

THE AMBER ADVOCATE

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Your story ideas and pictures are welcome.

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ON THE FRONT LINES:

FIVE STATES UNITE TO FIND HANNAH ANDERSON

The search for Hannah Anderson received international attention after AMBER Alerts were issued in 5 states to find her. On August 4, grandparents called police to report their 16-year-old granddaughter and her 8-year-old brother Ethan were missing from their home in National City, California.

The San Diego Sheriff's Office asked the California Highway Patrol to issue a regional AMBER Alert on August 5 and later requested a statewide alert. Nevada, Oregon, Washington and Idaho also issued AMBER Alerts as the search intensified for Anderson and the suspect, 40-year-old James Lee DiMaggio.

On August 9, horseback riders in the backcountry near Cascade, Idaho recognized a man and a girl that matched the description of the victim and suspect in the AMBER Alert. The next day FBI agents shot and killed DiMaggio after he shot at them. Anderson was found with no visible injuries and taken to a hospital.

BIGGEST ACTIVATION EVER

An AMBER Alert being issued in five states is unprecedented and the search for the suspect and victim expanded into other states as well as Canada and Mexico. This was also the largest activation ever of the new Wireless Emergency Alert system or WEA.

"I think this case is a great example of how the AMBER Alert system should be used," said Bob Hoever, Director of Special Programs Missing Children Division for the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children. "The expansion of the AMBER Alert was driven by the investigation."

Hoever said the Anderson case did a lot to increase national awareness of WEA because so many people received the alert for the first time on their cell phones. He said some of the media coverage focused on people who were upset that the alert was issued late at night.

"I explained I am sorry that people were inconvenienced that late in the evening," said Hoever. "But I was confident that when they discovered the minor inconvenience helped rescue a child, they would have a different point of view."

While the alert was activated the Anderson case was the most searched item on Google, receiving more than 500,000 searches.

An AMBER Alert being issued in five states is unprecedented and the search for the suspect and victim expanded into Canada and Mexico.



Hannah's father Brett Anderson addresses the media.

CALIFORNIA

Initially the San Diego Sheriff's Office did not have enough information to issue an AMBER Alert because they did not have any evidence the children were abducted. Investigators soon discovered the badly burned body of the victim's mother, Christina Anderson, and a child's body that was burned beyond recognition in DiMaggio's home.

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AMBER ALERT IN INDIAN COUNTRY

PROFILE: ISLETA TRIBAL POLICE CHIEF IS A PIONEER FOR AMBER ALERTS IN INDIAN COUNTRY



Kevin Mariano was appointed as the new Isleta Pueblo police chief in June 2013 in part because the community needed someone to bring a “friendlier demeanor” to the police department. During his eight previous years as the chief of police with the Pueblo of Acoma---which is also in New Mexico---Mariano has proven himself to be a friend to the AMBER Alert Program.

While in Acoma, Mariano helped set up one of ten pilot

sites for the AMBER Alert in Indian Country. He developed AMBER Alert and other child protection programs throughout Indian Country. Mariano also acts as a trainer, consultant and mentor to other communities on public safety issues in Indian Country with the AMBER Alert Training and Technical Assistance Program.

“Chief Mariano provides a combination of experience, cultural awareness and community engagement that makes him an invaluable partner in developing child protection programs throughout Indian Country,” said Jim Walters, the AMBER Alert Training and Technical Assistance Liaison for the AMBER Alert Initiative for Indian Country. “On more occasions than I can count, I have sought his guidance and counsel.”

The AMBER Advocate posed some questions to Mariano to get some insight on the AMBER Alert in Indian Country Initiative.

AA: Chief Mariano, please tell us how you first got involved in the AMBER Alert program?

Mariano: This came about when the AMBER Alert was new. As a chief of police I can tell you the AMBER Alert provides a valuable tool for protecting our children.

AA: What drives you personally to make sure a missing or abducted child comes home safely?

Mariano: I remember a case early in my career that showed how difficult these problems are. Children are our obligation and our future. It is our responsibility to bring them home.

AA: What did it take to set up one of the first pilot sites for AMBER Alert in Indian Country?

Mariano: A lot of communication and it was important that we work together as a team. You have to make sure everyone is committed to the program.

AA: Have you seen any differences between the way tribal law enforcement officers handle cases than officers in other local law enforcement agencies?

Mariano: In our community you have to rely a lot on the people; they are our greatest strength. You also have to deal with jurisdictional issues, limited resources and other challenges.

AA: What are some of the challenges you have seen in Indian Country when a child is missing or abducted?

Mariano: Jurisdictional issues and communications can be big challenges.

AA: What strengths do the tribal communities bring to the AMBER Alert Program?

Mariano: Children have always been a priority in our communities. We also have a history of caring for our own. This allows us to have everyone involved to make sure the program works. ☺

AMBER ALERT INTERNATIONAL

GERMANY NOW HAS AN AMBER ALERT PLAN

Germany has joined with the Netherlands to be part of the AMBER Alert Europe program. The 2 countries will now be able to reach more than 100 million people if an AMBER Alert is issued. The Netherlands started its child abduction alert system in 2008 and is the founding member of AMBER Alert Europe.

The program uses SMS text messages, email, social media, smartphone apps, pc pop ups and screensavers, website pop ups, highway signs, TV and radio, digital signs and advertising screens to notify the public when a child has been abducted in a certain area.

The 2 countries already had an ad-hoc cooperation agreement to notify the public when a child was abducted. The first AMBER Alert was issued for

2 missing brothers who were last seen near the German-Dutch border. The second alert was issued for a 4-year-old boy from Groningen, Netherlands, which is only 30 minutes away from the German border. A citizen's tip helped to safely find the boy in less than 2 hours.

"Germany and the Netherlands are 2 of the most interconnected countries in the world," said Viviane Kusters-Brokerhof, spokesperson for AMBER Alert Netherlands. "We need to make sure that in the future it only takes a child alert 90 seconds to be issued in the entire region--in German and in Dutch---and on both sides of the border."

German and Dutch residents can register to receive the alerts at www.amberalert.eu. ☺

CENTRAL & SOUTH AMERICAN COUNTRIES FOCUS ON FINDING MISSING CHILDREN

The International Centre for Missing and Exploited Children hosted a missing children investigation symposium for all Central American countries. The law enforcement training was held in conjunction with Interpol on November 18-20 in El Salvador. Participants learned how to better collaborate with stakeholders across borders. It was done in collaboration with Interpol.

A similar training took place in Buenos Aires on December 3-6. This symposium was done with the help of Interpol Latin America and included law enforcement representatives across South America. ☺

EUROPEAN MISSING PERSONS SYMPOSIUM HELD IN POLAND

A 2-day conference in Warsaw, Poland offered the latest techniques to find missing persons, including using drones in searches. The "Searching for Missing People in Poland and Europe" conference was held November 20-21.

The conference also had presentations about search and rescue teams and child abduction alerts in Poland, Greece and the rest of Europe. ☺

ON THE FRONT LINES:

FIVE STATES UNITE TO FIND HANNAH ANDERSON

Ninety minutes after getting the initial call, the San Diego Sheriff's Office determined the criteria had been met for an AMBER Alert. The alert went out at 5:27 p.m. (Pacific Standard Time or PST) in San Diego and Imperial Counties. The AMBER Alert was disseminated to the entire state at 9:30 p.m. (PST)

California Highway Patrol Captain Greg Ferrero is also the state AMBER Alert Coordinator. He said all of components of the statewide AMBER Alert worked as it was designed.

"I think the human element was the most essential component of the success of the Anderson AMBER Alert," said Ferrero.

Looking back, Ferrero said a current list of state AMBER Alert coordinators, point-of-contact information and criteria for each state would have made it easier to get the alerts out in the other states. The lack of uniformity between state plans also led to some delays and miscommunication but Ferrero said all of the coordinators worked together really well.

"The cooperation among the states and out-of-country coordinators was astounding," added Ferrero. "The sense of urgency to recover the victim was a common goal of all coordinators."

NEVADA

The Nevada AMBER Alert Program got involved early on because the state's Emergency Alert System sends AMBER Alerts to Eastern California. On November 7, a caller from Utah called the Nevada AMBER Alert Coordinator about a possible sighting of the suspect and victim in Las Vegas. The caller was connected to the San Diego Sheriff's Office to see if an AMBER Alert was also needed in Nevada.

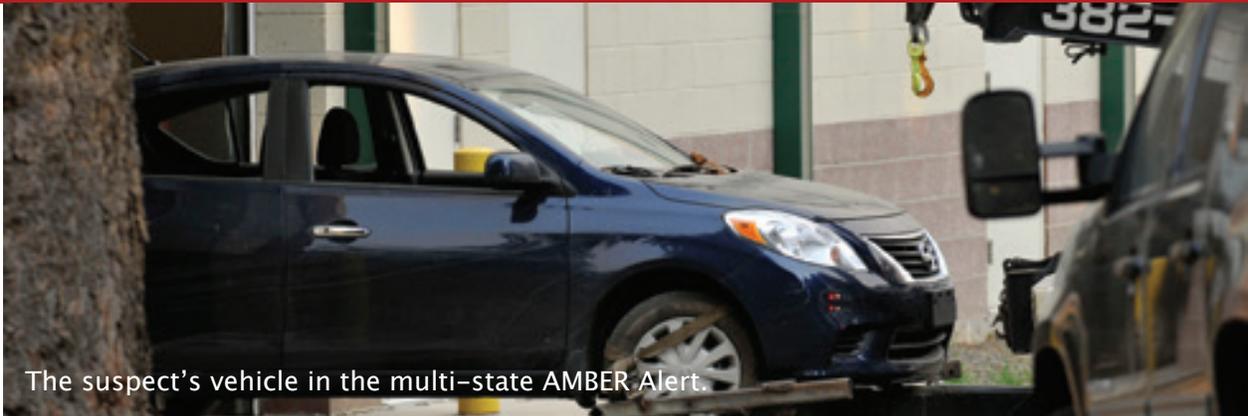
"We had to receive confirmation from the activating agency in California that they had a valid reason to believe there was a high probability that the suspect would most likely travel through Nevada," said Nevada Statewide Emergency Alert/AMBER Alert Committee Chair Stephanie Parker.

Nevada's statewide AMBER Alert went out at 4:20 p.m. (PST) on August 7. The media coverage intensified after the alert was issued in the state because now it was a local story.

Parker said the coordination and timely responses between the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children, California and eventually other states worked really well throughout the activation.



On August 9, horseback riders in the backcountry near Cascade, Idaho recognized a man and a girl that matched the description of the victim and suspect.



The suspect's vehicle in the multi-state AMBER Alert.

The Nevada AMBER Alert Committee plans to review the alert. In addition, the state has recently acquired Common Alerting Protocol technology that will simplify the process for issuing AMBER Alerts when an agency requests a statewide alert. The current Legacy EAS system requires agencies to call the three main EAS stations in Elko, Las Vegas and Reno for a statewide AMBER Alert.

OREGON

Oregon activated the AMBER Alert at 4:17 p.m. (PST) on August 7 after authorities received a tip that the suspect's vehicle was seen near Alturas, California and heading north on Highway 395 towards Oregon. Another person reported seeing the vehicle in the Lakeview area, which is north of the Oregon/California border.

"One of our criminal detectives contacted the woman in Alturas to get additional information and he felt what we had was enough to activate our AMBER Alert for the state of Oregon," said Oregon AMBER Alert Coordinator Richard Culley.

Because of the location, Culley said it would have been easy for the suspect to continue into Oregon or head back into Nevada.

Some doubts were later cast about the tips concerning sightings in Oregon but law enforcement officials decided to keep the alert active just in case. "We are not turning our back to this and we are doing what we can to locate that suspect vehicle and the missing children," said Oregon State Police Lt. Gregg Hastings to a reporter.

WASHINGTON

The state of Washington also issued an AMBER Alert at 4:40 p.m. (PST) on August 7. Washington State AMBER Alert Coordinator Carri Gordon said the Washington State Police reached out to the San Diego Sheriff's Office to see if the agency could help in the search. She said the decision to activate the alert was made after receiving information the suspect may be heading to Washington.

"In my opinion we should have reached out to the San Diego Sheriff's Office earlier," said Gordon. "As involved as they were in their investigation, extending the alert beyond California was probably a low priority."

Washington used the Law Enforcement Alert Portal to distribute the AMBER Alert. Overall, Gordon thinks the system worked really well.

"There was excellent coordination between our state and the command center in San Diego," said Gordon. "We were included in conference calls regarding the investigation and they kept us up to date on events as they occurred."

IDAHO

Idaho turned out to be the key state for the AMBER Alert. But the request for Idaho to issue an alert actually came from the Washington State Police. Idaho AMBER Alert Coordinator Dawn Peck said they had to consider whether the case met their state criteria and whether there was a real possibility the suspect and victim could be in Idaho.

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ON THE FRONT LINES:

FIVE STATES UNITE TO FIND HANNAH ANDERSON

“The coordination between the states is key,” said Peck. “When another state calls and asks for assistance, you need to do all you can to accommodate the request. The investigating agencies do not ask unless they feel the alert in your state will help in the recovery of the child. In Idaho, we always err on the side of the child.”

The AMBER Alert went out in Idaho at 5:52 p.m. (PST) on August 7. The alert notified broadcasters, law enforcement and the public through the AMBER Alert Portal but it did not go out initially on the EAS system or on the highway signs. Two days later the California Highway Patrol called about a credible sighting in Idaho and the alert went out again using all of the state’s notification methods, including EAS and the highway signs.

RELIEF ALL AROUND

Peck said the conference calls between all the coordinators helped to keep them informed and to make sure the message going out to the public was consistent. “We were very happy that this team effort led to Hannah Anderson’s safe recovery,” said Peck.

Everyone involved with the multistate AMBER Alert summed up what was accomplished with the alert with one word: relief.

“Relief primarily that she was alive and safe,” said Carri Gordon from Washington. “The information about her being located as a result of the AMBER Alert was very reaffirming that the system works as intended.”

“It was a relief she was found alive, and it was also an affirmation that the system worked again,” added Nevada’s Stephanie Parker. “Law enforcement, broadcasters, wireless alerts, social media and the public saved a life.”

“We are glad everything worked out and that Hannah was recovered safely,” added Oregon’s Richard Culley.

Greg Ferrero of California offered this closing thought: “Due to the violent events surrounding the abduction, I think we all knew that the stakes were very high in this case. All involved employees had a sense of accomplishment and felt responsible for Hannah’s safe recovery.”



ONLINE COURSE NOW AVAILABLE FOR NEW CART MEMBERS

The CART Online Course for New Members was launched in January to provide initial training for new members of existing Child Abduction Response Teams. The training can also be taken by existing CART members as a refresher course.

The program is available through the FVTC Blackboard Learn Online Course System. (<http://bit.ly/16nmWgD>). The six to eight hour course includes the roles and functions of CART members and key action items needed to be ready during a missing and child abduction case. The class also provides the history and impact of CART programs and helps new members understand how to prepare for their role and responsibilities on the team.

AN ADVOCATE RETIRES

AMBER ALERT TRAINING LOSES THE QUIET FORCE BEHIND THE SCENES

Bill Bryan was always soft-spoken but his efforts with the AMBER Alert Training and Technical Assistance Program communicated volumes about his commitment to recovering abducted children. Bryan started working for the program in January 2005 and retired July 2013.

“There are many fond memories from my days with the AMBER Alert Program,” said Bryan. “The one thing that, of course, stands out the most is the wonderful relationships that were developed over the years.”

Bryan started as a consultant and helped develop the Investigative Strategies for Missing and Abducted Children (ISMAC), Leadership for Missing and Abducted Children (LMAC) and Basic Forensic Response to Missing and Abducted Children courses. In 2006 he became a program manager and those programs and others started being offered on a regional basis about ten times a year.

“There was a shift from regional programs to onsite technical assistance programs which are more cost effective and allowed the programs to reach more people,” added Byran. “Many of those early technical assistance programs were run in Indian Country and were very well received there.”

Bryan also took on additional duties including instructor coordination, consultant supervisor, onsite facilitation, curriculum review, coordination of case study development and coordination of the annual AMBER Alert award program.

“A friend and colleague for more than 36 years, Bill is dedicated to a common mission of working together and doing things right; and, respecting others with the highest of regards,” said Phil Keith, AMBER Alert Training and Technical Assistance Program Director.

“Personally, I am grateful for the help Bill gave me in refining our AMBER Alert Plan,” said former Utah AMBER Alert Coordinator Paul Murphy. “He identified strengths and weaknesses and made suggestions that helped improve our plan.”

Bryan is now Deputy Secretary with the North Carolina Department of Administration where his responsibility includes issues involving women, human relations, Indian Affairs and youth advocacy. “Many of my AMBER experiences have served me well in this new position and I continue to stay involved in issues involving child protection and the prevention of human trafficking,” said Bryan. ☺

Bryan started as a consultant and helped develop the Investigative Strategies for Missing and Abducted Children (ISMAC), Leadership for Missing and Abducted Children (LMAC) and Basic Forensic Response to Missing and Abducted Children courses.



Bill Bryan

C.A.R.T. SPOTLIGHT

UTAH CHILD ABDUCTION RESPONSE TEAM FACES REAL CHALLENGES DURING MOCK ABDUCTION

Minutes before 8:00 a.m. on September 5, a child was snatched from a park playground in Riverton, Utah in front of dozens of people. The people were expecting to play a role in the mock activation for the Utah Child Abduction Response Team (CART) but they had no idea they would be witnesses to a carefully planned abduction.

“One witness looked over and refused to look back,” said Utah CART Coordinator Jessica Farnsworth. “They said, “We really didn’t see anything. People do not go around expecting to witness an abduction.”

For about six months Farnsworth and Co-Coordinator Patty Reed worked to come up with an exercise with as many realistic details as possible that would truly test the team’s ability to respond to the challenges that may be encountered during an actual abduction.

They recruited more than 100 neighbors and friends to act out the roles of victim, suspect and witnesses. Some of the participants called in tips and others allowed investigators to come in and search their homes.

“If you do not use your skills then you lose them,” said Farnsworth. “CART members are highly skilled and we need to make sure they can respond quickly if this happens in real life.”

The Utah CART has about 150 members from 26 local, state and federal agencies with expertise in computers, forensics, search and rescue, crime intelligence analysis and other areas.

The last mock activation was held three years ago to test whether the Utah CART would receive national certification from the U.S. Department of Justice. The Utah Cart was started six years ago and is now one of 19 teams in the country with national certification.

The time line shows that this exercise moved very fast:

- 8:26 a.m. CART members respond to the CART activation. The dispatcher’s original report indicates a 9 to 11-year-old girl was grabbed by the wrist and started screaming for help.
- 8:45 a.m. A mother calls in and reports her 12-year-old daughter McKenna was missing.
- 9:26 a.m. CART members arrive at the command post near Riverton Chase Park.
- 10:04 a.m. The decision is made to issue an AMBER Alert.
- 10:13 a.m. Instead of activating the official state AMBER Alert system, Twitter is used and tweets start going out with the following information:

 #Utah CART issues mock AMBER Alert for McKenna Eldredge, 12, white, denim shirt, jeans, long brown hair, taken from park #AMBERtraining.

 Suspect in #AMBERtraining is white male, 6’, avg build, scruffy, khakis, driving dark 4-door south from Riverton Chase Park



Photo from mock child abduction exercise, Riverton, Utah, September 5, 2013



Photo from mock child abduction exercise, Riverton, Utah, September 5, 2013

 #Utah CART canvassing neighborhood & interviewing sex offenders in area for AMBERtraining. “Victim” is 5’, 70-80 lbs

- 9:53 a.m. Tweet sends out photo of abducted child.

The team began canvassing the area and checking for sex offenders when tips came in that a man in his 20’s was seen dragging a girl down the canal road. At 11:20 a.m. investigators found the victim’s bracelet inside a vehicle near the road and soon found her hoodie on the canal road.

The “victim” was found at 11:51 a.m. and this tweet went out two minutes later: “Great news! Abduction “victim” located safe at Jordan Parkway. Suspect still at large #AMBERtraining.” The “suspect” played by Daniel Stewart was arrested at 12:15 p.m.

Despite the massive numbers of CART members and the quick recovery, those in the exercise learned they could have done better with more people.

“New leads came in but there were not enough investigators to handle them,” said Utah CART Search Coordinator Leo Lucey. “We would have found her 45 minutes earlier with enough resources.”

A debriefing was held a few hours after the exercise to find out what went right, what went wrong and what is needed to improve. Teams are encouraged to hold a debriefing and prepare an “After Action Report” anytime a CART is activated, even for an exercise.

Here are some examples of the lessons learned: witnesses mistakenly thought the suspect had a

hat and was wearing jeans instead of khakis, the location of the printing plotter caused delays for making maps, the victim’s family needed hourly updates and the CART needed more investigators, searchers, radios and flyers.

The media was invited to take part in the exercise and reporters and camera crews gave the exercise more authenticity. Members of CARTs in Iowa, Arizona, and Southern and Northern Utah also came to observe.

“You did a good job of getting back and forth with your information,” said Iowa Department of Public Safety (DPS) Special Agent Don Schnitker. “It was important to see when leads come in whether or not it has already been checked.”

“It was very impressive,” said Iowa DPS Special Agent Michael Motsinger. “We have been talking about how far you have come. This will be huge to take back and use as a springboard to go forward.”

“It was really impressive and it is good to know you are not far away if we need help,” said St. George, Utah Police Captain Kyle Whitehead.

One of the biggest surprises: a real stolen vehicle was discovered by the license plate reader during the exercise.

Despite some missed opportunities, everyone was impressed by what was accomplished in such a short amount of time. “I was blown away that you had found the child so soon,” said Farnsworth.

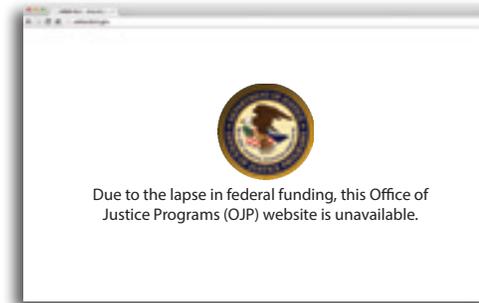
“You guys put the safety in public safety,” concluded Ken Wallentine, former Chief of Law Enforcement for the Utah Attorney General’s Office. “I appreciate your service.” 

ODDS & ENDS

PUBLIC FEARED AMBER ALERT SYSTEM WAS SHUTTERED DURING GOVERNMENT SHUTDOWN

The Department of Justice AMBER Alert website was down for a few days during the partial U.S. government shutdown. The site has current state AMBER Alerts and information about the child abduction alert program but some media accounts suggested the entire AMBER Alert system had been shut down.

Read more: <http://bit.ly/P8wsim>

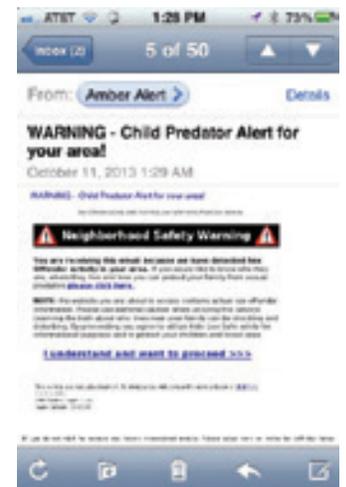


SUSPICIOUS AMBER ALERT EMAIL CAUSES CONCERN IN OKLAHOMA

Oklahoma residents received an email with the words "AMBER Alert" in the subject head and a message that "sex offender activity has been detected in your area." The Oklahoma Department of Public Safety issues AMBER Alerts for the state and officials stated the emails had nothing to do with its AMBER Alert Program.

The email invited people to go to the website for Kids Live Safe, a web based sex-offender monitoring service. The company said it was a mistake made by a third party marketing organization that sent the messages but was never authorized to use the term "AMBER Alert" or imply it was connected with the government.

Read more: <http://bit.ly/1lqtZO3>



NEBRASKA WANTS "NEXT-GENERATION 911" TO WORK FOR AMBER ALERTS

Emergency response officials met in Grand Island, Nebraska to discuss the impact of the "next-generation 911" will have on the AMBER Alert program and other public safety issues. The October 10 meeting included discussions about how the new 911 will need to be able to receive text messages, photos, video and VOIP or Voice over Internet Protocol.

Officials said dispatchers would need additional training to handle the new applications. They added that the advanced 911 would help provide a description of a child and distribute a photo to the public and to electronic highway signs during an AMBER Alert.

Read more: <http://bit.ly/1hgGJnh>



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