

TUESDAY MORNING: DON'T DRIVE ANGRY



[image: Chris Plascik via Flickr]

Okay, campers, rise and shine! It's Groundhog Day! Like that genius film Groundhog Day we are stuck in an unending, repeating hell – like the dark circus that is our general election cycle in the U.S.

The lesson: it's hell by choice. Let's choose better. What'll we choose today?

BPS, replacement for plastic additive BPA, not so safe after all

Here's a questionable choice we could examine: using BPS in "BPA-free" plastics. A study by Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA found that BPS negatively affects reproductive organs and increased the likelihood of "premature birth" in zebrafish, accelerating development of the embryos. Relatively small amounts and short exposures produced effects.

As disturbing as this finding may be, the FDA's approach to BPA is worrisome. Unchanged since 2014 in spite of the many studies on BPA, the FDA's website says BPA is safe. Wonder how long it will be before the FDA's site says BPS is likewise safe?

Exoskeleton assists paraplegic for only \$40,000

Adjustable to its wearer's body, SuitX's exoskeleton helps paraplegic users to walk, though crutches are still needed. It's not a perfect answer to mobility given the amount of time it takes to put on the gear, but it could help paraplegics avoid injuries due to sitting for too long in wheelchairs. It's much less expensive than a competing exoskeleton at \$70K; the price is expected to fall over time.

SuitX received an NSF grant of \$750,000 last April for its exoskeleton work. Seems like a ridiculous bargain considering how much we've already invested in DARPA and other MIC-development of exoskeletons with nothing commercial to show for it. Perhaps we should choose to fund more NSF grants instead of DOD research?

Patches and more patches – Cisco, Android, Microsoft

- Networking equipment manufacturer Cisco pushed 11 patches last week to eliminate Denial of Service vulnerabilities across 42 products.
- Google pushed an over-the-air update to their Android-based Nexus devices to patch exposures in Broadcom Wi-Fi.
- Microsoft Windows 10 update released last week Wednesday if you haven't already seen it. No Patch Tuesdays for Win 10. And if Microsoft has its way, no more Patch Tuesdays for any upgrade holdouts as it will push Win 10 even more

aggressively down our
throats.

Dudes behaving badly

- Former Secret Service agent involved in the Silk Road investigation and later charged with theft of \$800K in Bitcoins has been arrested just one day before he was to begin serving his sentence for theft. This Silk Road stuff is a movie or cable series waiting to happen.
- Massachusetts's Rep. Katherine Clark, who proposed the Interstate Swatting Hoax Act last November, was swatted this weekend. Fortunately, the local police used a low-key approach to the hoax call. Way to make the case for the bill's passage, swatters, let alone increased law enforcement surveillance.

I know I've missed something I meant to post, but I'll choose to post it tomorrow and crawl back into my nest this morning to avoid my shadow. In the meantime, don't drive angry!

MONDAY MORNING: JAVA JUNKY JONESING

This morning will not launch without coffee. I don't care how you deliver it, just bring it or nothing will start and finish today without it.

Need more of it than usual given the wacky stuff I've been reading into the wee hours over the weekend – like this stuff:

Former DHS Secretary now University of California prez surveils staff emails

Holy cats. This is ugly. After an alleged network security breach in June last year at UCLA's medical center, an outside party was contracted by University of California president Janet Napolitano to monitor networks at all of University of California's campuses. Collection of content both inbound and outbound, in violation of UoC-Berkeley's IT policy, is alleged. UCOP has been opaque about the reason for the monitoring or data collection. Keep an eye on this case.

DDoS attack on HSBC crimps UK freelancers' tax filing

The end of January in the United Kingdom is the filing deadline for the self-employed. Unfortunately, those who banked with HSBC lost access to their records for roughly four hours on Friday due to a distributed denial of service (DDoS) attack. It's the second service outage inside a month for HSBC. The last outage lasted roughly two days but was not attributed to a DDoS. If UK lawmakers were testy after the first outage in January, they're going to be ugly today.

Oil crash: massive wealth transfer, or increased dependency on oil?

Francisco Blanch, Commodities and Derivatives Strategist at BofA Merrill Lynch, claims plummeting oil prices have transferred roughly \$3 trillion to consumers away from oil producers, and the resulting uptick in

consumption will spur the economy. This assumption neatly ignores the likelihood consumers will have to pay one way or another for increasing losses due to unchecked climate change. Buying more insurance against weather damage and paying more taxes to replace infrastructure, as well as paying more for food due to crop losses won't stimulate anything but consumer frustration.

War of words inside military about F-35's readiness

In a December memo, the Defense Department's director of operational test and evaluation Michael Gilmore wrote that the Joint Program Office's July 2017 deadline for the F-35 jet's full warfighting capability is "not realistic." Software completion, testing and debugging is the risk. Folks in JP0 are pushing back, with at least one official grousing online. So not cool, JP0. Address the concerns and then get to work on that software. Americans are paying for a working jet, not trash talk on Facebook.

Speaking of military...Sonic boom(s) caused minor earthquake in New Jersey

Just for fun, browse through a Twitter search for tweets from last Friday. Something caused more than one sonic boom – perhaps as many as nine – loud enough to register as an earthquake on USGS' meters. At first, the military said it knew nothing about it, claiming there are no training exercises or other missions in the area. NASA's Wallops Flight Facility-Virginia, Federal Aviation Administration, and the North American Aerospace Defense Command had no knowledge of flights in the area capable of generating sonic booms. But then the Navy piped up later, saying the Naval Test Wing Atlantic had been conducting test flights. Though not named, the F-35 fighter is believed to be the source of the booms. Were JP0 and Lockheed Martin trying to make a rather loud and indiscreet point?

Or were the sonic booms due to some other unknown/unspecified cause, given Joint Base

McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst's inability to explain the booms when asked? USGS' website is still taking feedback from folks in New Jersey – did you feel the earth move, too?

Time to taper off from espresso and move to an Americano. Hope your Monday is as caffeinated as you need it to be.

FRIDAY MORNING: KNOW WHEN TO FIGHT

Sun Tzu said,

“There are five occasions when victory can be foretold: When the general knows the time to fight and when not to fight...”

Fridays are lousy times for fights, eh? Unless it's just for fun.

Speaking of fun...

Oil crash wreaking havoc with MIC

Huh. Who could have guessed when buyers of defense goods suffer deep cuts in income, their suppliers feel the same pinch?

Kolkata-based call center workers arrested for telecom fraud

Some cyberthreats aren't malware or hackers, but human beings with ready access to customers' personal information and banking. In this case, three call center employees at Wipro-India working on UK accounts committed fraud of undisclosed nature, costing thousands of pounds. Seems to me these folks couldn't have been too bright, traceability should have been easy. And being located in India offered no protection for either the criminals or the victims.

Zika virus may be transmitted sexually?

At least two cases so far suggest the virus may be transferred between partners during sex. One case involved a Colorado State University researcher who came down with Zika in 2008 after infection in Senegal. His wife came down with it after he came home from abroad; both tested positive for Zika antibodies. His children in the same household did not get sick, however.

Ukrainian power plant attackers now using BlackEnergy-infected Word documents

Though earlier attempts to launch BlackEnergy relied on Powerpoint and Excel documents, the attackers now use Word documents – but all document types contained macros that were enabled. Kaspersky's SecureList says the entities most at risk for BlackEnergy infection are:

- ICS, Energy, government and media in Ukraine
- ICS/SCADA companies worldwide
- Energy companies worldwide

At some point, this will move beyond energy and government targets. Keep your software patched and updated, run antivirus frequently, don't open emails or documents you weren't expecting, and only enable macros after validating the document's source. This is pretty much standard operating practice for the last decade if you've been smart.

If you're looking for something to read this weekend, you might try comparing two different translations of Sun Tzu's The Art of War. The quote I used above is from the E. F. Calthrop version; the same bit in the Lionel Giles version renders,

“Thus we may know that there are five essentials for victory: ... He will win who knows when to fight and when not to fight. ...”

The Giles version is both more simplistic – at some points too much so – but filled with supplemental commentators' content fleshing out interpretation. Relevant to political and business warfare, as much as traditional and asymmetric warfare today.

Save me a seat at the bar at the end of the day!

THURSDAY MORNING: WAR ALL THE TIME

War All The Time – seems appropriate now, and it's been more than a dozen years since this song was released. Also rather pathetic that MTV censored a reference to suicide in this tune, like a drop of merthiolate on a gaping wound.

Say it isn't so, girl! Wendy's investigating possible breaches

On the face it, this doesn't sound like a corporate-wide cybersecurity event. It may be confined to specific stores. But fast food chain Wendy's contracted a security firm to look into unauthorized credit card charges made to cards used at their stores. Wendy's joins Jimmy John's and Chick-Fil-A in the growing list of compromised fast food chains.

Ransomware infects Israel's Electric Authority

No outage has been reported as a result of ransomware infection of Israel's electrical power system via phishing. Computers may have been isolated from the system's network, though. The full extent of the malware's impact is difficult to determine from reports available online; some likened this to the cyberattack on a Ukrainian power plant, and others called this a hacking, though neither description appears to fit well.

California struggles with self-driving car regulations

Oh dear Cthulhu...this bit:

Google has concluded that human error is the biggest risk in driving, and the company wants to remove the steering wheel and pedals from cars, giving people minimal ability to take over.

But computers never, ever make mistakes, right? No wonder California is struggling with this...but no. Even though Google's DeepMind AI mastered GO a decade early, it can't master California's highways.

**New high-speed wireless internet service
launched by former Aereo CEO**

Using microwave technology, new gigabit internet service provider Starry will begin in Boston this year once the FCC approves a limited test run in 15 cities. For now, this looks like a solution for urban areas, but it could be an alternative in rural areas where existing telecoms/ISPs fail to provide high-speed internet in spite of federal funds allocated to expand coverage. Imagine using wind turbine towers for Starry microcells to carry gigabit service to rural America.

All right, everybody back to the front, back to the foreverwar.

WEDNESDAY MORNING: ADULTING IS HARD

While looking for Wednesday, I discovered there's a video short series based on a grownup version of Wednesday Addams character. Cute, though from Wednesday's POV becoming an adult isn't all the fun one might expect.

So much for those carefree days when one could leave all the bad news and difficult choices to

parental figures. It was all an illusion there were ever any grownups in charge.

Playstation moves to U.S. as Sony melds and migrates interactive entertainment divisions

What's this really all about? Does this consolidation of Sony Computer Entertainment with Sony Network Entertainment and their move to California as Sony Interactive Entertainment allow better collaboration with Sony Pictures? Or does this allow for easy access by U.S. government entities suspicious of Playstation Network as a potential terrorist communications platform? Or is this a means to secure a leaky business by pulling more of Sony Group inside a single network? Sony explained SIE will "retain and expand PlayStation user engagement, increase Average Revenue Per Paying Users and drive ancillary revenue" – but that sounds like fuzzy vapor to me.

"Bent spear? Oh, THAT bent spear..." Air Force review omits report of damage to nuke

I hope like hell President Obama has already called someone on the carpet and asked for heads to roll. Not reporting a "bent spear" event in a review of U.S. nuclear force isn't exactly a little boo-boo. A "bent spear" in 2007 spawned a rigorous investigation resulting in a large number of disciplinary actions including resignations and removals from duty.

Zika virus: risk to U.S. mounting

There have been more non-locally transmitted cases of Zika virus here in the U.S. as another Latin American country warns women against pregnancy. *Not to worry, it's not like Ebola, relax*, we've been told...except that we've seen this playbook before, where there were casualties as a pandemic began before either federal or state agencies took effective action. In the case of Zika, we may not see mortalities; casualties may be serious birth defects following a rapid spread with mosquito season. Fortunately President Obama has now asked for more accelerated research into Zika, though we may not see results before Aedes mosquito season

hits its stride this year. For more information about this virus, see the CDC's Zika website.

EU seeks hefty fines in draft law to overhaul auto industry regulations

At fines of €30,000 (£22,600) per vehicle found in violation, the EU might get some results out of proposed regulations governing automotive emissions standards. But the problem hasn't been the lack of EU standards – it's the inability to validate and extract compliance when so many member states are willing to turn a blind eye to their constituent manufacturers' failings in order to preserve employment. Can the EU make these fines stick once new regulations are passed?

By the way, Consumer Reports published a really snappy overview of the VW emissions scandal. Worth a read.

Con Edison's creaky website leaves online customers exposed

You'd think by now after all of the successful hacks on business and government websites that companies would catch a clue. But no, not in the case of Con Edison. Read the article [here](#) so you know what to watch for at other websites; all of ConEd's site's links do not open fully encrypted connections. This is a really easy thing to fix, should be the very first thing every single business allowing customers to log in or pay online should check.

Heading out to act like an adult for the next eight hours. Maybe less.

TUESDAY MORNING: CHASING THE CLOUDS

AWAY

Hope by this afternoon all the major thoroughfares are clear and transportation nearly back to normal along the east coast. You'd think by now we'd have developed and installed self-maintaining highways that melt ice and snow, right?

For now, let's dig.

A former Goldman Sachs exec parts company with CenturyLink

They called it "creating an environment that was unproductive," and maybe it was – a diversified telecom organization may not be a great fit for an investment banker, leading to some less-than-productive discussions. But a nearly unanimous vote said Joseph Zimmer, retired GS exec, should not apply for re-election to CenturyLink's board of directors. Wonder if the rumored-but-not-completed acquisition of Rackspace had anything to do with this rocky situation?

Retail Mixed Bag: Wal-Mart retrenches, Staples rethinks, Shoes.com kicks butt

The Arkansas-based retailer is closing up its 102 Wal-Mart Express stores, as well as a few of its full-sized stores. Were the smaller stores simply too much overhead, or were they cannibalizing sales from larger stores, or did Amazon finally cut into Wal-Mart's sales enough that Wal-Mart needed to reduce?

Staples, one of the two largest big box office supply retailers, changed up some of its senior management while indicating it may back out of its proposed merger with the other mega office supply retailer, Office Depot. The merger has not received approval yet from the USDOT. This unresolved deal may be a bigger liability in terms of expense by now, especially when all retail sales have slowed down.

Shoes.com is looking for cash to make some acquisitions. This Canadian online shoe retailer is bucking the retail trend with a strong uptick in sales in spite of stiff competition from

Zappos and Amazon.

All three retailers mirror a turn-down in consumption – even Shoes.com. If retail was doing well, there'd be less need to close brick-and-mortar stores or buy up market share.

Six GOP Senators suck up to ISPs while annoying broadband users

Quel surprise: a handful of GOP Senators sent a letter to the FCC saying that standard broadband speeds are arbitrary, and most users don't need the current baseline speed.

I'd like to know why some tech media won't name names. Fortunately, The Hill listed the signatories. Senators Roy Blunt (MO), Steve Daines (MT), Deb Fischer (NE), Cory Gardner (CO), Ron Johnson (WI) and Roger Wicker (MS) wrote,

“Looking at the market for broadband applications, we are aware of few applications that require download speeds of 25 Mbps ... Netflix, for example, recommends a download speed of 5 Mbps to receive high-definition streaming video, and Amazon recommends a speed of 3.5 Mbps.”

The stupid, it burns almost as much as the visible corporate whoring. Like nobody in their world has multiple users in a household sharing service or online gamers or emerging technology which does need increasingly higher speeds. Hope these folks aren't on committees for cybersecurity issues – wait, what? Every one of these six dipschitz is on the Senate Commerce Subcommittee on Communications, Technology, Innovation, and the Internet. *~screaming into pillow~*

I can't with this. I must change gears or go insane. Keep the wheels on the road, kids.

MONDAY MORNING: GET A PICK AND SHOVEL

Mississippi John Hurt's lyrics seem appropriate this morning – get a pick and shovel to dig your way out of all that snow and ice this Monday morning.

Getting a late start here because I stayed up watching the X-Files revival.

Apple iMessage users' content at risk if backed up to iCloud

While iMessages themselves use end-to-end encryption, the same content when backed up to iCloud is encrypted by an Apple-controlled key. As many as 500 million users have data in iCloud services, at risk of exposure. You'd think after The Fappening, Apple users would be more leery about enabling iCloud backup.

Network problems affect NFL's Microsoft Surface tablets, left New England Patriots in the dark

Wow, right down to the "last defensive possession" and *blip* – nothing on the Surface tablets for Pats' coaches to show their players. Not the first time there've been problems with this technology, either. NFL's network problems are blamed for the loss of play information, but Microsoft's tablets are taking the brunt of it. Have to wonder why there wasn't adequate redundancy to ensure network burps would not affect the game. Can't fault the tablets or the network outage for the delay of X-Files on FOX, though, since the Patriots vs. Broncos were on CBS.

Donald Rumsfeld, video game designer

One of the last things I ever expected to see in my feed: Donald Rumsfeld, former Secretary of Defense under George W. Bush, designed a video game. It's an obscure form of solitaire attributed to Winston Churchill. "...I've signed off on something they call 'UX'," Rumsfeld said.

Heaven help us.

I'm deferring my date with a shovel for later today and crawling back into bed. Stay safe and warm, gang.

FRIDAY MORNING: THANK A GODDESS

Yeah, you can thank Fríge for her dæg – Friday is her day. Frigg, Freya, or Freyja, has been lumped into sky-and-weather-goddesses category though I don't recall running across a folktale about her actually doing weather-y stuff.

Hope you were prepared for snow if you live in eastern U.S.; Frigg won't be as much help to you as a decent snow shovel. Same with keeping the kids busy on a snow day. Maybe you could coax them into writing a story about Frigg calling up a snow storm, replete with drawings?

Speaking of weather...and climate...

These news stories suggest snowpocalyptic events here in the U.S. aren't the only unusual conditions affecting the way we do business today.

- South African's wine production will be affected by recent wildfires. Wonder if Australia's will be, too? Oh definitely, by too much rain as well as drought and bushfires.
- Milder than usual weather hurt retail spending in UK. Lucky for our former British overlords we've exported our Black Friday to give them a

temporary boost in sales.

- The worst drought in two decades spurs Zimbabwe to seed clouds. Ugh. Not good. If they're seeding there, what happens to rainfall in Mozambique, Malawi, and Madagascar?

Note: My spell check app offers "snowpocalypse" and "snowpocalypses" after I wrote "snowpocalyptic" – even spell check insists mega-sized snowstorms are now a regular occurrence.

Dutch tech firm Philips' sale of Lumileds division halted

No specific details were shared, but the Senate Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States (CFIUS) blocked the sale of Philips' California-based lighting component manufacturing subsidiary. Note the article refers to "Asian buyers," and mentions further down the story that Chinese firms were involved in the buyers' consortium.

Seems odd this sale was blocked by CFIUS, but not that of chipmaker OmniVision Technologies last May, or Freescale Semiconductor in March (though perhaps the previous owners of Freescale may have been a factor).

Military vendor for AV and building systems sold devices with backdoor

Not only a hidden backdoor, but packet sniffing capabilities found in the AMX brand NX-1200 model building controls device.

But backdoors are a good thing, right? No?

That's a wrap on this week. Hope those of you along the east coast expecting heavy snow are prepared with ample alcoholic beverages for what appears to be a long weekend. Make an offering to Frigg and see if it helps. Offer another to the person who shoveled your snow.

THURSDAY MORNING: TROUBLE, WE HAZ IT

Quite literally I went looking for Trouble, and I found this video by José James from the AllSaints Basement Sessions. Might be the first time looking for trouble paid off.

Drug makers struggle with 'supply and demand' concept

Speaking of trouble, the World Economic Forum meets at Davos, Switzerland this week to engage in its annual circus of the wealthy. Big Pharma piped up and said it wants money to develop antibiotics to replace/augment their current lineup to which bugs have become resistant. Extortion, much?

Hello? Your drugs don't work any longer, which means sales will go down. They don't work because you oversold them, jackasses. You don't get to change 'supply and demand'. Your incentive is and always has been profits, which only happen if you sell a working product. Too bad you screwed your golden goose – and us.

Here's an idea: in the meantime, the U.S. government should fund a competing government-owned drug research and manufacturing facility the way it funds DARPA. The public will benefit directly from the research it bought, and if private drug companies can do better, even using freely available public research, they can knock themselves out.

Still want incentives? Sure. We get a chunk of the company in exchange for a handout, just like General Motors. Now beat it and get back to research or bean counting, whatever it is you really do.

Speaking of drugs, Chinese caught spying on pharmaceutical firm GlaxoSmithKline

Along with four others, a senior-level manager

and biotechnology expert based at Glaxo's Pennsylvania facility was charged with conspiracy, wire fraud, money laundering, and theft of trade secrets. An interesting spin on this story is the involvement of a twin sibling used in money laundering. Glaxo has been at the heart of a couple other corruption stories in China, including reports of bribery and industrial espionage. These Glaxo-related stories all read like telenovela scripts.

Hey, look! A leaky backdoor built into encrypted phone calls

Shocking, just SHOCKING, that a backdoor might be so flawed that a single master key could allow the holder access to ALL phone calls in an encrypted system. It's not shocking that GCHQ is pushing this system's security protocol it developed in-house.

Android phones used for banking may be infected with two-factor defeating malware

Wow. This is pretty creepy. You'd think your voice would be your bond in banking, but it can be used to access your account even though your voice is part of a two-factor authentication system. *Android.bankosy* is the bug in question; better read this article because it's pretty complex stuff.

Internet of Things via search engine – including your Things?

You want more creepy trouble? Here you go – but I sure hope your home doesn't appear in these webcam feeds.

That's enough trouble for now. Make some of your own.

WEDNESDAY MORNING:

WHAC-A-MOLE

Can't bop them on the head fast enough. There are just too many issues popping up. See which ones you can nail.

And GO!

Video popularity in Facebook's 'walled garden' means change for news outlets

This is not good. This is AOL's model come full circle. Increasingly Facebook is shutting down access from outside, forcing news outlets to move inside, and to produce video instead of text content in order to fight for attention. Numerous outlets are affected by this trend, including the former AOL (now Huffington Post). The capper is Facebook's persistent tracking of any users, including those who click on Facebook links. What will this do to general election coverage? Facebook really needs effective competition – stat.

Weather and bad flu season raised French deaths above WWII's rate

Wow. I knew the flu was bad last year, but this bad? Ditto for Europe's weather, though the heat wave last summer was really ugly. Combined, both killed more French in one year than any year since the end of World War II, while reducing overall life expectancy.

FDA issues guidelines on 'Postmarket Management of Cybersecurity in Medical Devices' for comment

Sure hope infosec professionals jump all over this opportunity to shape policy and regulation. Imagine pacemakers being hacked like a Chrysler 300, or reprogrammed without customer knowledge like a VW diesel, or surveilling user like a Samsung smart TV...

UK's Cameron says one thing, UK's arms dealers another with sales of £1Bn arms to Saudi Arabia

Can't. Even. **mumbles something about pig porker**

“The day after the prime minister [David Cameron] claimed to be 'trying to

encourage a political process in Yemen' and declared 'there is no military solution in Yemen', official figures reveal that in just the three months July to September, the government approved the sale of over £1bn worth of bombs for the use of the Royal Saudi Air Force. ...

[Source: *The Guardian*]

Lack of transparency problematic in fatal French drug trial

Like talking to a brick wall to get answers about the drug involved in one death and five hospitalizations after 94 subjects were given an experimental drug. On the face of it, simultaneous rather than staggered administration may have led to multiple simultaneous reactions.

Canadian immigrant helped two Chinese soldiers attempt theft of U.S. military aircraft plans

You want to know how 'chaining' works? Here's a simple real world example allegedly used to spy on U.S. military aircraft: Identify a key node in a network; identify the node's key relationships; sniff those connections for content and more key nodes. A Chinese immigrant in aircraft biz, located in Vancouver, shares email addresses of key individuals in the industry with Chinese officers. They, in turn, attempt to hack accounts to mine for plans, which their contact in Vancouver vets.

Now ask yourself whether these key individuals are in or related to anyone in the Office of Personnel Management database.

Ugh. Keep whacking those moles.