

LAS VEGASSUN

LOCALLY OWNED AND INDEPENDENT | FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 28, 2020



A plaque in a Sky Suite at Aria denotes its status as a AAA Five-Diamond hotel.

RONDA CHURCHILL FOR GREENSPUN MEDIA GROUP

TOURISM

How hotel inspectors award AAA Five Diamond ratings

BY BRYAN HORWATH | This story was posted on vegasinc.com.

Crawling around toilets to make sure they’re clean and working properly might not sound like much fun, but no detail is too small for AAA hotel inspectors like Adam Smith. If a hotel wants the association’s coveted Five Diamond rating, everything in a room or suite must be perfect.

“You want to take in the smells, the temperature, all of that stuff,” said Smith, who didn’t use his real name for this story because inspectors often check into hotels incognito to ensure they have the same experience as any other guest. “It all goes together. You’re looking in drawers, making sure there’s no crumbs, looking in magazines and making sure kids haven’t drawn in them,” he said. “People have their own pet peeves. For me, it’s the TV remote not working.

Another one for me is unplugged lamps.” Smith, who has worked as an inspector for AAA for 15 years, recently demonstrated the inspection process at a 30th-floor suite at the upscale Aria Sky Suites hotel on the Strip. He checked for dust, searched the room for trash, looked into closets (and counted the number of hangers), and, yes, inspected around and behind the toilet. Technology is also important, with

guests expecting fast, reliable Wi-Fi and USB plug-ins for their cellphones and tablets, Smith said. Of the thousands of hotels the motor and travel club reviews each year, less than 1% are awarded Five Diamond status. AAA also hands out Four Diamond, Three Diamond and “approved” distinctions. Las Vegas is home to six Five Diamond properties on AAA’s just-released 2020 list: Aria, Aria Sky Suites, Bellagio, Four Seasons, Wynn Tower Suites and Waldorf Astoria. “AAA has more than 60 million members, so it’s huge for any property to say they achieved the Five Diamond designation,” said Sergio Avila, a AAA spokesman for Nevada, Northern California and Utah. “These are people who go into

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THE SUN'S MOST-READ STORIES

The most-read stories on lasvegassun.com as of 10:30 a.m. Thursday.

- 1

Police: Man fatally shoots brother during argument. The suspect, Eric Perry, 44, was arrested on a count of open murder and was taken to the Clark County Detention Center, police said.
- 2

Blog: Golden Knights blank Oilers as winning streak reaches 7. Vegas withstood an early charge in the first, grabbed momentum in the second and put the game to bed in the third. Add it all up and the result was a 3-0 victory.
- 3

Vegas Golden Podcast: Everything is coming together for the Golden Knights. The optimism at City National Arena and T-Mobile Arena comes from two primary factors — a season-long win streak and a trade-deadline bolstering.
- 4

Las Vegas soccer team to host ‘Midnight Match’. The Lights are always eager to try wacky promotions, and Wednesday they announced a July 11 game at Cashman Field with an 11 p.m. kickoff and midnight celebration at halftime.
- 5

Vegas Play of the Day: Virginia at Virginia Tech. Case Keefer led the Sun staff’s annual sports betting contest heading into Thursday, and wagered \$440 on the Hokies coming within 2.5 points of the Cavaliers.

IMMIGRATION

Advocates: ‘Remain in Mexico’ policy overlooks health issues



MEGHAN DHALIWAL / THE NEW YORK TIMES

Guatemalan migrant Heidi Lorena Sagastume Salguera waits with her daughter, Daniella, for an examination by medical staff with Global Response Management at a makeshift camp in Matamoros, Mexico. The Trump administration’s Migrant Protection Protocols included exemptions to returning migrants south of the border to wait for their cases to be heard — such as if they could establish a sufficient fear of torture or persecution, or if they had known physical or mental health issues — that appear to have been largely ignored.

BY ZOLAN KANNO-YOUNGS
The New York Times Company

MATAMOROS, Mexico — Maria Sam had lost count of her 9-year-old son’s seizures in the nearly three months since they applied for asylum in the United States but were told to wait on the Mexican side of the Rio Grande. But his most recent medical episode was enough to prompt Sam, who is from Guatemala, to pack up their few belongings and return to the border post to test the Trump administration’s “Remain in Mexico” asylum policy and its stated exemption for medical emergencies. “Yesterday was the worst because he turned purple,” Sam said Feb. 12 as her son David clutched her jacket and they prepared to walk to the international bridge that connects this dangerous area of Mexico to Brownsville, Texas. “They had to call an ambulance and bring him to the

hospital.” Also at the port of entry on that cold, rainy afternoon was a Honduran mother with a child who has autism. Nearby, a 7-year-old whose rare brain disorder, lissencephaly, gave her a life expectancy of only three more years, danced to the holiday jingle “Mi Burrito Sabanero” playing on the cellphone of a volunteer doctor. That doctor had just asked U.S. immigration officials to allow the families in on a medical exemption after evaluating them. A little more than a year ago, these families, fleeing violence and upheaval in Central America, probably would have requested asylum, been detained for a short period in the United States and released to await an adjudication of their cases — the “catch and release” process that infuriates President Donald Trump. While in custody, the migrants were entitled to treatment at public hospitals and clinics of the

United States, or by the federal government at a detention center. But in January 2019, the administration introduced the Migrant Protection Protocols, or MPP, which empowered officers to return migrants south of the border to wait for the duration of their cases. Senior officials with the Department of Homeland Security were quick to note the exemptions for migrants who could establish a sufficient fear of torture or persecution or had known physical or mental health issues. But as the policy returned around 60,000 migrants to Mexico, those exemptions were largely ignored, according to immigration lawyers, U.S. doctors in Matamoros and the migrants themselves. At a makeshift camp in Matamoros, tents crowd a muddy levee, housing around 2,500

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CRIME & JUSTICE

Interrogators played it by ear with 9/11 captives

Report, pretrial hearing detail methods used on suspected terrorists

BY CAROL ROSENBERG
The New York Times Company

GUANTÁNAMO BAY, Cuba — It was May 2003, a year into the CIA program that had led to three detainees being waterboarded hundreds of times in search of information about possible terror plots, and the agency needed to train more interrogators. At a classified prison in Afghanistan known as the Salt Pit, trainees took turns practicing “insult slaps and attention grabs” on a naked prisoner named Ammar al-Baluchi. It was not supposed to work that way. The two psychologists who had set up the interrogation program that used waterboarding and violence and was authorized by the Bush administration had intended for interrogators to learn by trying out the techniques on each other. After that, they were to be paired with a certified interrogator as an apprentice. “We had them practice on themselves so they would know what it felt like,” James Mitchell, one of the contract psychologists, testified at Guantánamo last month during a pretrial hearing in the long-delayed trial over the Sept. 11, 2001 attacks. “We didn’t have them practice on detainees.” CIA personnel at the Salt Pit nonetheless chose to train on at least two prisoners, according to recently declassified accounts. About five trainees took turns slapping al-Baluchi, spinning him around and slamming his head into a wooden or cement wall, so a supervisor could observe and “then certify class member as interrogators,” said a report on the training session read aloud during testimony in the war court.

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ANGEL VALENTIN / NEW YORK TIMES FILE (2017)

James Mitchell is one of two psychologists who helped devise the CIA’s interrogation program after the 2001 terrorist attacks. Testimony at Guantánamo Bay shows that CIA black sites, where some detainees were tortured, amounted to test labs for unproven techniques, with shifting rules shaping operations.

DEVELOPMENT

Swooping into business

PHOTOS BY YASMINA CHAVEZ



Attendees wait in line Feb. 20 for special offers from Roberto's Taco Shop and Capriotti's Sandwich Shop during the grand opening of the Swoop Building, which houses the restaurants. The developer of the Swoop Building, J Dapper, also restored the Huntridge plaza and two other structures in the surrounding area. In addition to Roberto's and Capriotti's, other tenants include Wingstop, Circle K and The Garrison.



The Rock 'n' Roll Mariachis perform during the grand opening.



Congresswoman Dina Titus speaks during the grand opening ceremonies.



The Swoop Building is adjacent to the Huntridge Shopping Center and is named for the shape of its roofline, which somewhat resembles an S turned on its side. The design pays tribute to the midcentury modern architecture that was prevalent in Las Vegas during its Rat Pack days, when the Huntridge Shopping Center was new.

