MONDAY MORNING: SO GOOD TO ME

Yeah, Mondays start off well as we emerge from the safe warm cocoon of our beds to begin our day. But Monday evenings are a different kettle of fish.

Like this Monday – we've enjoyed a weekend's cozy glow from soft power exercised through diplomacy now that the IAEA kicked off the new Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). By mid-morning the flying monkey hoard of dissent will saturate media, making a cesspool out of the evening news.

Can hardly wait. Meanwhile…

Un grupo de 66 accionistas de Volkswagen
I admit my command of Spanish is weak, but even at first glance this article didn't look good for VW. *A group of shareholders*—again? Let's translate:

> A group of 66 shareholders of Volkswagen (VW) take legal action against the German automaker after the company distorted evidence of greenhouse gas emissions. The complaint will be presented this week, according to the British newspaper Financial Times.

El Pais reports this is the second class-action lawsuit against VW in relation to the emissions controls defeat technology; plaintiffs for this suit are believed to be investment banks. However there were dozens of class action suits in the U.S. as of last fall, including dealerships stuck with rapidly depreciating but unsalable inventory.

A second article in El Pais also noted VW's Mueller announced additional investment in its Tennessee-based plant after apologizing to the U.S. for the emissions control 'trick' (this last word was '*trucaje*' in Spanish). VW has now

lost marketshare in the EU for the first time in eight years.

USDOT, NHTSA, Automakers agree on Proactive Safety Principles – including improved cybersecurity
Seems rather feel-good in a non-binding sort of way, but USDOT and NHTSA managed to convince automakers to agree to collaborate on vehicle safety and cybersecurity. The agreement announced last week at Detroit's auto show coordinates with the Obama administration's proposed $4 billion budget earmark for automated vehicle research and development.

I still can't see the benefit in individual autonomous cars over public mass transit. My gut says this White House-driven effort at coordination is really aimed at cybersecurity – and surveillance. And no mention of the Three Laws of Robotics, either.

Formic acid fuel cell to power Dutch students' car
Now this is a great bit of automotive and alternative energy news. Students at Eindhoven University of Technology in the Netherlands are working on automotive fuel cells powered by formic acid instead of hydrogen. Much of the fuel cell technology to date relies on hydrogen, but the problem has been hydrogen generation and storage. This challenge has stymied fuel cell-powered cars for nearly two decades. Formic acid could be handled like gasoline; it is fairly easy to produce from wood pulp and other fibrous plant mass, or by catalysis, and is low in toxicity, though care must still be used in its handling.

Given the potential application beyond vehicles, I'd rather see investment in this line of automotive research.

U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission looking into China's military robots
Since the 1990s there have been a number of organized cyber attacks originating in China which seek out military and industrial content.

China’s recently-developed military robots look an awful lot like those developed by QinetiQ. USCESRC is hiring researchers to assess China’s current robotics capabilities, and how much of this capability arose from U.S. sources.

The article in NextGov about USCESRC’s effort characterizes QinetiQ as a “Pentagon contractor.” Funny, that.

Enjoy your peaceful Monday morning while it lasts.