

THREE THINGS: ORACLE'S 299, FLASHBACK, LONGREADS AND 4/20

Day Zero – the day after federal income tax filings were due – came and went, with zero Trump tax returns disclosed to the public. While Trump's positions on many issues flip-flop and confuse the world, on transparency, ethics, and his tax returns he has been utterly consistent: opaque and unethical.

Fortunately today is 4/20. Do with that what you will. Do you smell brownies?

Speaking of 4/20, did you know that states where marijuana legalization appeared on the 2016 ballot, those initiatives outperformed one or more of the two main presidential candidates? What a candidate or political party might do with that knowledge...anyhow, on with three things.

Unprophetic Oracle

There's still some fallout after The Shadow Brokers (TSB) release last week of NSA Tailored Access Operations' (TAO) toolkit. Software vendor Oracle announced a patch for 299 vulnerabilities revealed by the TSB.

Wrap your head around that: *299 fixes*.

Bigger than the whopping 276 fixes Oracle issued last summer in one fell swoop.

Now wrap your head around the fact this mega-patch covers a range of corporate enterprise software used for nearly every aspect of business operations, from human resource management to service or manufacturing resource planning.

If the NSA isn't conducting economic espionage Oracle seems like an odd target to saturate so wide and deeply.

Still haven't decided what to think of Oracle's ability to push out this many patches inside a week. Were they tipped off, or were these vulnerabilities so obvious they should have been fixed ages ago? Or maybe this is what happens when a business like Oracle takes its eyes off the ball and focuses on the wrong things like a protracted lawsuit against Google?

Memories, jogged

When I saw this table fragment on Twitter, listing a few exploits revealed by TSB, I had a flashback to the Bush administration.



The image shows a screenshot of a table with multiple columns and rows. The table appears to be a spreadsheet or a database export. The columns are not clearly labeled, but the rows contain various entries, some of which are highlighted in red. The table is somewhat blurry and difficult to read, but it seems to contain technical information, possibly related to exploits or vulnerabilities as mentioned in the text.

Gee, I wonder how much of the NSA TAO-Equation Group toolkit could explain the White House's missing emails post-Plame outing?

Longreads: Economics, Liberalism, Google's first moonshot

These are worth your time yet this week or weekend.

The Liberal Order Is Rigged by Jeff D. Colgan and Robert O. Keohane in Foreign Affairs (registration required) – An examination of liberalism's failure and how the failure led to anti-democratic populism. In my opinion, this assessment is good but simplistic; the knee-jerk reaction many will have to the word 'liberalism' alone indicates there is far more at work than liberalism failing to deliver on its merits. It's still worth a read; we must begin to pick out and save the liberal from neoliberal if we are to save democracy. Must say I'm surprised at Foreign Affairs' steady shift away from rigid conservatism as well as neoliberalism.

The moral burden on economists – Darryl Hamilton's 2017 presidential address to the National Economic Association warns against treating economics as a morally neutral

'science'. How much of the failure of liberalism is really due to immoral/non-neutral application of economics?

Torching the Modern-Day Library of Alexandria by James Somers for The Atlantic – This tagline is quite the hook: "Somewhere at Google there is a database containing 25 million books and nobody is allowed to read them." Heartbreaking to think there hasn't been a middle ground to free these books to the public. In my opinion, Google is out the money on the scanning process. What would happen if they spun off this effort as a nonprofit digital Library of Alexandria? Could the funds from books approaching out-of-copyright date pay for the upkeep and digitization of new works?

Chaffetz out?

I don't even know what to think of the rumors that Rep. Jason Chaffetz may leave Congress before his term ends December 2017. Some speculate his role in cutting funding directly related to security for diplomats plays a role; others speculate the decision is based on a more personal driver. I hope he can live with what he's done and what he may yet choose to do. I'd hate to have to explain myself to my kids if I'd made some of his decisions to date.

There's your three things and a lagniappe. À *bientôt!*