對大氣造成污染的主要是一氧化碳、碳氫化合物和氮氧化物三種氣體。催化淨化器一般都安裝在汽車底盤上，與內燃機的排氣系統連結在一起。從內燃機排出的廢氣通過淨化器的催化劑床，便轉化為二氧化碳、氮和水。汽車廢氣淨化的效率計算需要靠氧氣傳感器的幫助經過計算機的計算獲得。如果汽車廢氣淨化(Catalytic Converter)的效率不達標，汽車的發動機故障燈(check)就會一直亮，故障代碼是P0420或者P0430。

催化式排氣淨化器有氧化型、雙床型、三元型等多種型式，其中最常用的是三元型催化式淨化器。當汽車廢氣通過淨化器的通道時，一氧化碳和碳氫化合物就在催化劑鉑與鈾的作用下，與空氣中的氧發生反應產生無害的水和二氧化碳，而氮氧化物則在催化劑銻的作用下被還原為無害的氮和氫。

所謂三元型催化式淨化器是指汽車廢氣只要通過淨化器本身，就可同時將廢氣中的三種主要有害物質轉化為無害物質的一種高效淨化器。三元型催化式排氣淨化器的淨化效率十分高，可以淨化90%以上的有害物質，是現代轎車上一種

標準裝置。當然，三元型催化式排氣淨化器也不是全能的，它只能適用於無鉛汽油做燃料的汽車，如果使用含鉛汽油，廢氣中的鉛就會復蓋催化劑，使淨化器停止工作而不起任何作用，所以現在的車用汽油一般都是無鉛汽油。如果您汽車的check Engine燈亮了，很有可能是廢氣淨化器除了問題，需要趕快到修車廠檢查，及時更換廢氣淨化器。

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謹誠會計師事務所趙廣華會計師 專欄2 --- 怎樣在美國開辦LLC?



使用了您的公司名；

- 查找德州商標：在德州州務卿的網站Texas SOS的商標查找欄中，搜索在德州是否有商標已經使用了您的公司名；
- 確認公司名在德州是否可用：在Texas Secretary of State的Texas SOS中搜索您的公司名，看看名稱是否可用；
- 使用Google搜索：使用谷歌搜索查找您所構思的公司名是否可用。
- 使用Social Media搜索：在Facebook、Twitter等社交網站上查找公司名是否可用；
- 確定網絡域名是否可用：使用Namecheap，查找以公司名命名的網絡域名是否可用，為之後的公司網站申請做好準備，這一點非常重要，如果公司名已經被註冊成爲網絡域名，那麼您日後可能需要花重金去購買此域名。

3，確定公司地址

您需要確定公司地址，從而可以完成後續的公司申請手續。這裡可以分成線下商業和線上商業：

線下：如果您從事線下的商業活動，比如餐飲、兒童教育、游泳教學等等，那麼您需要租用或者購買從事商業活動的房屋，那麼公司的地址自然就是從事商業活動的地址。

線上：如果您從事電商、網上教育等等不需要實體地址的商業活動，那麼您仍然需要一個實體地址來註冊您的公司。這裡不建議使用自己的家庭地址，因爲盡量將公司和家庭分開，滿足有限責任的要求，另外，您也不想將家庭地址公佈在網上。這裡，您可以使用UPS的郵箱服務，一個月大約20刀~30刀不等。

4，使用Registered Agent

德州要求所有的公司在德州必須具有一個Register Agent，用於接受信件、法院通知。Register Agent需要在德州有一個確定的地址，同時保證在工作日里，都有人能夠接受法庭傳票等等重要信件。您可以使用您的公司地址，或者使用專門的Registered Agent的服務。如果您使用Registered Agent的服務，大約一個月是10美金，如果有任何信件，您的Agent都會掃描給您，或者轉寄給您。下面是一些Registered Agent Services的信息：

- www.legalzoom.com
- www.bizfillings.com
- www.csglobal.com

5，提交公司申請表

您需要登陸德州州務卿官方網站來進行申請，需要填寫的內容大約包括：公司類別，公司名，公司地址，Registered Agent地址等等。網上填寫完成之後，在1~2天之內，您會收到以下三份電子檔文件：

- Certificate of Formation Limited Liability Company：記錄了您所有填寫的信息。
 - Certificate of Filing：告知您有限責任公司已經申請並且收到；
 - Acknowledgement Document：告知您公司已經申請成功。
- 請將以上的文件打印出來，保存在安全的地方。美國德州註冊LLC的價格爲300美金，可以使用信用卡支付。

6，申請EIN號

公司註冊完成之後，您需要去IRS網站註冊公司的稅號，俗稱Employer Identifi-

cation Number，簡稱EIN，您需要使用稅號進行報稅。需要的基本信息包括公司名，公司地址，公司類別等等。申請完成之後，您會在網上得到一個格式爲xx-xxxxxxx的EIN號，請將這個文件打印出來，保存在安全的地方。

7，收取EFTPS信件並建立賬戶

EFTPS是Electronic Federal Tax Payment System的縮寫，是一個用來繳納聯邦稅的系統，您的Registered Agent會收到一封郵件，告知註冊EFTPS的相關信息，通過這個系統，您可以設置您的賬戶和密碼來繳納聯邦稅。

8，填寫Texas Franchise Tax Questionair這份問卷調查會寄送到您的Registered Agent那裡，您需要按照信中的要求到達官方網站進行填寫。之後，按照要求，您需要交納Texas Franchise Tax。

9，完成公司的運營協議

這是一封非常重要的文件，主要概括了公司的製度、規章和條款。目的是指導公司內部的運營，從而滿足公司所有者的需求。您可以使用一些在線的服務、聘請專業的律師或者使用一些模板來自己完成。

10，全體公司成員大會

您需要召集公司的所有成員商討以下的內容：

- 通過公司的運營協議；
- 授權以LLC的名義開通銀行賬戶；
- 授權以LLC的名義開通Paypal賬戶；
- 授權爲公司的成員提供Membership Certificate；
- 授權公司需要購買的辦公設備等等

- 討論需要爲公司購買什麼樣的保險，並且授權購買。

11，開通銀行賬戶

爲公司開通銀行賬戶，包括儲蓄卡和信用卡，並且爲公司提供起始資金，如果是多人所有的有限責任公司，那麼按照各自的份額出資。切記，不要使用自己的個人銀行賬戶進行公司運營，您需要保持公司的獨立性，從而滿足有限責任的要求。您可能還需要爲公司開一個Paypal賬戶，並且將Paypal賬戶連接到公司的銀行賬戶。

12，頒發Membership Certificate

按照成員大會的授權，爲每個公司成員頒發Membership Certificate，主要是明確寫明成員在公司的所占份額比例。

以下是一些在美國開公司可能需要的網站：

- 美國商標局：USPTO
- 美國小企業管理局：Small Business Administration
- 美國國稅局：Internal Revenue Service
- 美國德州審計署：Texas Comptroller
- 美國德州州務卿：Texas Secretary of State

- 開公司的流程；
- 更多網上資源。

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駐休士頓台北經濟文化辦事處羅復文處長介紹新到任領務組林副組長



三位出席僑務委員由劉秀美代表感謝羅總領事的團圓大餐，讓大家在有機會在寒冬相聚！這張謝卡有各位前輩、各位僑領的簽名，大家同心謝謝羅總領事的盛情。

黃麗珊 本報記者攝



餘興節目



駐休士頓台北經濟文化辦事處羅復文處長致歡迎詞



2023年台北經濟文化辦事處春宴兩位節目主持人小Angel和黃依莉