



Son of ‘El Chapo’ pleads guilty to charges in U.S.

INSIDE, 5A

REPORTER-TIMES

MONDAY, JULY 14, 2025 | REPORTER-TIMES.COM MARTINSVILLE, IND. | PART OF THE USA TODAY NETWORK

Illegal Chinese vapes funneled into U.S.



The supply chain ferrying illegal Chinese-made vapes into the United States mostly operates in plain sight. PHOTOS BY CBP/HANDOUT VIA REUTERS

Analysis finds billions of dollars in imports unaccounted for

Emma Rumney, Kaylee Kang and Tom Polansek
REUTERS

CHICAGO – From an office a 15-minute drive from Chicago’s O’Hare International Airport, one small firm helped import millions of unauthorized Chinese-made vapes last year alone, forming a key link in the supply chain feeding U.S. demand for illegal e-cigarettes.

In a little over four years, the firm, a customs brokerage run by a man named Jay Kim, became a go-to broker for the Chinese vape industry. The firm worked on 60% of all shipments of vapes and vape parts from China to the United States in 2024 registered by the Food and Drug Administration, according to a Reuters analysis.

“A lot of them have FDA authorization,” Kim said in an interview in his office in April, referring to the vape shipments his firm handled.

However, FDA data on imports into the U.S. of FDA-regulated goods such as tobacco products or medicines showed the products Kim’s firm helped bring into the United States included unauthorized brands like Lost Mary and Geek Bar.

The FDA has declared those brands illegal to import or sell, warning their array of fruit and candy flavors may appeal to children. The agency says nicotine can harm developing brains and impact attention, learning and mood in young people, who can get hooked more easily on the addictive chemical.

See VAPES, Page 3A



Unauthorized Chinese-made vapes were seized in a raid outside of Chicago by members of the Food and Drug Administration and U.S. Customs and Border Protection.

Another forecasting tool gets scrapped

Dinah Voyles Pulver
USA TODAY

The heart-wrenching July 4 flooding in Texas served as a stark reminder of the importance of accurate and timely weather forecasts.

As extreme rainfall events grow more intense, such tragedies are expected to increase. Further improvement to forecasts is critical, but meteorologists worry that with the additional cuts planned by the Trump administration, the nation’s weather and climate research programs won’t be able to keep up.

The latest blow was the announcement by the U.S. Navy that it would no longer transmit data from aging satellites past June 30, roughly 15 months earlier than expected. Later, the department extended the deadline to July 31.

Without those satellite images, hurricane forecast accuracy could be compromised, say current and former scientists with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. Polar researchers, who use the images to measure the extent of sea ice, hope to acquire the same data through a Japanese government satellite instead.

In any other year, the satellite snafu might not have gathered much attention. But this summer, it exacerbates mounting concerns about the accuracy of weather prediction amid contract cancellations, staff reductions and other Trump administration efforts to reduce the federal bureaucracy.

“You can’t keep taking tools away from people and expect them to get the same result,” said Andy Hazelton, a hurricane scientist at the University of Miami. Hazelton had been hired as a NOAA scientist last October and was dismissed in the Trump administration’s widespread agency layoffs.

USA TODAY interviewed more than a dozen industry veterans, including a half-dozen former NOAA scientists, as well as independent researchers, who all fear that forecasts for hurricanes and other extreme weather events may become less accurate and that efforts to monitor the warming climate could be disrupted.

The flash flood deaths in Texas on Independence Day weekend are not being blamed on poor forecasts, but weather scientists say the tragedy is emblematic of what can happen when forecasts become less accurate.

See TOOL, Page 2A

Cases separated conservative Supreme Court justices

Split brought victories for civil rights plaintiffs

Maureen Groppe
USA TODAY

WASHINGTON – Though the Supreme Court’s conservative supermajority continues to push the law in a rightward direction, the six justices appointed by Republican presidents are

not always rowing in sync.

In the term that ended in June, the conservatives splintered in more than a dozen cases in which at least two joined with all three liberals to form a majority – including in cases important to the conservative legal movement.

It happened when the court upheld the Biden administration’s regulation of untraceable “ghost guns” and turned aside conservative challenges to Obamacare and to an internet subsidy pro-

gram in cases targeting the power of federal agencies.

And it happened in multiple cases involving death row inmates and other criminal defendants.

“I’ve said this before and I’ll say it again: I think liberals should be thankful to President Trump for appointing more moderate conservatives,” said Josh Blackman, a law professor at South Texas College of Law in Houston and close observer of the high court. “It could be

much worse for them.”

Divide over agency decisions

Leah Litman, a law professor at University of Michigan Law School and a court critic, said she’s more focused on the conservative majority’s decisions that she believes have major negative consequences.

See JUSTICES, Page 3A

Subscriber-only eNewspaper

The eNewspaper is an electronic copy of your print newspaper. Enjoy every page by going to reporter-times.com/enewspaper or scan this code on your mobile device. You will also find late news and sports in the bonus sections. Check it out today!



Volume 137 | No. 164
To subscribe: 833-213-7008
©2025 \$1.50



7 27740 00151 6