

VIRGINIA

# Officials: Chagas reports overstated

‘Kissing bug disease’ is rarely contracted in United States

BY WESLEY ROBINSON

Health officials are cautioning that news reports that the parasitic disease known as chagas could be prevalent in Northern Virginia are overstated.

The state doesn't report cases of the illness, also known as the "kissing bug disease," because it so rarely diagnosed and is very rarely contracted in the United States, said Margaret Tipple, a public health physician with the state Health Department.

The news reports have been prompted in part by a recent magazine article in which a District cardiologist refers to Northern Virginia as a possible "ground zero" for the disease.

Chagas is caused by the parasite *Trypanosoma cruzi*, which is transmitted to humans through bites from the triatomine bug, which is common in poor living conditions within parts of Latin America.

The disease is usually asymptomatic, and many of those who acquire it never become ill. But in some people, it can lead to chronic conditions affecting the cardio-

vascular and digestive systems, resulting in death. The disease is endemic to Central and South America, and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that 8 million people are infected worldwide. Chagas can be spread through congenital transfer from mother to child, contaminated blood transfusions, infected organ transplants, laboratory accidents or, in rare cases, contaminated food or drink, according to the CDC.

In an interview with The Washington Post on Wednesday, cardiologist Rachel Marcus elaborated on her comments in the Atlantic. She said she did not intend to imply that there were a large number of confirmed cases in Northern Virginia. The area is a likely place to find the disease because of the sizable number of residents who have emigrated from Bolivia, where chagas is a major health problem, she said.

An informal study she conducted seemed to support this conclusion, she said. Out of 66 Hispanic immigrants she screened for the disease, 29 percent tested positive. Out of the 66, 34 had come from regions in Bolivia where the disease is prevalent. Seventeen of the those 34 had chagas, she said. This led her to surmise that there needed to be increased awareness of the disease and the need for testing and treatment.

Marcus added that, overall, the

risk of someone in Northern Virginia getting the disease, is exceedingly low because the disease does not spread through casual contact.

"It's not something that should make people fear their neighbor," she said of chagas. "If there is any fear-mongering because of [my previous statement], that would be a catastrophe."

Susan Montgomery, an epidemiologist with the CDC, affirmed that the risk is almost

*"It's not something that should make people fear their neighbor."*

Rachel Marcus, cardiologist

exclusively limited to those who may have contracted the disease outside the United States. The CDC estimates that about 300,000 people in this country have chagas that they contracted in their home countries. Montgomery said there have been only 23 reported cases of the disease being contracted in the United States since 1955.

There is virtually no risk of anyone contracting the disease inside the country because of how the disease is transferred between species, she said.

"It's a different picture here," Montgomery said.

The triatomine bug thrives in poor housing conditions, nestling in the mud walls and thatched roofs common in parts of Latin America. The bug is the only known vector or agent able to transmit the disease to humans. Montgomery said that triatomine bugs are found in the United States but are not found in same proximity to people as in Latin America. In this country, they tend to be in undeveloped areas where people don't live.

Roberto Salvatella, a regional consultant on chagas with the Pan American Health Organization for the World Health Organization, said 70 to 80 percent of people with the disease are asymptomatic for life.

Salvatella, who has researched chagas for 32 years, said it is important that people who may potentially be affected consult a doctor or the CDC for screenings and treatment if necessary. The disease is treated with anti-parasitic drugs and specific treatments for symptoms such as a heart murmur.

"There is still much to do, but a lot of progress has been made in the fight against chagas," Salvatella said.

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Ileana Najarro contributed to this report.

## LOCAL DIGEST

### THE DISTRICT

#### Woman charged with killing her mother

Two women were found injured Thursday morning in Northwest Washington's Columbia Heights neighborhood, D.C. police. One of them, 54-year-old Tajuana Lynn Hooks, died at the scene.

The second woman, 30-year-old Keiva Hooks, was treated for injuries that were not life-threatening, a law enforcement official said. She was later charged with second-degree murder while armed in Tajuana Hooks's death.

The official said the women were mother and daughter. They were found about 5:20 a.m. in the 1300 block of Columbia Road NW, about one block from the Columbia Heights Metro station.

— Peter Hermann and Clarence Williams

### MARYLAND

#### 2 people are sought in fatal Bowie shooting

Prince George's County police are looking for at least two people in the slaying of a Bowie man who was shot in his home early Thursday, authorities said.

Police found 39-year-old Amir Ali Jr. suffering from a gunshot

wound in his home, in the 9900 block of Chessington Way, after they received a 911 call about 5:45 a.m. reporting a shooting, authorities said.

Officials pronounced him dead at the scene, according to a statement from police. Other family members were in the home at the time, police said, but authorities didn't report that anyone else was injured.

The incident may be drug-related and doesn't appear to be random, authorities said.

Detectives planned to return to the scene Thursday evening to canvass the neighborhood a second time for clues. Ali's relatives trickled into the quiet neighborhood all morning, waiting for more details.

Ali, who was a Metrobus driver, was a "very family-oriented" man with three children, said his stepmother, who spoke on the condition of anonymity for privacy reasons.

"He loved to work," she said. "The people on the bus loved him. He was just a happy-go-lucky type of person," she said.

Police are offering a reward of up to \$25,000 for anyone with information that leads to an arrest and indictment in the case. Officials are asking people with tips to call 301-772-4925.

To remain anonymous, people can call 1-866-411-TIPS (8477).

— Lynh Bui

## LOTTERIES

Results from July 31

5 Card Cash:

KH-4H-JS-2S-3C

DISTRICT

Mid-Day Lucky Numbers: 8-0-0

Mid-Day DC-4: 0-7-3-1

Mid-Day DC-5: 5-2-7-4-6

Lucky Numbers (Wed.): 9-3-7

Lucky Numbers (Thu.): 6-5-8

DC-4 (Wed.): 8-6-3-9

DC-4 (Thu.): 6-2-5-5

DC-5 (Wed.): 1-8-8-6-6

DC-5 (Thu.): 4-8-9-6-9

MARYLAND

Mid-Day Pick 3: 9-1-4

Mid-Day Pick 4: 0-2-6-8

Night/Pick 3 (Wed.): 0-1-5

Pick 3 (Thu.): 8-3-6

Pick 4 (Wed.): 1-2-7-3

Pick 4 (Thu.): 0-9-7-0

Multi-Match: 4-5-20-25-33-39

Match 5 (Wed.): 24-32-34-35-38 \*28

Match 5 (Thu.): 7-13-15-17-34 \*16

VIRGINIA

Day/Pick-3: 0-1-8

Pick-4: 3-6-1-7

Cash-5: 9-13-19-25-29

Night/Pick-3 (Wed.): 3-9-3

Pick-3 (Thu.): 2-3-4

Pick-4 (Wed.): 2-9-5-8

Pick-4 (Thu.): 1-0-3-8

Cash-5 (Wed.): 3-14-15-25-33

Cash-5 (Thu.): 17-18-22-26-29

Win for Life: 4-5-15-25-29-38 †41

MULTI-STATE GAMES

Decades of Dollars: 3-4-9-12-13-17

Powerball: 13-30-42-49-53 \*\*29

Power Play: 3x

Hot Lotto: 8-23-32-39-46 †15

\*Bonus Ball

†Hot Ball

‡Free Ball

For late drawings and out-of-area results, check [washingtonpost.com/lottery](http://www.washingtonpost.com/lottery)

# Va. GOP treasurer under fire for post on Muslims

GOP FROM B1

Ramadan and praising Muslims for helping to build "the very fabric of our nation and strengthening the core of our democracy."

"Exactly what part of our nation's fabric was woven by Muslims?" FitzSimmonds wrote. "What about Sikhs, Animists, and Jainists? Should we be thanking them too?"

FitzSimmonds, 62, has worked in the clerk's office at the Prince William County Circuit Court since 2008. The GOP central committee elected him state party treasurer two years ago.

He describes himself as a conservative and abortion opponent and is a former director of the Crisis Pregnancy Center in Gainesville and the Prince William-Manassas Family Alliance, an anti-abortion, anti-gay marriage advocacy group.

FitzSimmonds spent several years as a legislative aide to then-state Sen. Ken Cuccinelli II

(R), who would go on to become state attorney general. He ran unsuccessfully for the state Senate or House of Delegates five times: in 1985, 1999, 2003, 2007 and 2011.

In February, FitzSimmonds responded angrily on Facebook to a commenter who predicted that women would turn out in large numbers to vote for Comstock, who was competing in the Republican primary for the congressional seat being vacated by Rep. Frank R. Wolf (R). (Comstock has since won the Republican nomination.) FitzSimmonds called the commenter's prediction "sexist" and included an offensive slang term sometimes used to refer to women.

He later apologized and deleted the remark, but Mullins and other senior Republicans in the state — including House Speaker William J. Howell (R-Stafford), Majority Leader M. Kirkland Cox (R-Colonial Heights) and caucus chairman Timothy D. Hugo (R-

Fairfax) — said he should resign his post.

In 2013, FitzSimmonds embarrassed some Republicans with his comments in a YouTube video interview, conducted by a Democratic blogger, in which he said, "I'm not a big fan of contraception. We're giving morning-after pills to 12-year-olds. Pretty soon, I guess, we'll hand them out to babies."

In 2012, he drew attention by predicting that Obama would blame George W. Bush when Obama "dies and goes to Hell."

The remark about Muslims sparked a new round of denunciations from elected Republican leaders, conservative bloggers, Democrats and two Muslim organizations. Several critics said FitzSimmonds's comments could be damaging to Republican efforts to appeal to a younger, more diverse voter population.

FitzSimmonds posted another comment midday Thursday, defending his original statement.

"Modern day Muslims are integral and important members of our society, but that is not really pertinent to my previous comment," he wrote.

"Muslims were not around in the 1700's to 'build the very fabric of our nation' as asserted by the President. If he had opined that Christians 'built the very fabric of Afghanistan or China' I would have been equally dismissive."

Ibrahim Hooper, the national communications director for the Washington-based Council on American-Islamic Relations, noted that scholars believe that up to 20 percent of slaves brought to the United States were Muslim. "I think they may have had something to do with building our nation," Hooper said.

Reached at the court clerk's office early Thursday, FitzSimmonds told a Post reporter: "I am not discussing this with you, but thank you."

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## THE REGION

# Former Army contractor admits to illegally taking gifts worth \$490,000

BY WESLEY ROBINSON

A former contractor for the U.S. Army on Thursday admitted to accepting vacations, a luxury car, escorts and cash in return for helping businesses obtain federal contracts worth millions.

In Seon Lim, 48, pleaded guilty in federal court in Alexandria to conspiracy to commit bribery and wire fraud, general bribery and tax fraud. The Fairfax Station resident, who worked in the United States and South Korea, accepted illegal gifts worth about \$490,000, prosecutors said.

Lim said little as U.S. District Judge Leonie Brinkema read off

his offenses, which included taking gifts of \$40,000 and a trip to the Philippines in 2007 in exchange for a \$330,000 contract with Nova Datacom. He admitted to taking a 2010 Lexus LS 460 in exchange for helping Aveniatech win \$3 million in contracts. And he admitted to helping Unisource Enterprise obtain a \$1.1 million contract in exchange for a secret 40 percent ownership stake.

Lim's attorney, Michael Nachmanoff, described the government's evidence against his client as "thousands of pages of documents, files and e-mails," which led to his client's guilty plea.

Federal prosecutors said in

court that Lim asked contractors to submit invoices for work they did not do. He also operated under aliases to direct subcontracts.

Lim received bribes in the form of cash for a down payment on a home, golf clubs, female escorts, meals, a cellphone and a free service contract, and family trips, according to the court papers.

Lim faces up to 23 years in prison for all three counts. Seven other counts of corruption were dismissed as part of a plea agreement with prosecutors.

Brinkema noted that Lim's cooperation as a part of the plea deal does not guarantee a lesser sentence. She added that in white-

collar crimes such as Lim's, the court takes general deterrence into account when sentencing.

The District's U.S. attorney, Ronald Machen Jr., whose office prosecuted the case along with federal prosecutors in Virginia, said Lim sold out the public trust with his actions and was one of 17 people and one corporation, Nova Datacom, convicted as a part of a crackdown.

Under the deal, Lim must also pay a \$250,000 fine to the Department of Defense, nearly \$125,000 to the IRS and forfeit more than \$490,000. He is scheduled for sentencing at 9 a.m. Oct. 17.

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# SUNDAY PREVIEW



## Arts & Style Crimes of passion... for your enjoyment

When it comes to artistic inspiration, lurid tales of sex and violence are often a good spark. Take a look at some famous examples.

## The Magazine

**Game over:** The saga of a pinball wizard and his dream of a Washington museum.

## Business

**Drowning in chocolate:** The multilevel marketing opportunity sounded ideal, all he had to do was find distributors and sell lots of chocolate. What could go wrong?

## KidsPost

**Europe 100:** A special eight-page edition traces the past 100 years of European history, from the first shots of World War I to the present, in photos, maps and more. *Additional features online.*

## Travel

**Central California:** Sandwiched between the glamorous, sunny south and the trendy, tech-driven north, the Central Coast of California combines the best the state has to offer on a refreshingly quaint scale.

## Sunday's Coupons

**Save \$287** with coupons in this Sunday's Post! Some stories may not run due to breaking news.

# The Washington Post

If you don't get it, you don't get it.

14-1060-2x10.5

## DISTRICT DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT NOTICE OF PUBLIC AVAILABILITY OF DOCUMENTS

### Anacostia River Sediments Project "For a Cleaner Anacostia River"

The District Department of the Environment (DDOE) gives public notice as to availability of an administrative record. The administrative record file contains all relevant project documents for public viewing. All relevant project documents for the Anacostia River Sediment Project, "For a Cleaner Anacostia River," are available at: <http://ddoe.dc.gov/anacostiasediment>.

Major project documents are also available for in-person review at:

**ROSEDALE NEIGHBORHOOD LIBRARY**  
1701 Gales St. N.E.,  
Washington, DC 20002

and

**FRANCIS A. GREGORY NEIGHBORHOOD LIBRARY**  
3660 Alabama Ave. S.E.,  
Washington, DC 20020

All questions may be directed to  
Dev Murali at (202) 673-6700 or via email to  
[DDOE.Sedimentproject@dc.gov](mailto:DDOE.Sedimentproject@dc.gov)

## Business Magnate

forced to

### DIVORCE AUCTION

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**Public auction: Sat, Aug 2 at 2:00 pm, viewing at 1:00 pm at the Williams Hall ~ 4081 University Drive Fairfax ~**

Directions from I-66: Take Chain Bridge Rd/Va123 exit towards Fairfax. Turn left onto North St, then take 1st right onto University Blvd. Williams Hall is on the left.

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