"All the News That's Fit to Print"

# The New York Times

**THE WEATHER**
**Today,** partly sunny, cold, high 30. **Tonight,** partly cloudy, chilly, low 25. **Tomorrow,** cloudy, warmer, morning snow, sleet and rain, afternoon rain, high 40. Weather map is on Page D8.

VOL. CLXXV .... No. 60,811 © 2026 The New York Times Company MONDAY, MARCH 2, 2026 Prices in Canada may be higher $4.00

# U.S. TROOPS KILLED AS BLASTS JOLT MIDEAST; FEAR OF WIDER WAR AFTER IRAN'S RESPONSE



ARASH KHAMOOSHI FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

**TEHRAN** A crowd chanted "death to America" and "death to Israel" at a rally to mourn the supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, killed in an airstrike. Iran's top national security official said that an interim committee would run the country. Obituary, Page A8.

## *Trump Says He's Willing to Talk to Tehran's New Leadership*

*This article is by* ***Aaron Boxerman****,* ***Farnaz Fassihi****,* ***Helene Cooper*** *and* ***Thomas Fuller****.*

JERUSALEM — As the United States and Israel pounded Iran from land and sea for a second day, a defiant Iranian regime unleashed deadly retaliatory strikes across the Middle East on Sunday, amid fears of a wider, protracted conflagration.

Three U.S. troops were killed in Kuwait, the Pentagon said on Sunday, the first Americans to die in President Trump's high-stakes war with Iran. And at least nine people were killed in a small Israeli city near Jerusalem. Explosions resounded in Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, Oman and the United Arab Emirates, killing at least four people, as local air defenses sought to repel Iranian drones.

A day after Iranian media confirmed that the country's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, was among many top officials killed in an airstrike, Iran's top national security official, Ali Larijani, announced that an interim committee would run the country until a successor to the ayatollah was chosen. Mr. Larijani also said that the supreme leader's death would not deter Iran, which he said would hit Israeli and American targets "with a force they have never experienced before."

The ability of the Iranian people to "take back your country," as Mr. Trump said in the video recording on Sunday, remained an open question, with internal divisions displayed on city streets. Images from Iran showed large crowds gathering in Tehran and other cities early Sunday morning to celebrate the ayatollah's death, lighting off fireworks and dancing. But hours later, scores of tearful mourners emerged to grieve his death, waving Iranian flags and holding photos of him.

In a phone interview on Sunday morning, Mr. Trump told The Atlantic magazine that Iran's new leadership wanted to speak to him and that he was willing to do so.

"They want to talk, and I have agreed to talk, so I will be talking to them," he said from his residence in Florida. "They should have done it sooner. They should have given what was very practical and easy to do sooner. They waited too long," he added.

The global consequences of the attack on Iran were only beginning to unfold on Sunday, with markets in Egypt and Saudi Arabia jolting downward, widespread flight cancellations and the prospect of prolonged convulsions in the global oil markets, especially for China, which sources a

*Continued on Page A11*



ALTAF QADRI/ASSOCIATED PRESS

**UNITED ARAB EMIRATES** A warehouse in Sharjah City. Iran's attacks on Persian Gulf countries hurt their images of safety. Page A12.



AVISHAG SHAAR YASHUV FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

**ISRAEL** Officials said that an Iranian missile strike killed at least nine people in Beit Shemesh, near Jerusalem. Page A10.




Sources: Iranian state news agency; verified satellite images and video. THE NEW YORK TIMES



ABBAS ZAKERI/MEHR NEWS AGENCY, VIA ASSOCIATED PRESS

**IRAN** The death toll from a strike at a girls' elementary school rose to at least 115 people, according to news media reports. Page A11.



ALI RAZA/ASSOCIATED PRESS

**PAKISTAN** At least 22 people were killed on Sunday as thousands gathered across the country to denounce U.S. and Israeli strikes.

**NEWS ANALYSIS**

## *Once Foe of Regime Change, Trump Asserts Power Abroad*

**By PETER BAKER**

WASHINGTON — When he first ran for president in 2016, Donald J. Trump disavowed the military adventurism of recent years, declaring that "regime change is a proven, absolute failure." He promised to "stop racing to topple foreign regimes."

When Mr. Trump ran for president in 2024, he boasted of starting "no new wars," and asserted that if Kamala Harris won, "she would get us into a World War III guaranteed," and send the "sons and daughters" of Americans "to go fight for a war in a country that you've never heard of."

Barely a year later, Mr. Trump is racing to topple foreign regimes, and is sending American sons and daughters to wage another war in the Middle East. The self-declared "president of PEACE" has chosen to become the president of war after all, unleashing the full power of the U.S. military on Iran with the explicit goal of toppling its government.

What the Donald Trump of 2016 would think of the Donald

*Continued on Page A6*

## *Nostalgic Young Audience Rediscovers the iPod*

**By KALLEY HUANG**

SAN FRANCISCO — About four years ago, Angeline Richard opened Apple Music, hoping to listen to the Weeknd's cover of Drake's "Trust Issues."

"This song is not currently available in your country or region," a pop-up read.

Ms. Richard, 25, continued discovering that other songs she loved or had added to her playlists were no longer available on the app.

Upset with the disappearing songs and ever-increasing prices of streaming services, she set a goal for this year: "To get off as many streaming services as possible, just so I can own the things that I listen to, that I read, that I watch."

### *Seeking a Refuge From Phone Notifications and Social Media*

So in January, Ms. Richard bought a silver, third-generation iPod Nano from eBay for about $40. She immediately added Deftones' 2000 album, "White Pony," to her iPod and has downloaded 10 more CDs to the device since. The process of adding music to her iPod, she said, has been "so fun" and "like a little meditation."

Over the past month, Ms. Richard has found another upside to her iPod.

"If I'm on my phone, I'm listening to music, then I get a notification, I click on that notification and I keep going into different apps," Ms. Richard, a content creator in Raleigh, N.C., said. The iPod "just grounds me, and it feels convenient to be in one place at one time, instead of everywhere at once."

The iPod, introduced nearly 25 years ago and discontinued in 2022, is finding new fans among people who may not have even been born when it was first re-

*Continued on Page A15*

## *Doctors Served Epstein While Treating His 'Girls'*

*This article is by* ***David A. Fahrenthold****,* ***Azeen Ghorayshi*** *and* ***Maggie Astor****.*

A plastic surgeon from Mount Sinai closed a young woman's head wound with 35 stitches on Jeffrey Epstein's dining room table.

An internist in West Palm Beach ordered a blood test for another woman, then reported the abnormal results back to Mr. Epstein.

A dentist at Columbia University asked Mr. Epstein how much work he wanted done on a "girl" with severe tooth decay.

These providers were part of a small stable of loyal medical specialists cultivated and rewarded by Mr. Epstein, the convicted sex offender and financier who died in a jail cell in 2019. He often tapped their expertise for his own ailments, firing off questions about his bad back, high cholesterol and erectile dysfunction drugs. Sometimes, he connected them with his powerful friends in business and politics, even arranging one lawyer's mammogram.

### *Some in a V.I.P. Stable Broke the Rules and Profited, Files Show*

But Mr. Epstein also used the doctors to manipulate young women from overseas who were having sex with him, according to a tranche of Epstein-related documents released by the government in January.

He directed women to get pelvic exams, liposuction and mole removals, and paid for a range of specialty treatments, from $800-an-hour psychiatric therapy to a root canal. Sometimes, he abruptly cut off the women's care: An assistant once forwarded him a plea from a woman asking for $600 to refill her prescription for acne medicine. "Ignore," Mr. Epstein replied.

*Continued on Page A19*

INTERNATIONAL A4-13

**Setting Rules for Ocean Mining**
The leader of a global authority said President Trump's aggressive action added urgency to her task to forge an international agreement. PAGE A4

NATIONAL A14-19

**Deadly Shooting in Texas**
An attack that started at an Austin bar left three people dead, including the shooter. It is seen as a potential act of terrorism, the authorities said. PAGE A15

SPORTS D1-8

**M.L.B.'s Salary Cap Battle**
Team owners will surely seek a new system. What that could mean for things like free agency, guaranteed contracts and franchise values. PAGE D6

ARTS C1-6

**The First Boot Is the Hardest**
The "Survivor" contestants who have been voted off right off the bat commiserate as the 50th season of the enduring reality show gets underway. PAGE C1

OPINION A20-21

**The Editorial Board** PAGE A20

0 354613 9

# Inside The Times

The New York Times

**A. G. SULZBERGER**
*Publisher*

*Founded in 1851*

**ADOLPH S. OCHS**
*Publisher 1896-1935*

**ARTHUR HAYS SULZBERGER**
*Publisher 1935-1961*

**ORVIL E. DRYFOOS**
*Publisher 1961-1963*

**ARTHUR OCHS SULZBERGER**
*Publisher 1963-1992*

**ARTHUR OCHS SULZBERGER JR.**
*Publisher 1992-2017*

**NEWS**

**JOSEPH KAHN**
*Executive Editor*

**MARC LACEY**
*Managing Editor*

**CAROLYN RYAN**
*Managing Editor*

**SAM DOLNICK**
*Deputy Managing Editor*

**MONICA DRAKE**
*Deputy Managing Editor*

**STEVE DUENES**
*Deputy Managing Editor*

**MATTHEW ERICSON**
*Assistant Managing Editor*

**JONATHAN GALINSKY**
*Assistant Managing Editor*

**PATRICK HEALY**
*Assistant Managing Editor*

**KARRON SKOG**
*Assistant Managing Editor*

**MICHAEL SLACKMAN**
*Assistant Managing Editor*

**JIM YARDLEY**
*Assistant Managing Editor*

**OPINION**

**KATHLEEN KINGSBURY**
*Opinion Editor*

**BUSINESS**

**MEREDITH KOPIT LEVIEN**
*Chief Executive Officer*

**WILLIAM T. BARDEEN**
*Chief Financial Officer*

**DIANE BRAYTON**
*Chief Legal Officer*

**JACQUELINE M. WELCH**
*Chief Human Resources Officer*

**R. ANTHONY BENTEN**
*Chief Accounting Officer, Treasurer*

**ALEXANDRA HARDIMAN**
*Chief Product Officer*

**DAVID S. PERPICH**
*Publisher, The Athletic*

**JOY ROBINS**
*Global Chief Advertising Officer*

**DAVID RUBIN**
*Chief Brand and Communications Officer of The Times, and Publisher, Wirecutter*

**JASON SOBEL**
*Chief Technology Officer*

**HANNAH YANG**
*Chief Growth and Customer Officer*

**Contact the Newsroom**
*To contact the newsroom regarding correction requests, please email corrections@nytimes.com.*

**Send a Confidential News Tip**
*Reach us through tools that will help protect your anonymity at nytimes.com/tips.*

**Submit a Letter to the Editor**
*letters@nytimes.com*

**Manage Your Subscription**
*nytimes.com/account*

**Contact Customer Care**
*nytimes.com/contactus or call 1-800-698-4637*

## The Newspaper and Beyond

**TODAY'S PAPER**

Crossword C3
Obituaries A8, B7-8
Opinion A20-21
Weather D8
Classified Ads D6







**VIDEO**

In T Magazine's video series, artists perform in The New York Times Building. See the Trisha Brown Dance Company stage an excerpt from the 1983 piece "Set and Reset," Live From the 10th Floor. *tmagazine.com*

**TRAVEL**

During a layover, the airline pilot and writer Mark Vanhoenacker explored Montreal, savoring the wintry charms of the Canadian city. Follow along the 48-hour journey. *nytimes.com/travel*

**LIST**

Book lovers, mark your calendars and load your reading lists. Find 27 upcoming releases, including a novel by Rebecca Lehmann and a memoir by Liza Minnelli, at *nytimes.com/books*.

## Quote of the Day

"I am disconnected from social media, but I feel more connected with myself."

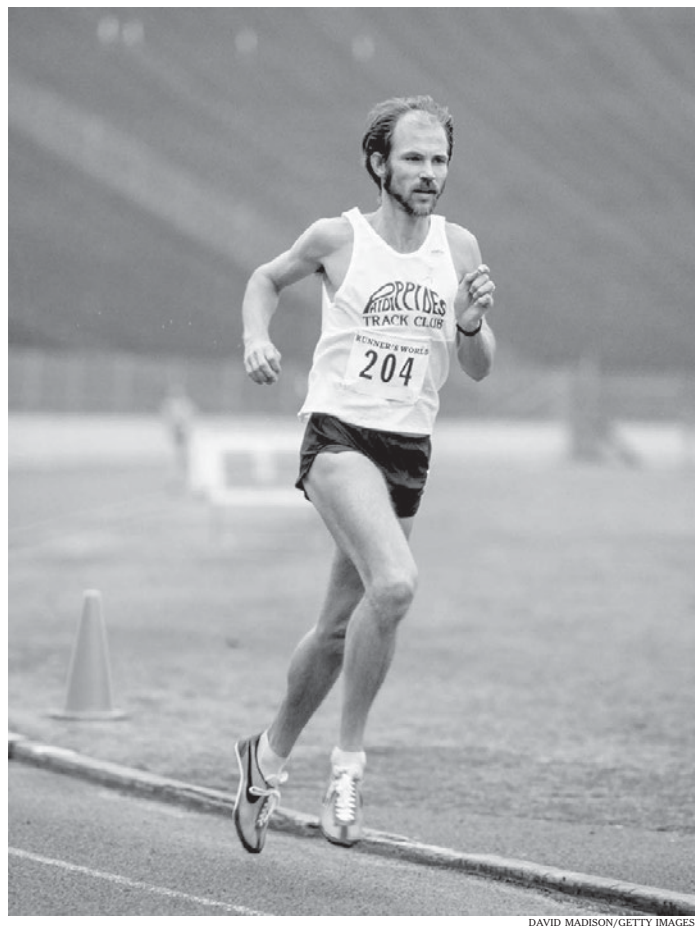
**ELIZABETH HERNANDEZ**, *a student at Eastern Washington University, on eschewing music streaming services for an Apple iPod, a discontinued device that's newly popular among young people who seek less time on smartphones. Page A1.*

**The Story Behind the Story**

# A Final Run With a Back-of-the-Pack Champion

The run-walk-run method created by Jeff Galloway helped turn one health reporter into a marathoner.

**By DANIELLE FRIEDMAN**




DAVID MADISON/GETTY IMAGES

**Jeff Galloway competing in 1980 in Palo Alto, Calif. He died on Wednesday at 80.**

Less than three months ago, on a cloudy December day, Jeff Galloway and I met on a dirt running path along the Chattahoochee River in Atlanta. The Olympic runner and creator of the run-walk-run method had spent most of last year training for a marathon. He hoped it would be his first since recovering from a heart attack a few years earlier.

As we set off on the path, he was only able to jog in 10-second intervals before walking for 30 seconds. But his delight in running at all was obvious in the way he glided forward. The intervals, he said, felt "perfect."

Days later, Mr. Galloway broke his kneecap, and our run would turn out to be his last. On Wednesday, Mr. Galloway, 80, died after suffering complications of a stroke.

The day of the run, I was on assignment to profile Mr. Galloway and his planned marathon comeback. But the fact that I'm a runner at all is, in large part, because of Mr. Galloway's relentless support for back-of-the-packers like me.

Mr. Galloway's discovery that taking strategic walk breaks during runs could allow people of all fitness levels to accomplish otherwise insurmountable athletic feats has propelled me across three marathon finish lines. It has given me permission to call myself an athlete, despite my glacial pace, about 13 minutes per mile. Perhaps more important, it has taught me how to endure, both on and off the race course.

Like Mr. Galloway, I am an Atlanta native. Growing up in the 1980s and '90s, I remember him as an ever-present hometown hero, preaching the joys of run-walking at his chain of specialty running shops, Phidippides. My dad, a proud middle-of-the-packer, would shake Mr. Galloway's hand while buying shorts and Sauconys.

In the 1970s, Mr. Galloway had worked with the Atlanta Track Club to grow the city's Peachtree Road Race. Back when most road races were staid affairs, he wanted to welcome more people into the sport by making the Peachtree feel like a party, with live music along the course. The race helped create the template for the modern urban road race, and it now draws more than 50,000 participants annually. I have been among them more than a dozen times. I didn't realize until later how lucky I was to spend my earliest running years in a race culture that prioritized fun and inclusion.

Still, throughout my 20s, I ran the conventional way: without walk breaks. I was a slower runner even then, but I'd bought into the idea that walking was a sign of weakness. This was fine for 10Ks and even half-marathons, but after a series of injuries and a schedule that limited my training time, I felt like I'd hit a racing wall.

I asked my dad for advice, and he sent me a copy of Mr. Galloway's book "Marathon: You Can Do It!" He also told me that if I trained for a marathon using the Galloway method, he would run the 26.2 miles with me.

During my training runs, I began doing intervals of 45 seconds of running and 30 seconds of walking. I found that I could travel farther, and bounce back more quickly, than ever before. I began to see each long run not as one daunting push, but a series of manageable parts. In 2016, my dad and I crossed the finish line of the New York City Marathon together.

In the decade since, I have completed dozens more races using the run-walk-run method. The most profound gift that this has given me is the knowledge that I am someone who can keep going, even when the road ahead is not clear or I am riddled with doubt.

I have called on this endurance during health ordeals, like in 2018, after suffering an emergency C-section and premature delivery of my first son, and again in 2021, after losing a pregnancy in my second trimester. It has also carried me through less trying pursuits, like writing a book (a marathon if there ever was one).

Mr. Galloway helped hundreds of thousands of other people discover a similar belief in their own abilities, too. Lori Bierbrier, 55, began using Mr. Galloway's online coaching programs during the pandemic, and would run with his voice in her ear. His magic, she told me, was his "kindness and humanity, and never a moment of condescension."

While run-walker Jennifer Goddard, 69, was battling breast cancer, he coached her through her treatment and recovery. "His philosophy translated seamlessly to healing: Take it one segment at a time, trust the process, believe in the body's resilience," she said. "It is a mind-set of sustainability and hope."

When I spent time with Mr. Galloway in December, I learned that his power as a coach and motivator came from a life spent testing his own ability to keep going. He had firsthand experience tapping into a private well of doubts, fears and setbacks, such as getting hit by a car in college, serving in Vietnam and surviving a heart attack.

Sitting at a dining table in his living room during my visit, I asked Mr. Galloway about the people who had influenced him the most. I was surprised when the first person he named was the Austrian psychiatrist Viktor Frankl, who believed that the key to happiness was finding meaning in suffering. Traversing long distances, Mr. Galloway said, offered an ideal vehicle for this search — regardless of whether you are at the front or back of the pack.

During our run-walk together in December, Mr. Galloway thanked me for slowing down to move at his pace. I assured him there was no need. He took in the wooded landscape, pausing to point out a deer. He was completely confident that he had at least one more marathon ahead of him, and said he had made peace with the fact that he might need to walk most or all of the course.

His goal, he said, was simply to keep moving forward for as long as he was alive.

## Top Trending Headlines Online

**Iran Says Supreme Leader Killed in U.S.-Israeli Strikes** Crowds of Iranians poured into the streets of Tehran and other cities across Iran on Sunday after the government said that U.S.-Israeli attacks had killed Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. Others mourned his death. It is not clear whether removing the ayatollah, who was 86, will result in significant changes to the system he led.

**Elite Doctors Served Jeffrey Epstein While Treating His 'Girls'** The convicted sex offender Jeffrey Epstein often tapped the expertise of a small stable of doctors he cultivated and rewarded for his own ailments, and also used the doctors to manipulate young women from overseas who were having sex with him, according to a tranche of Epstein-related documents released by the government in January.

**Kash Patel's Girlfriend Seeks Fame and Fortune, Escorted by an F.B.I. SWAT Team** Former F.B.I. officials say Kash Patel, the director of the F.B.I., ordered agents to ferry his girlfriend, the country singer Alexis Wilkins, on errands and to events. An F.B.I. spokesman said Ms. Wilkins, 27, needed full-time SWAT protection because "she is facing more than a dozen active death threats."

**Trump's Attack on Iran Is Reckless | Opinion** President Trump's justification for attacking Iran, to eliminate its nuclear program, is a worthy goal, the Editorial Board wrote. But he declared that program "obliterated" by the strike in June, a claim belied by U.S. intelligence and this new attack. The contradiction underscores how little regard he has for his duty to tell the truth when committing troops to battle.

## A Headline From History

### AND BEHOLD A BIG BLUE HORSE? MANY IN DENVER JUST SAY NEIGH

**March 2, 2009.** A giant statue of a cobalt blue horse at Denver International Airport was "freaking more than a few people out," The Times reported. Critics of the 32-foot-tall mustang, which has come to be known as Blucifer, found it unnerving — perhaps because of its glowing red eyes, or the fact that the artist, Luis Jiménez, was killed creating it in 2006 when a piece of the 9,000-pound fiberglass figure came loose and severed an artery in his leg. The horse still stands today, despite the anxiety it has unwittingly inflicted upon travelers. Its eerie gaze has contributed to a strange subculture surrounding the airport, the editor of an alt-weekly in Denver said: "It's brought out the conspiracy theorists who think there are aliens living under the airport."

**THE NEW YORK TIMES COMPANY**
620 Eighth Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10018-1405

The New York Times (ISSN 0362-4331) is published daily. Periodicals postage paid at New York N.Y., and at additional mailing offices. Postmaster: Send address changes to The New York Times, 620 Eighth Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10018-1405.

| **Mail Subscription Rates*** | 1 Yr. | 6 Mos. |
|---|---|---|
| Daily and Sunday | $1430.00 | $715.00 |
| Monday-Saturday | 1271.40 | 635.70 |
| Sunday only | 728.00 | 364.00 |
| **Times Book Review** | $338.00 | |
| **Large Print Weekly** | $200.20 | |

Higher rates, available on request, for mailing outside the U.S., or for the New York edition outside the Northeast: 1-800-631-2580.

**Not including state or local tax.*

The Times occasionally makes its list of home delivery subscribers available to marketing partners or third parties who offer products or services that are likely to interest its readers. If you prefer that we do not share this information, please notify Customer Service, 620 Eighth Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10018-1405, or email help@nytimes.com.

All advertising published in The New York Times is subject to the applicable rate card, available from the advertising department. The Times reserves the right not to accept an advertiser's order. Only publication of an advertisement shall constitute final acceptance.
© 2026, The New York Times Company. All rights reserved.

A.G. Sulzberger, *Publisher*
Meredith Kopit Levien, *President and Chief Executive Officer*
R. Anthony Benten, *Treasurer*
Michael A. Brown, *Corporate Secretary*

## Facts of Interest

Osawese Agbonkonkon, a track and field athlete for the Texas Longhorns, has a sideline in publishing: He released a novel, "Psychic Suit," in 2024.

*From High Jump to Sci-Fi, Athlete Turns Author* D2

As major religious seasons for Muslims and Christians began recently, about 68,000 people were being held in immigration detention centers, compared with about 40,000 a year ago, according to ICE.

*Immigrants in Detention Struggle To Observe Lent and Ramadan* A14

Francesca Hogi holds the honor of being the only two-time "first boot" contestant — a player who is voted out first — in the history of the reality TV show "Survivor."

*Never Mind the Survivor: What About the First Boot?* C1

A total of 170 nations are members of the International Seabed Authority, a global authority that's been struggling for a decade to set rules about mining the deep ocean.

*Sea Mining Turning the World's Waters Into a 'Wild West' Is Her Biggest Worry* A4

In the choreographer Benjamin Millepied's "Romeo and Juliet Suite," the title characters are played by two men, two women or a man and a woman, in alternating casts.

*Star-Crossed Lovers, Onstage And on Camera* C1

A week after the late January launch of Moltbook, a social network for A.I. personal assistants, more than two million bots, all of them presumably belonging to a human somewhere, had profiles on the site.

*What Do A.I. Chatbots Discuss Among Themselves? We Sent One To Find Out.* B3

## The Mini Crossword

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | |
| 5 | | | | |
| 6 | | | | 7 |
| | 8 | | | |
| | 9 | | | |

3/2/2026 BY JOEL FAGLIANO

**ACROSS**
1 "Yeah, why not!"
5 Collector's ___
6 Worker who frequently takes off
8 Stressful way to run
9 Crossed (out)

**DOWN**
1 Tiny drink
2 Useful ... or a useful draw in Scrabble when you have a "Q"
3 Chill
4 Be expressive with one's feelings
7 TV's "___ Lasso"

**ANSWER TO PREVIOUS PUZZLE**

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| J | O | C | K | |
| A | U | R | A | S |
| G | R | A | Z | E |
| | S | N | O | W |
| | | K | O | S |


TOMASZ BRODA

## Reader Corner

Tiny Love Stories

Tiny Love Stories, a Modern Love project, asks contributors to share their epic love stories in 100 words or fewer. Read one edited Tiny Love Story below.

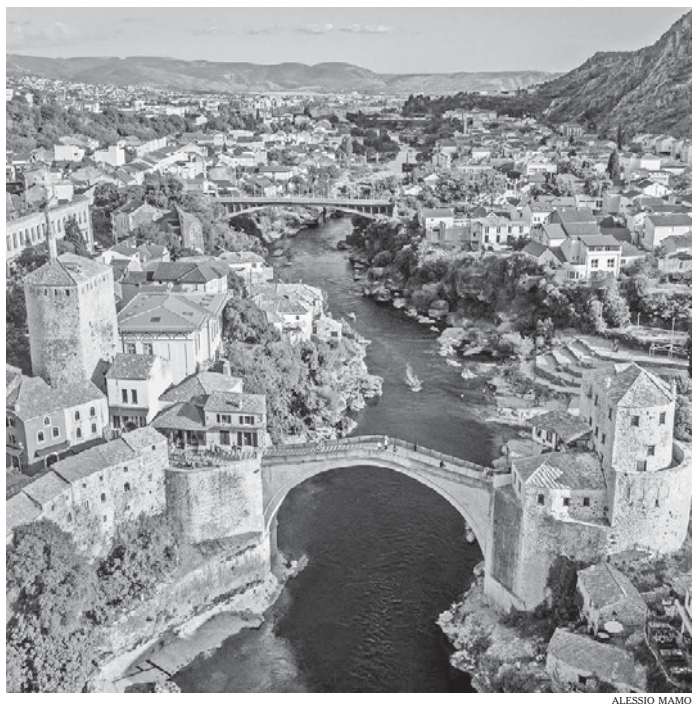


Mom found peace in the garden through her cancer journey. Among the last things she planted before the cataracts from treatment blurred her eyesight and a wicked bout of sepsis stole her mobility were 40 daffodil bulbs. As they began to bloom months later, I religiously photographed them for her, letting my phone camera become her sight. "Think of me each spring when you see them," she said before she passed from ovarian cancer. Mom, I still see you in every bloom. — KATIE PARADISE

## Pop Quiz

Test your travel knowledge: Where in the world is this scene?

An installment of The World newsletter asked readers to identify this place by its scenery. Here's a hint: For hundreds of years, divers have leaped from a bridge in this city.


ALESSIO MAMO

Answer: This is Mostar, Bosnia and Herzegovina. Pictured above is the bridge known as Old Bridge, or Stari Most, which divers have traditionally leaped from for some 400 years. The first recorded dive from the bridge took place in the 17th century, around 100 years after it was built. After the original bridge was destroyed in 1993, a faithful reconstruction was completed in 2004. Mostar has held an annual summer diving competition since 1968, inviting people from around the world to brave the drop of around 75 feet.

*Subscribe to The World at nytimes.com/theworld.*

## Here to Help

Vanessa Friedman Answers Your Style Questions

**I'm seeing more and more people, men and women, wearing shorts outside, even in very cold weather. Is this a macho thing? Is it wanting to appear sexy? To me, they just look freezing.** ANTHONY, LONDON

The contemporary phenomenon of shorts in winter, visible not just outside various urban gyms and on college campuses but also in the suburbs, on the street and at parties, is the product of a variety of factors.

Some are physical, some psychological and some fashionable. And though it may seem nuts, this kind of warm weather cosplay has been going on for years. As has the debate around whether it's ridiculous or appealing.

As to why anyone would want to expose his or her legs in nigh freezing temperatures, the most straightforward explanation is the simplest: They are hot. Some people, especially when exercising (or even, say, snow shoveling), run warmer than others. This tends to be more true for men than women, who have a lower metabolic rate.

Then there is the comfort factor, since shorts tend to be more forgiving, and often elasticated, than trousers. See Senator John Fetterman, for example, who wore his signature shorts before the last presidential inauguration, when Washington was so cold the event had to be moved indoors.

At the same time, as you point out, wearing shorts in winter most likely also has something to do with a desire to demonstrate toughness, currently a quality much in vogue among the manosphere set. Essentially, the implication of shorts in winter is that only wimps get cold.

Besides, beyond the machismo, there may also be some wishful thinking at play. Wearing shorts in winter — especially what is supposed to be the tail end of winter (or used to be anyway) — suggests, as my colleague Jacob Gallagher said, that all this covering up has gone on long enough, and it's time for the seasons to change. You're just getting a little ahead of the calendar. Think of this as the "Field of Dreams" rationale: If you dress for it, it will come — "it" being spring, and shorts being a visual harbinger of warmer weather.

Finally, and this is particularly true for women who can wear shorts over tights whether in the workplace or to an event, silhouette and practicality are considerations. Shorts center the leg the same way a miniskirt does, without any of the accidental exposure issues involved. And wearing a long-sleeved top over shorts is a proportionally flattering look for almost everybody.

Perhaps that is why, during the recent fall 2026 fashion shows in Milan, there were cashmere knit booty shorts on the runway at Max Mara paired with a matching sweater, and long cotton undershorts at Prada.

In other words, whatever the weather forecasters say, designers clearly don't see this changing any time soon.

*Every week in the Open Thread newsletter, The Times's chief fashion critic, Vanessa Friedman, answers a reader's fashion-related question. Sign up for Open Thread at nytimes.com/newsletters.*

Explore the Collection



Celebrate Your *Adventures*

The Mini "Adventure" Compass Necklace
In 18K Gold or Sterling Silver

MONICA RICH KOSANN

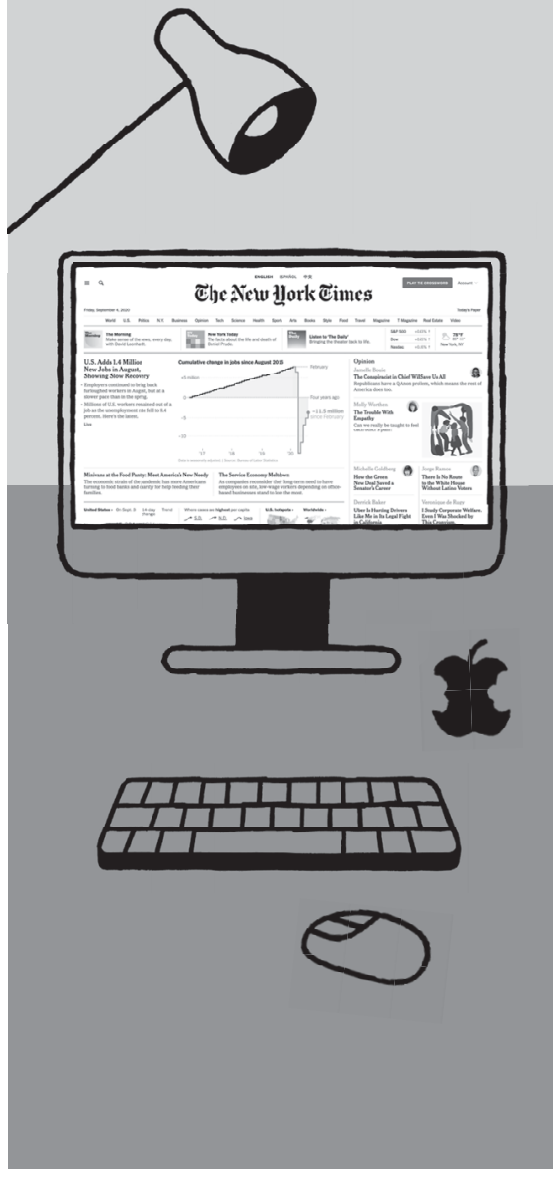
Please call 866.598.2784 or Visit Us at
MONICARICHKOSANN.COM

SHOPS AT COLUMBUS CIRCLE | HUDSON YARDS

The New York Times

Sharpen employee perspective. Empower forward thinking.

Provide a companywide subscription to The Times.
**nytimes.com/atwork**



The New York Times

# Sea Mining Turning the World's Waters Into a 'Wild West' Is Her Biggest Worry

## As U.S. Acts Independently, a Global Authority's Chief Asks 170 Member Nations to Create a Rulebook

By SACHI KITAJIMA MULKEY

After a decade of debate, by year's end the world should finally have a rulebook for mining the deep sea, Leticia Carvalho, the head of the International Seabed Authority, said in an interview.

It's her job to help make it happen. And in the past year, the Trump administration has made the task far more urgent. She called it "absolutely existential" that the 170 nations in the authority now reach an agreement.

That's because the Trump administration has said it will start unilaterally issuing permits for seabed mining in international waters, the vast stretches of the ocean that are not the domain of any one country. Regulators in the United States are now considering applications from companies that want to mine in these areas for valuable minerals, a practice that is environmentally controversial and has never been done on a commercial scale.

"The world agreed 30 years ago that this is an area that belongs to all of us, and we should go there collectively," Ms. Carvalho said. In a world without international rules, she said, the oceans could turn into a kind of "Wild West" where each nation makes up its own.

Last week, the seabed authority that she leads began its annual meetings in Kingston, Jamaica, to try to end the impasse. The authority was created in 1994 under a global treaty, the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, as an independent body to regulate use of the seafloor in international waters, which cover nearly half the planet.

The United States has not ratified the U.N. convention, but has observer status at the authority's deliberations and, until recently, followed its standards.

"It was quite extraordinary that such assertive messaging is coming out from the secretariat already, ahead of this meeting," said Pradeep Singh, an expert on ocean governance at the Oceano Azul Foundation, a Portuguese science and advocacy group, who has attended several years of the authority's meetings. He is among the experts concerned that rushing to complete the rules this year might lead to sloppy work.

Reaching an agreement on these rules, often called a mining code, would make history. The authority has been locked in debate over what the rules should look like for more than a decade. At the same time, the potential environmental toll of the industry has come under increasing scrutiny.

A completed mining code wouldn't necessarily give the greenlight for commercial mining. But The Metals Company, which is leading the race to the seafloor, has told investors it will be ready to start mining by the end of 2027 with the assistance of the Trump administration.

Much of the activity would happen in the Pacific Ocean in an area known as the Clarion-Clipperton Zone between Hawaii and Mexico. There, the ocean floor is blanketed with fist-sized nodules of valuable minerals and metals including cobalt, nickel and manganese that have accumulated over millions of years. (Some countries, like Japan, are planning to mine for similar resources in territorial waters rather than international ones.)

By some estimates, these deep ocean riches could eclipse all land-based reserves. But accessing such remote areas is technologically complex and costly. Some critics say that the industry may not turn a profit.

Scientists also say mining would damage deep sea ecosystems. There, all manner of animals exist, like tuba-shaped sea sponges and delicate, feather-like corals, that live on the nodules and around them. A scientific study of a Metals Company test run found that collecting nodules could reduce the abundance and biodiversity of seabed life by 30 percent.



NATALIE KEYSSAR FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

*'The world agreed 30 years ago that this is an area that belongs to all of us, and we should go there collectively.'*

**LETICIA CARVALHO,** secretary general of the International Seabed Authority.

Ms. Carvalho was elected to run the authority last year, and, as a trained oceanographer, she is its first secretary general with a background in science. She is also a former oil industry regulator from Brazil.

United States actions in international waters circumvent the authority, Ms. Carvalho said.

Particularly concerning, she said, is that U.S. regulations were recently modified to combine the permitting process for exploration licenses and commercial ones. As a result, half as many environmental review periods are required before a company's application can be approved.

"My job is not to design these regulations," said Ms. Carvalho, who is expected to refrain from taking a position on mining itself. "I know my job is to set the table."

Gerard Barron, the chief executive of The Metals Company, said he was doubtful that the International Seabed Authority could finalize its regulations this year. "Unlike the I.S.A., the U.S.A. has a complete and modernized set of regulations," he said, noting that at least 10 mining applications have been submitted under United States law. "The industry has clearly demonstrated which regime it believes in," he said.

His company also holds exploration permits from the seabed authority and has spent hundreds of millions of dollars on tests and scientific studies in an allotted area of the Clarion-Clipperton Zone.

Last year, shortly after President Trump ordered federal regulators to prioritize seabed mining, the company applied for new permits from the United States in the same location.

Environmental groups have staunchly opposed seabed mining. "We shouldn't see deep sea mining as inevitable simply because the front-runner company is now essentially pretending that international law doesn't exist," said Louisa Casson, a project leader for Greenpeace International's campaign against the practice. The organization is among the environmental groups and 40 countries calling for a ban or moratorium on the industry.

The U.N. convention was also designed to protect the interests of small and less wealthy countries, a core promise that Greenpeace argues it is failing to deliver. A recent study, commissioned by Greenpeace International, found that under the seabed authority's current proposal, developing countries would get a small fraction of the estimated revenue.

In the interview, Ms. Carvalho said she viewed moratoriums as counterproductive. Banning mining outright, she said, takes money away from scientific research into deep sea ecosystems and delays the authority from establishing strict environmental standards.

"Being able to make the rules before activity starts is unique in human history," she said, adding that the time for ideological debate is over. If the United States acts independently, then other nations may follow, she said. A patchwork of rules could result, which she said would leave the environment less protected and provide fewer benefits for developing countries.

As the authority gets to work this week, Ms. Carvalho said there were 32 specific issues that need to be resolved, some as small as a few words in a sentence, others as hefty as a paragraph. She said she believed the draft could be completed this year without rushing or risking mistakes.

The completed regulations wouldn't be set in stone, Ms. Carvalho said, and could continue to be perfected over time. "The most important thing that the member states in the council now need to decide is what is desirable versus what is tolerable," she said. "The perfect is the enemy of the good."

Ms. Carvalho has not made her goals a secret. Ahead of this year's meeting, she met with European leaders to urge them to support a mining code.

To some, her current view may come as a surprise. During the 2024 election that elevated her to lead the seabed authority, she had argued that several years of work most likely remained before a code could be finalized. Her predecessor's tenure ended amid criticism from diplomats who said he was rushing the process to favor The Metals Company.

As the authority's head, Ms. Carvalho is expected to remain impartial and not take a position on mining itself, but rather to facilitate deliberation among the 170 member states. "My job is not to design these regulations," she said. "I know my job is to set the table."

Still, the mission has become personal. "If I am the lucky one, if this agreement can be reached under my watch, then I would say that is the biggest achievement of my career," she said.




TAMIR KALIFA FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES



TAMIR KALIFA FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Gerard Barron, left, chief executive of The Metals Company, which applied for new U.S. permits last year after President Trump ordered regulators to prioritize seabed mining, said he doubted the seabed authority could finalize its regulations this year. Right, the Maersk Launcher, chartered by The Metals Company to look into the viability of seabed mining, in 2021.

# HOME→TOKYO



## Switch on **vacation mode**
## Get unlimited data abroad
## from $11.50

Use code VACATION for 15% off
your first Unlimited eSIM*

airalo

Download on the App Store

GET IT ON Google Play

*Terms apply

**Attack on Iran**

NEWS ANALYSIS

# *Once a Foe of Regime Change, Trump Asserts His Power Abroad*

*From Page A1*

Trump of 2026 will never be known. But they are starkly different figures when it comes to overseas intervention. A decade after propelling himself to the highest office by promising to focus on "America first," Mr. Trump has become increasingly willing to assert power overseas. The bombardment of Iran on Saturday was the ninth time he had ordered the military into action in his second term. He has decapitated the government of Venezuela and threatened to overthrow Cuba's dictator.

In his middle-of-the-night social media video announcing the opening of this new war, Mr. Trump laid out a bill of particulars against Iran going back nearly half a century, including its pursuit of nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles, its support for terrorist groups that attacked Americans and allies, the 1979 seizure of the U.S. Embassy in Tehran and the recent massacre of Iranian protesters. But he never explained why those aggressions required action now rather than earlier, or why his thinking evidently changed.

Nor did he reconcile his conflicting statements on the status of the Iranian threat. After joining Israel in attacking Iran last summer, he said that he had "obliterated" the country's nuclear program. He repeated that claim in Tuesday's State of the Union address, and again in his early Saturday morning video. But he did not clarify why it was necessary to strike a program that had been obliterated.

He did, however, go further than ever in making regime change the goal, calling on Iranians to overthrow their leaders. "When we are finished, take over your government," Mr. Trump said. "It will be yours to take." He repeated that in a social media post Saturday afternoon announcing that the strike had killed Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, the supreme leader — "one of the most evil people in History," as the president put it.

But how Iranians should go about taking over was left unclear. Mr. Trump wrote that police and Revolutionary Guards forces should "peacefully merge with the Iranian Patriots, and work together as a unit to bring back the Country to the Greatness it deserves" — a remarkable notion suggesting that Iranian security officials would somehow team up with the same people they were gunning down in the streets just weeks ago.

"His stated goal here, regime change, is the very thing he ran against in 2016," said Brandan P. Buck, a research fellow in foreign policy studies at the libertarian Cato Institute. "Previously, the president used airstrikes, raids and covert military power when he believed it could achieve discrete ends with good optics at little cost. This attack on Iran has broken that formula and constitutes a leap into the unknown."

Mr. Trump's critics quickly resurrected his past statements to accuse him of abandoning his promises, circulating video clips of his campaign rallies and social media quotes assailing Barack Obama, George W. Bush and Kamala Harris as warmongers.

Mr. Trump, 2012: "Now that Obama's poll numbers are in tailspin — watch for him to launch a strike in Libya or Iran. He is desperate."

Mr. Trump, 2013: "Remember that I predicted a long time ago that President Obama will attack Iran because of his inability to negotiate properly — not skilled!"

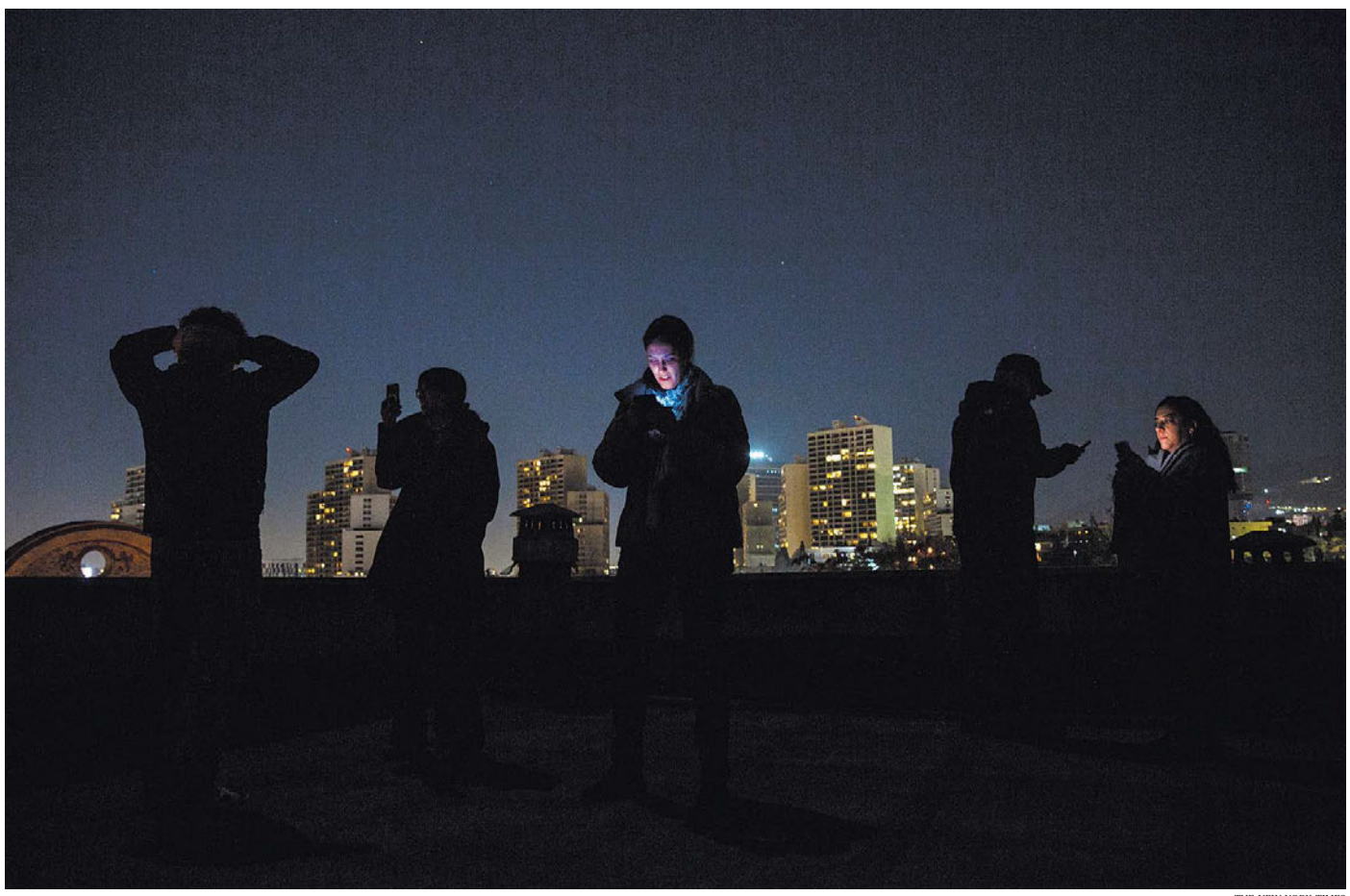
Mr. Trump, 2016: "We're going to stop the reckless and costly policy of regime change."

Mr. Trump, election night 2024: "I'm not going to start wars. I'm going to stop wars."

And there were plenty of quotes from advisers like Stephen Miller, now the deputy White House chief of staff ("Kamala = WWIII. Trump = Peace," Nov. 1, 2024), and Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth ("The War Department will not be distracted by democracy-building, interventionism, undefined wars, regime change," Dec. 6, 2025).

Among those lashing out at Mr. Trump on Saturday were not just liberals but also prominent leaders of the Make America Great Again movement who complained that he had been captured by the neoconservatives he once spurned, criticism led by the right-wing podcast host Tucker Carlson and former Representative Marjorie Taylor Greene, Republican of Georgia.

"It's always a lie and it's always America Last," Ms. Greene, who resigned her seat in January after breaking with Mr. Trump, wrote on social media. "But it feels like the worst betrayal this time because it comes from the very man and the admin who we all believed was different and said no more."



THE NEW YORK TIMES

In Tehran on Saturday after the news broke that Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, Iran's supreme leader, had been killed. President Trump did not explain his shift in thinking.

Mr. Trump's allies pushed back against that. Representative Marlin Stutzman, Republican of Indiana, argued that Mr. Trump's attack on Iran would head off a worse threat and pave the way for a new Middle East that would be friendlier to the United States. "To those who say, 'Well, President Trump said he wasn't going to take us into any wars,' he's keeping us out of wars in the long run," he said on CNN.

Advocates of action against Iran maintained that Mr. Trump still had not gone far enough by failing to fully commit to changing the government in Tehran, but instead leaving it to the Iranian people. "Trump's speech wasn't a regime change speech — and I wish it had been," said Mark Dubowitz, chief executive of the Foundation for Defense of Democracies, a group that has long pressed for tougher policy on Iran.

The only "durable solution," he added, is not a military strike that sets the Iranian nuclear weapons program back by months or years, but the end of the regime. "But that's not exactly what Trump prioritized tonight," Mr. Dubowitz said, "and we need to be honest about what he did, and didn't, say."

Mr. Trump's increasing willingness to deploy military force underscores the broader change between his first term and second term. He is far more comfortable using the instruments of power than he was the last time around, at home as well as abroad. What he threatened or considered doing in his first stint in the White House, he more readily acts on now, whether it be sending federal forces into American streets, prosecuting his perceived enemies, purging the government of those deemed disloyal or imposing tariffs on countries around the world.

The team he assembled in the first four years included establishment Republicans and career military officers who often restrained his most radical impulses. But there is no John F. Kelly, Jim Mattis, Mark T. Esper or Mark A. Milley this time around. Instead, he has surrounded himself with more aggressive break-the-china advisers pushing for more ambitious action, along with figures like Mr. Hegseth, Secretary of State Marco Rubio and Susie Wiles, the White House chief of staff, who view their jobs as facilitating the president's desires rather than talking him out of them.

Mr. Trump's journey as commander in chief has been a fitful one. He had no experience in either the military or public office when he first arrived in the Oval Office in January 2017. He promoted a more aggressive war against the Islamic State, but sometimes hesitated to use force, at one point calling off a retaliatory military strike on Iran with just minutes to go, deeming it not worth the casualties.

He was intent on pulling back from much of the world, seeking to bring U.S. troops home from places like South Korea, Germany and Syria. He negotiated a peace agreement with the Taliban to withdraw all American forces from Afghanistan, a deal then executed by his successor, President Joseph R. Biden Jr., in a disastrous operation.

But he was also emboldened when a U.S. strike in 2020 targeted and killed Maj. Gen. Qassim Suleimani of Iran without instigating the devastating reprisals or prolonged regional war that some critics had predicted. Likewise, in this second term, the successful commando raid that captured President Nicolás Maduro of Venezuela also energized Mr. Trump.

His public posture, however, has veered wildly over the past year. One moment, he presents himself as a historic peacemaker, forming a so-called Board of Peace and griping that he has not won the Nobel Peace Prize while claiming, inaccurately, that he has ended eight wars — including one with Iran. The next moment, he threatens to seize Greenland, take back the Panama Canal, strangle Cuba and even go after Colombia's president as he did Venezuela's.

Charles Kupperman, who was a deputy national security adviser to Mr. Trump in the president's first term, said he did not think Mr. Trump had evolved in his thinking about foreign threats. But in the case of Iran, Mr. Kupperman said, the president set himself up by investing in a diplomatic effort that was always doomed to fail, leaving little alternative but to take military action.

"It is difficult to determine Trump's decision-making process given the serious downgrade of the N.S.C. and its policymaking role," he said of the National Security Council. "What options were developed and presented to Trump and the process for generating them are key questions." But he added that "the diplomatic effort to engage Iran was never going to yield the results that Trump sought. Pure Kabuki theater."

The outcome of Mr. Trump's geopolitical gamble will depend not just on how the military operation proceeds, but what comes next. Success has a way of making voters forget about broken promises. There is little love lost for the Tehran regime, and video showed Iranians in the streets cheering Ayatollah Khamenei's death. If Mr. Trump manages to push the remaining government from power, he will have something to boast about that none of his predecessors dared try.

Unlike the so-called forever wars in Afghanistan and Iraq that helped fuel his political rise, Mr. Trump has not made any major commitment of ground troops in Iran, and seems determined to stick to air power, avoiding the sort of grinding guerrilla warfare that turned Americans against past wars.

If the Tehran government does fall, it could yield a replacement that is still hostile to the United States, or result in fratricidal chaos, as happened in Libya after Muammar el-Qaddafi was deposed and killed in 2011.

One way or the other, his allies were already talking about it being a legacy moment for Mr. Trump. What kind of legacy is not yet clear. But it will not be the one that he originally promised.



AVISHAG SHAAR YASHUV FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

The aftermath of a missile strike on Beit Shemesh, Israel, on Sunday, part of Iran's retaliation.

# *A Murky Message by Trump To Iran's People: 'Take Over'*

By ANTON TROIANOVSKI

WASHINGTON — As President Trump announced the opening strikes of a U.S.-led assault on Iran, he told the country's soldiers to "lay down your weapons" and urged its people to "take over your government."

"It will be yours to take," the president said.

The message was rife with ambiguity. Mr. Trump left it unclear whom Iranian soldiers were supposed to surrender to, and how Iranians might overthrow their rulers.

"It's not like there are American soldiers there and they can put down their weapons right now," said Philip H. Gordon, a senior foreign policy official in the Obama and Biden administrations. As for the president's call for the Iranian people to overthrow their government, Mr. Gordon said: "Which Iranian people? There's 90 million of them."

In past conflicts, the United States relied on federally funded media outlets to get its message, coupled with critical journalism, past enemy lines. It created Voice of America during World War II, and Radio Free Europe during the Cold War. The outlets lived on after the Berlin Wall fell, with local language offshoots targeting audiences across the Middle East, in former Soviet countries and elsewhere.

But many critics say that the Trump administration's cuts to government-funded broadcasting have hurt the United States' ability to reach the Iranian people — and win their trust — just as Washington is calling on them to rise up.

The Trump administration "has dismantled some of the most potent tools that it has" to get its message out, said Ilan Berman, an Iran expert at the American Foreign Policy Council, a Washington think tank.

"This de minimis approach is just not suited for the moment," said Mr. Berman, who is also a member of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty's board.

Last year, Mr. Trump wrote on social media that Voice of America was "a TOTAL, LEFTWING DISASTER," and put nearly all of its 1,400 journalists and support staff on paid leave. He tried but failed to shutter Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, known as RFE/RL, an independent, U.S.-funded group whose outlets include the Persian-language Radio Farda.

Kari Lake, the Trump ally who now runs the parent entity overseeing government-funded media, reversed some of the cuts to Voice of America's Persian service when Israel and the United States bombed Iran last June, according to news reports. But she continued to berate RFE/RL, asserting in January that its outlets had failed to "align their message with American foreign policy."

*Minho Kim contributed reporting.*

**REACTIONS IN U.S.**

*As Iranian Americans cheered in Los Angeles, the attack reshaped the midterm elections. Page A17.*

RFE/RL had long broadcast into Iran via a U.S. radio facility in Kuwait, which allowed it to be heard in the country even when the government blocked internet access. It lost its ability to use that transmitter for several months last year amid the dispute with Ms. Lake, and its reach was still limited when Israel and the United States attacked Iran on Saturday.

"Farda was built for this moment," Steve Capus, the president of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, said in an interview on Saturday, as he and his staff scrambled to deal with disruptions to internet access and satellite distribution in Iran. "Our job is to empower the people of Iran by giving them access to timely, relevant information, and amplifying their voices."

Mr. Capus said that on Saturday, Ms. Lake's U.S. Agency for Global Media had agreed to carry Farda's programming on the AM radio waves from the Kuwait transmitter at Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty's expense.

"We're still working to effectively transmit our programming on any available means of distribution," Mr. Capus said, calling Saturday's agreement "a big first step."

After Mr. Trump announced the strikes on Iran on Saturday, a Persian translation of his speech by Voice of America was quickly posted to the president's account on Truth Social.

Ms. Lake said in a statement that "V.O.A. Persian went live within hours of this morning's operation, delivering President Trump's message and real-time updates to the brave people of Iran through a variety of methods, including satellite."

On Voice of America's Persian homepage, one headline paraphrased Mr. Trump's message to Iranian soldiers: "Lay down your weapons or face certain death."

Mr. Gordon said that the risk that the United States faces amid the muddled messaging is that seeking regime change without ground troops can create "even more of a security vacuum into which all sorts of different forces will surge."

Mr. Gordon served as the assistant secretary of state for Europe when NATO waged an air war against Col. Muammar el-Qaddafi of Libya in 2011, aiding a rebellion that eventually brought about the dictator's death but threw the country into further chaos.

In Iraq, Libya and Afghanistan, he said, the U.S. military sought to bring about regime change in different ways. But, he said, "all cases were similar in the sense that they turned into a costly disaster."

Most stories do not begin with a journalist.

When a river is drying up,
the first to notice are the people living beside it.
When a new band emerges,
the first to find out is often a neighbor.
When a school loses teachers,
the first to ask why is a parent.

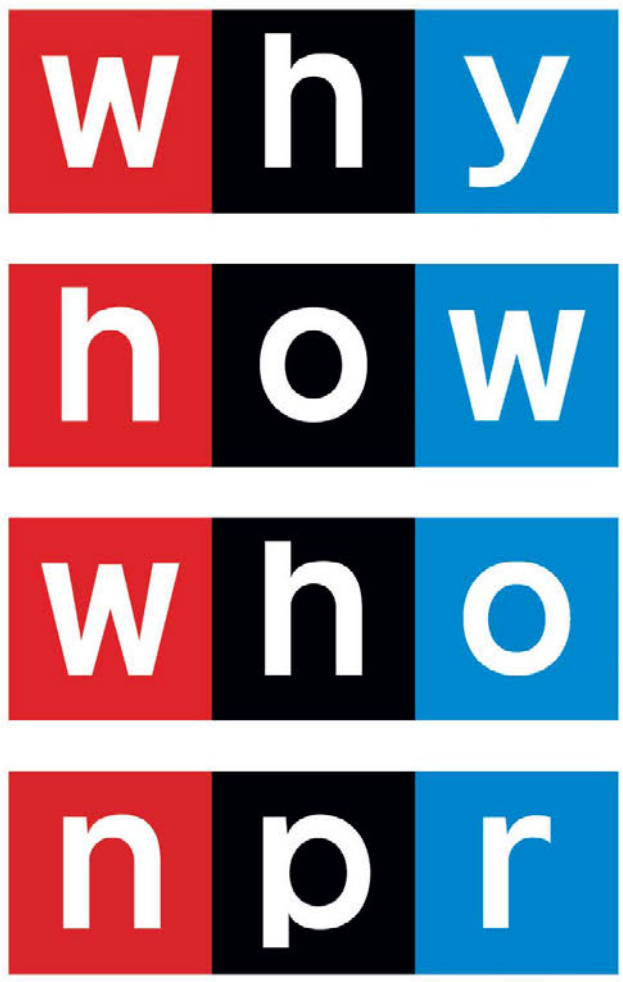
Curiosity is core to being human.
It doesn't wait for permission.
It can't be contained.

People notice.
People question.

NPR is there to listen.
To ask more questions.
To take your curiosity further.
And we're not going anywhere.

That is why this month,
the three letters in our name will be replaced
with the three-letter questions
that are the seed of every story.

A reminder that any attempt to silence curiosity
will only inspire more of it.




For your right to be curious.

**Attack on Iran**

# *Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, Autocratic Cleric Who Led Iran, Dies at 86*



WANA NEWS AGENCY/VIA REUTERS

Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, Iran's supreme leader, speaking in 2022 at a shrine to his predecessor, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini. He cemented and expanded hard-line Islamist and anti-Western policies.

## *Expanded Nation's Influence in Region And Brutally Crushed Dissent at Home*

**By ALAN COWELL and FARNAZ FASSIHI**

Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who in more than three decades as Iran's supreme leader turned the Islamic Republic into a regional power, brutally crushing dissent at home, and maintaining unswerving hostility to the United States and Israel, died on Saturday during U.S. and Israeli military strikes on his country. He was 86.

President Trump announced the death, writing on his Truth Social social-media platform: "Khamenei, one of the most evil people in History, is dead." Iranian state media later confirmed he had been killed.

Ayatollah Khamenei's death came amid an extensive attack on Iran by the United States and Israel earlier in the day. Mr. Trump had been building U.S. military forces in the Middle East for weeks and had threatened to hit Iran if it did not agree to his demands, which included ending its nuclear program and accepting restrictions on its ballistic missiles. After the attack began, Mr. Trump encouraged Iranians to take over their government.

As the second leader of the Islamic Republic, Ayatollah Khamenei cemented and expanded its hard-line Islamist and anti-Western policies, shaping the nation's Islamic revolution far more than its founder, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, who held power for just a decade, most of it during a devastating war with Iraq.

At home, Ayatollah Khamenei ruled with an iron fist, blocking attempts at moderate reforms, labeling public demands for change as Western-orchestrated "sedition" and squelching dissent with arrests and executions. He vastly expanded a loyal military force, the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps, whose intelligence wing served as a powerful tool of repression.

Abroad, he trained and armed allied militias in Gaza, Iraq, Lebanon and Yemen, expanding Iran's influence to challenge Israel and Saudi Arabia for regional dominance.

His worldview was shaped by animosity toward the United States, which he called "the great Satan," and Israel, which he described as "a cancerous tumor that must be removed," though for the most part he avoided open military confrontation with either.

Such was his rancor toward the United States and its allies that Tehran supplied Russia with suicide drones to attack cities in Ukraine after Moscow invaded in 2022. After the Palestinian militant group Hamas led a devastating attack on Israel in October 2023, he offered full-throated support to anti-Israel militants in the resulting wars in Gaza and Lebanon.

But Iran's nuclear program, coupled with the ayatollah's fiery rhetoric toward the West, led to rafts of crippling international economic sanctions and made Iran an international pariah. It also drew a covert, Israeli-led campaign of sabotage and targeted killings aimed at preventing Iran from developing nuclear weapons. This campaign culminated in Israeli strikes across Iran in June 2025 that killed key military leaders and scientists and damaged nuclear sites, and the joint U.S.-Israel assault eight months later.

*Neil MacFarquhar contributed reporting.*

Ayatollah Khamenei vehemently insisted on what he said was Iran's sovereign right to pursue its own interests in nuclear fuel enrichment, missile development and regional diplomacy.

"Should the Iranian nation beg for the right of exploitation of nuclear energy from the bullying world powers until they accept that the nation has a nuclear right?" he asked in 2007. "No," he answered. "This is not the way of a free and independent nation."

He presided over a state that jailed critics and journalists and enforced draconian restrictions on women. By the end of Ayatollah Khamenei's life, many Iranians viewed him as the dictator of a corrupt and repressive regime whose policies had killed thousands of Iranians and forced countless others into exile.

During the past decade, as bouts of antigovernment protests increased in frequency, Ayatollah Khamenei resorted to ever more brutal tactics. In January 2026, he ordered the security forces to open fire on protesters who had initially taken to the streets peacefully over economic issues.

The government said more than 3,100 people were killed, while human rights organizations estimated the toll at more than 6,000 dead. Ayatollah Khamenei blamed foreign "enemies" for provoking the bloodshed.

Mr. Trump threatened to bomb Iran to halt the killing of protesters and dispatched a naval "armada," which ostensibly prompted Iran to hold off on executing detainees accused of demonstrating. The ayatollah warned that he would start a regional war if the United States attacked, leading to a flurry of international diplomacy and direct talks between senior U.S. and Iranian officials.

But on Saturday, the U.S. and Israel attacked dozens of sites across the country in an assault Mr. Trump said would eliminate Iran's nuclear program and change its government.

Frustration with the ayatollah's rule had also exploded in 2022, when protests erupted over the death in custody of Mahsa Amini, a 22-year-old woman who had been accused of violating a law requiring women to wear head scarves. In a remarkable display of courage, women marched across the country, chanting "Women, life, freedom" and yanking off their scarves in public.

The protests widened into a nationwide uprising demanding an end to clerical rule and the ouster of Ayatollah Khamenei.

The authorities cracked down, killing hundreds of protesters and arresting thousands, sentencing dozens to death. The protests continued for months but ultimately petered out.

Ayatollah Khamenei's supporters credited him with shrewdly navigating Iran's complex political landscape and for resolutely deterring international threats and pressures.

Despite his deep mistrust of the West, he agreed to a landmark nuclear deal in 2015 that restricted Iran's right to enrich uranium in exchange for the lifting of international sanctions. His mistrust was validated three years later, however, when Mr. Trump withdrew from the agreement, restoring the sanctions and piling on new ones.

In 2025, Mr. Trump sought to reach a new nuclear accord with Iran, and Ayatollah Khamenei allowed Iranian negotiators to engage while insisting that Iran would not give up its right to enrich uranium.

Those talks were interrupted by the Israeli strikes that June that damaged nuclear facilities and killed officials linked to the nuclear program.

At his death, Ayatollah Khamenei was the longest-serving head of state in the Middle East and one of Iran's longest-serving modern rulers, with a tenure that antagonized six American presidents, from George H.W. Bush to Mr. Trump.

"He is one of the most consequential and important leaders of Iran in the modern period," said Vali Nasr, a professor at the School of Advanced International Studies at Johns Hopkins University. "It's really under him that the Islamic Republic took form. Khomeini led a revolution. Khamenei led a state."



THIERRY CAMPION/ASSOCIATED PRESS

Ayatollah Khamenei was a protégé of Ayatollah Khomeini, center, founder of the Islamic Republic.

### Becoming Supreme

In some ways, Ayatollah Khamenei (pronounced HAH-meh-NAY-ee) was an accidental leader, assuming the presidency in 1981 only after the incumbent was assassinated. Nor was his ascension to supreme leader a given. He was a devoted revolutionary and protégé of Ayatollah Khomeini, but he lacked the religious credentials required by Iran's Constitution for the top job.

But after Ayatollah Khomeini's death in 1989, he emerged as a consensus candidate. To address the legal requirements, he was designated an ayatollah overnight, and the Constitution was changed to remove the mandate that the supreme leader attain the highest rank in the Shiite hierarchy.

Ayatollah Khamenei inherited a country that was regionally isolated, with a depleted military and a war-torn economy. Though he lacked his predecessor's charisma and mystique, he moved quickly to expand his power and rebuild Iranian influence.

In terms of raw muscle, his position was underpinned by the Revolutionary Guards, a parallel force whose military, political and economic power he expanded and that in return offered him its enduring loyalty.

His authority was further buttressed by an extensive network of appointees, informers, commissars and multiple layers of security forces, including morality police and a plainclothes militia known as the Basij.

His black turban denoted a claim of direct descent from the Prophet Muhammad. And his appointment by a council of clerics as the earthly representative of the Imam Mahdi, a messianic figure, vested him with divine authority. The mere charge of being "against" his divine rule risked the death penalty.

With his spectacles, Palestinian kaffiyeh, long robes and silver beard, Ayatollah Khamenei cast himself as a religious scholar as well as a writer and translator of works on Islam. He affected an avuncular and magnanimous aloofness, running the country from a perch above the jousting of daily politics.

That facade of supposed neutrality showed cracks after the hard-line conservative president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad won a second term in a 2009 election widely seen as rigged. The ayatollah endorsed the flawed victory and the brutal crackdown on hundreds of thousands of protesters that followed, damaging his standing among many Iranians, particularly the educated, urban middle class.

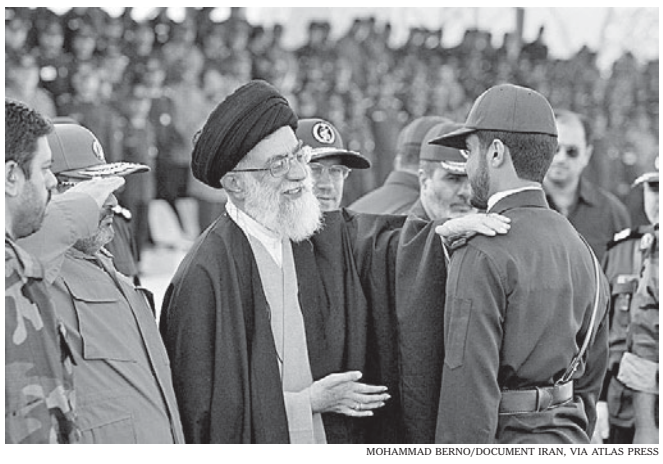
The 2009 uprising, known as the Green Revolution, was neither the first nor last to challenge clerical authority. Mass protests broke out again in 2017, 2019 and 2022. Each time, the government responded with violent crackdowns and, each time, the ayatollah praised the security forces for crushing the unrest.

He also began to insert himself more directly into the affairs of the government in televised speeches, dictating the approach if not the details of major policies.



VAHID SALEMI/ASSOCIATED PRESS

An Iranian military parade passing a poster of Ayatollah Khamenei in 2005. He claimed a sovereign right for Iran to develop missiles and other weapons.



MOHAMMAD BERNO/DOCUMENT IRAN, VIA ATLAS PRESS

Ayatollah Khamenei's position was underpinned by the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps, whose military power grew significantly under his rule.



KHAMENEI IR VIA, AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE GETTY IMAGES

Ayatollah Khamenei jostled with a series of Iranian presidents, including Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, who held the office from 2005 to 2013.

By the 2021 election, he no longer bothered to maintain the appearance of a fair contest, allowing Iran's top clerical body, the Guardian Council, to disqualify any candidates who posed a real challenge to his conservative protégé, Ebrahim Raisi, who won handily.

In July 2024, his regime appeared to be taken by surprise by the upset presidential victory of Masoud Pezeshkian, a reformist who said he sought to make Iran more prosperous, socially open and engaged with the West. Experts questioned how much leeway the new president would be given, but Ayatollah Khamenei offered his endorsement.

At the same time, he cannily exploited political instabilities in the Middle East to extend Iran's reach, constructing a so-called axis of resistance from the Persian Gulf to the Mediterranean that sought to threaten Israel and rival the Sunni Muslim powers of the Arab world.

"For many Shiites outside of Iran, he came to symbolize the power of the largest Shiite country, and the Islamic Republic in their minds in large part was summarized in Khamenei," said Mr. Nasr, the Johns Hopkins professor.

The American-led invasion of Iraq in 2003 provided an opening for Ayatollah Khamenei to exert influence abroad. The war toppled a Sunni dictator, Saddam Hussein, who ruled a Shiite-majority country. Iran developed and armed Shiite militias and backed Shiite political parties, giving Iran significant clout in Iraqi politics.

Foreign military ventures not only gave Iran a clear passage across the region — to ship missile parts to its ally Hezbollah in Lebanon, for instance — but also left it with a sectarian fighting force at its disposal.

In 2014, after a large swath of Iraq was captured by the Islamic State, a Sunni jihadist group, Iran-backed militias helped defeat the terrorist group, paradoxically placing Tehran and Washington on the same side against a common adversary.

When the Arab Spring uprisings erupted in 2011, the ayatollah sent militia forces into Syria to support President Bashar al-Assad against Western-backed rebels and Sunni jihadists. But they ultimately failed, and the rebels who toppled Mr. al-Assad in late 2024 vowed to keep Iran out of their country.

These regional allies posed risks for Iran. When Hamas led its surprise assault on Israel in October 2023, killing 1,200 people and dragging 250 back to Gaza as hostages, he praised it as "a decisive blow to the Zionist regime."

Israel engaged Hamas in a war that devastated Gaza, drew in Hezbollah in Lebanon and prompted Israeli assassinations of senior figures from both groups, including one inside of Iran.

Twice in 2024, in April and October, Iran fired barrages of drones and missiles toward Israel, but most were shot down and did little damage. Later that year, an Israeli bombing campaign severely degraded Hezbollah's military abilities and killed dozens of its leaders, ending its run as a regional extension of Iranian power.

### Opposing the West

The Islamic Republic's relations with the United States have been contentious since Iranian revolutionaries took American diplomats hostage at the U.S. Embassy in 1979, an event Ayatollah Khamenei later praised as "a great and valuable service performed for our revolution."

He said he considered the United States a "vindictive and malevolent" enemy.

The United States and other critics labeled Tehran a sponsor of terrorism and a threat to the regional order, with a record of torture, the jailing of adversaries and persecution of minorities.

Iran's nuclear enrichment program, which American and Israeli intelligence agencies said was intended to create nuclear weapons, became the most urgent matter of dispute.

Iranian leaders insisted that the program — conducted in secret until its existence was disclosed in 2002 — was for peaceful purposes. Moreover, they said, they had no interest in nuclear arms, which were banned by the ayatollah in a 2003 religious edict.

Western and Israeli analysts, however, said Iran was moving toward nuclear weapons capability, narrowing the so-called breakout time it would take to create a bomb.

Seeking a diplomatic solution in 2009, President Barack Obama wrote two letters to the Iranian leader, eventually leading to the astonishing scene of Iranian and American diplomats at the same negotiating table.

Ayatollah Khamenei voiced reluctant support for the deal reached in 2015, while emphasizing that it did not change Iran's hostility toward the United States and Israel.

In 2018, Mr. Trump unilaterally withdrew from the agreement, reimposed American sanctions against Iran and added new ones in a "maximum pressure" campaign.

In return, Iran resumed nuclear enrichment. Within a few years, Iran had crossed the threshold of being a nuclear-capable state with enough enriched uranium to make at least one nuclear warhead if it chose to do so.

Tensions between the two countries peaked in January 2020 with the American killing of the commander of the Revolutionary Guards, Maj. Gen. Qassim Suleimani, in a drone strike in Baghdad, pushing the two countries to the brink of war.

Five days later, Ayatollah Khamenei ordered a ballistic missile attack on American troops in Iraq. No Americans were killed, but more than 100 soldiers suffered traumatic brain injuries.

Both countries then stood down, averting a wider conflict, but the tension caused a new disaster.

With Iran on high alert for a possible American counterattack, a Revolutionary Guards officer shot down what turned out to be a Ukrainian Airlines passenger jet near Tehran's international airport. All 176 passengers, including some of Iran's best and brightest, were killed.

The ayatollah immediately knew what had happened. But for three days, the government denied that the plane had been shot down, dismissing the accusation as a Western plot to discredit the country, until mounting evidence made the lie untenable.

Personal honor is a sacred virtue in Iranian culture. To many Iranians, the ayatollah's had sustained permanent damage.

### Modest Upbringing

Sayyid Ali Husseini Khamenei was born in modest circumstances as the second of eight children on April 19, 1939, in Mashhad, in northeastern Iran, the country's second-largest city.

His father, Sayyid Jawad Khamenei, was a mid-ranking cleric who was regarded as ascetic and devout. His mother, Khadijeh Mirdamadi, also came from a clerical family. In his official autobiography, Ayatollah Khamenei described her as a "very wise, educated and well-versed woman who enjoyed poetic and artistic talents."

From the age of 4, he was educated at Islamic seminaries. At 13, he said, he felt the first stirrings of revolutionary zeal when he heard a speech by the Islamic militant Navab Safavi. After a year of study in Najaf, Iraq, he returned to Iran and the holy city of Qum, where at 19 he fell under the influence of Ayatollah Khomeini.

He was also influenced by the writings of Sayyid Qutb, an Egyptian fundamentalist ideologue and proponent of Islamic statehood, some of whose work Mr. Khamenei translated to Persian from Arabic.

In 1963, a time of great ferment over the shah's efforts to modernize Iran, the young Mr. Khamenei served as a secret courier between Ayatollah Khomeini in Qum and clerics in Mashhad. Later that year, he was arrested by the shah's secret police — the first of six times — and spent a night in jail.

A year later, he married Khojasteh Bagherzadeh. Although little is known about her, the couple had six children: four sons, Massoud, Mojtaba, Mostafa and Meysam, and two daughters, Bushra and Hoda. A complete list of survivors was not immediately available.

Ayatollah Khamenei has made much of his six arrests, in effect a tally of revolutionary credentials, culminating in the mid-1970s when he was held in solitary confinement before being banished, first to Iranshahr and then to Jiroft, both in southeastern Iran.

For many of these years, Ayatollah Khomeini was exiled from Iran — until his triumphant homecoming after the shah fled in early 1979 amid an uprising against the monarch's long, repressive rule.

He declared Iran an Islamic Republic and appointed Mr. Khamenei to lead Friday Prayer in Tehran, a major rallying point for the revolution. Mr. Khamenei also served briefly as deputy minister of defense and supervisor of the Revolutionary Guards.

In November 1979, after the United States admitted the exiled shah for cancer treatment, revolutionary students overran the American Embassy, setting off a 444-day hostage crisis.

In June 1981, Mr. Khamenei was badly wounded when a bomb concealed in a tape recorder by opponents of clerical rule exploded at a news conference, crippling his right arm.

### Khomeini's Choice

With Ayatollah Khomeini's backing, Mr. Khamenei became president in October 1981, serving two terms, until Aug. 3, 1989.

In the jostling to succeed Ayatollah Khomeini after his death in 1989, Mr. Khamenei's clerical credentials failed to meet the constitutional requirements. But according to accounts from the era, the Parliament speaker, Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, and Ayatollah Khomeini's son, Ahmad, maintained that Ayatollah Khomeini's dying wish had been for Mr. Khamenei to succeed him.

That blessing won the day, and Mr. Khamenei was elevated to ayatollah and supreme leader. As leader, he adopted a humble posture, calling himself "an individual with many faults and shortcomings, and truly a minor seminarian."

He appeared to live modestly in a home-office complex where he met with heads of state in a sparsely furnished room with a beige carpet, a sofa and a few wooden chairs. The few photos from his private residence show cushions lined against the wall on the floor.

Many details of his private life and finances remain opaque. In 2013, Reuters reported that he controlled a state-owned business conglomerate worth around $95 billion built on "the systematic seizure of thousands of properties belonging to ordinary Iranians." While the business gave him huge economic power, Reuters found no evidence that the ayatollah used it to enrich himself.

Ayatollah Khamenei had no qualms about taking stances that were anathema elsewhere.

He dismissed the Holocaust as "the myth of the massacre of Jews." In 2005, he upheld the religious injunction issued by his predecessor urging Muslims to kill the novelist Salman Rushdie over allegations that his book "The Satanic Verses" was blasphemous. In August 2022, a 24-year-old New Jersey man attacked Mr. Rushdie with a knife, stabbing him 10 times.

Iranian state media called it "divine retribution."

Ayatollah Khamenei's obstinacy sometimes hurt Iranians, as during the Covid-19 pandemic. On top of chaotic planning, a lack of transparency and a refusal to impose quarantines, the ayatollah banned American- and British-made coronavirus vaccines, insisting that Iran would produce its own.

That decision probably contributed to a toll of well over 100,000 deaths.

"He was arrogant, literate, obdurate, revengeful, unable to accept mistakes, unwilling to make concessions and given to conspiracy theories," said Abbas Milani, a historian and director of Iranian studies at Stanford University. "He was constantly at war with real and imaginary enemies. His policies led to Iran's isolation internationally and to sclerotic despotism at home."

After more than 35 years in power, Ayatollah Khamenei had shaped the Islamic Republic in his own image.

# Cheering and Grieving After Death of Leader

## Shock Mixes With a Gnawing Uncertainty

**By CHRISTINA GOLDBAUM and KIANA HAYERI**

BEIRUT, Lebanon — A sense of disbelief fell over Iran's capital, Tehran, on Sunday as the country came to grips with its new reality after its supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, was killed in a day of American and Israeli strikes.

Large crowds poured into the streets of Tehran and other cities across the country early Sunday morning to celebrate his death, amid fireworks, dancing and cheering. Hours later, scores more tearful mourners came out to the streets to grieve his death, waving Iranian flags and holding photos of Ayatollah Khamenei.

By midday, as fresh waves of airstrikes hit the capital, a strange cadence was playing out across the streets of Tehran: First the booms from the renewed assaults, followed by the sounds of many people cheering on the strikes they hope will bring down the government.

"It's surreal," said Azim, a 39-year-old in Karaj, a city west of Tehran. "Imagine your country is being attacked, but because of how disconnected people feel from the government, they react like that." Like many others interviewed for this article, he gave only his first name out of fear of reprisals by the government.

Azim said he and his neighbors had been celebrating the death of Ayatollah Khamenei out on the streets until dawn, he said. Later Sunday morning, he drove around the area to take in the scene, passing government checkpoints still manned by Revolutionary Guards soldiers and members of the feared Basij militia, a voluntary subsidiary of the Revolutionary Guards. But even they seemed to be in shock, he said.

Azim said he spoke to one member of the Basij militia who said he was unsure what to do.

"They couldn't believe that with the first missile, the first strike, Ali Khamenei would be hit," Azim said.

Late Sunday morning, large crowds poured into Engelab Square in Tehran to mourn the leader's death. Many waved Iranian flags and held pictures of Ayatollah Khamenei, according to photos posted by the Iranian judiciary's news agency.

Still others were gripped by the uncertainty of what was still to come, as airstrikes rang out around them.

Payman, 45, a resident of Tehran, was preparing for worst-case scenarios.

Worried about food shortages, he had stocked up on bread and water. He was preoccupied about his savings invested in the Iranian stock market, which he feared might collapse if the situation worsened. He was jolted with fear every time he heard strikes on the city.

Everything happening in the country felt "unbelievable and unpredictable," Payman said. "I feel like this system can't sustain itself because people don't accept it anymore."

Still, he added, most Iranians just want their basic needs met. If the government could strike a deal with the United States that would lift sanctions, improve the economy and stop the airstrikes, Iranians might stop pushing for more serious change, he said.

Arian, 32, of Tehran, shared that pragmatic view. As he drove around Tehran on Sunday morning in search of gasoline for his car, plumes of smoke from airstrikes billowed into the sky, according to a video he recorded, which was verified by The New York Times.

Even though some people were happy, he was not sure whether the swell of celebratory fervor could translate into substantial change.

If American or Israeli leaders put out a call for people to take to the streets to demand an overhaul of the government, "it could turn into chaos and violence," Arian said. "They don't really have the strength or capacity, but they have a strong desire."

# *Unilateral Strike Stokes Debate on Who Controls The Ability to Start a War*

**By CHARLIE SAVAGE**

WASHINGTON — President Trump's unilateral decision to launch a major attack on Iran has opened a new chapter in a recurring debate over who rightfully wields war powers in American democracy.

The move early Saturday to strike Iran has raised accusations that he is violating the Constitution by starting a war without congressional authorization. It appears likely to prompt a belated debate this week in Congress under the War Powers Resolution.

Many Democrats and at least two Republicans in Congress reacted to what Mr. Trump himself described as "major combat operations" — and said could result in American casualties as "often happens in war" — by insisting that Congress must vote on whether the country enters such a conflict.

The accusations underscore a clear split that has emerged between how the founders intended American-style democracy to function and how it has frequently been governed, especially during and since the Cold War. Presidents of both parties have used the large standing armies maintained after World War II to commit forces to combat without congressional authorization.

In 1973, at the tail end of the Vietnam War, Congress passed the War Powers Resolution in an attempt to regain its role. It described a limited set of situations in which a president can unilaterally deploy forces into hostilities: essentially, when the country is under attack. Every president since has breached that purported limit.

The War Powers Resolution also provided that unauthorized deployments into hostile situations must end after 60 days unless Congress votes to approve them in the interim. Both President Barack Obama, in the 2011 Libya intervention, and Mr. Trump, in his campaign of striking vessels suspected of smuggling cocaine from South America, took the position that this rule did not apply to air campaigns in which there was no risk to American forces.

The 1973 law also created a mechanism for Congress to force presidents to immediately withdraw American forces from unauthorized deployments into hostile situations.

Originally, it allowed lawmakers to act via a resolution that the president could not veto, but a 1983 Supreme Court ruling led to a change. Lawmakers must now send such measures to the White House — meaning they would need two-thirds majorities in both chambers to override a presidential veto.

Presidents have since obtained congressional authorization for major land wars — the Persian Gulf war, Afghanistan and Iraq — and they have stretched the Afghanistan war law, which targeted the perpetrators of the Sept. 11 attacks, into standing congressional authorization to strike militants affiliated with Al Qaeda elsewhere.

***Congress set limits on presidents, who keep ignoring them.***

But they have also increasingly claimed a right to carry out more limited interventions — those deemed in the national interest and whose anticipated nature, scope and duration fall short of a "war" in the constitutional sense — without going to Congress.

Because lawmakers have not impeached presidents for those operations, the moves have accumulated as precedents for their successors to build upon.

Mr. Trump has pushed further with his assassination of Maj. Gen. Qassim Suleimani, a top Iranian military commander, in his first term, his bombing of Iranian nuclear sites last year, his continuing boat strike operation and his invasion of Venezuela in January to arrest its leader, Nicolás Maduro.

No Americans were killed in any of those operations. But Mr. Trump's attack on Iran appears likely to be his most significant unilateral military operation yet.

**Attack on Iran**



AMIT ELKAYAM FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Tel Aviv on Sunday. Israelis repeatedly ran for bomb shelters as Iran fired missiles, and schools and nonessential businesses closed.

# For Israelis, Stress Coupled With Sense of Relief

By ISABEL KERSHNER

JERUSALEM — It was barely midday on Sunday, the start of the workweek and the second day of the conflict, and many Israelis were already exhausted.

Shrill phone alerts and wailing sirens warning of incoming Iranian missiles and drones kept people across the country awake until about 2 a.m., and then started up again at 6 a.m. A series of barrages sent them running repeatedly to bomb shelters.

Still, many said they were heartened by the morning headlines.

The front page of Yedioth Ahronoth, a popular Hebrew daily, featured a large portrait of Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, Iran's supreme leader, with a red X across his face and one word: "Eliminated."

The news was confirmed by President Trump late Saturday: An Israeli strike had killed one of the country's most implacable foes in the first minute of the attack on Iran, leaving some Israelis to feel the ordeal was worthwhile.

"I am happy Khamenei has been killed, but it's stressful," said Tanya Sachs, 42, a chemist from Jerusalem. "We are at war and it feels like war," she added, describing how she ran up and down from her apartment to a bunker below the building with her four children, aged 2 to 13.

Most Israelis needed few justifications for attacking Iran, having lived for decades with their leaders warning that Iran's nuclear program and ballistic missiles posed an existential threat to their country.

Ms. Sachs said that having Mr. Trump on board provided a one-time opportunity for Israel.

"It wouldn't be happening without him," she said. "We have a real desire to see a regime change in Iran. It's critical for Israel's security."

Ms. Sachs was in a Jerusalem supermarket stocking up on snacks and other food, like dry pasta. Others were loading shopping carts with trays of eggs, bottles of mineral water and toilet paper for their shelters.

Schools were closed and nonessential businesses shuttered on the instructions of Israel's home front command. Nobody knew how long the conflict would last, but the Israeli military said it would be for as long as it takes.

Iran had fired dozens of missiles toward Israel. Many were intercepted by the country's air defenses, but on Sunday a direct strike on a residential district in Beit Shemesh, a city 18 miles west of Jerusalem, killed at least nine people and injured dozens. It was the highest number of casualties in a single strike in Israel in this conflict.

On Saturday night, a direct hit on a residential building in central Tel Aviv killed a Filipino caregiver who was identified by the Philippine Embassy in Tel Aviv as Mary Ann de Vera, 32. A hospital reported the death of another woman on Sunday morning after she suffered shortness of breath running to a bomb shelter.

> An upwelling of joy after Iran's supreme leader was killed.

Not all Israelis were convinced of a good outcome, even if they supported the offensive.

"History teaches us that taking out leaders rarely brings about a better reality," said Gideon Lopez, 62, a Jerusalem resident who was sheltering in a bunker with his wife, Annie, and their daughter, Achinoam, 29.

Their two other children had been called up on Saturday for reserve duty. One is a tank commander in northern Israel, and another serves in a military search-and-rescue unit deployed in Tel Aviv.

"I'm too old to be naïve that something better might emerge" in Iran, Annie said. But the death of Ayatollah Khamenei, a "murderous leader," might be "better for humanity," she added.

Achinoam said she thought this was "a good war," adding, "The younger generation prefers to suffer now and not have a worse situation to deal with later."

Some Israelis drew a comparison between the death of Ayatollah Khamenei and the story of Purim, a Jewish holiday that falls this week. Set in ancient Persia, the tale celebrates the triumph of the Jews of the empire over an evil royal adviser who had persuaded the king, Ahasuerus, to allow them to be killed.

"I feel great, like from 2,500 years ago!" said Doron Binyamin, a grocer. "It feels like good things are happening, and that finally we are dealing with our problems."

His father, Zeev Binyamin, said he hoped this would be the war to end Israel's wars.

"I hope it will bring peace and quiet for a hundred years," he said.



AVISHAG SHAAR YASHUV FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

A shelter in Herzliya, Israel. Many of the Iranian missiles were intercepted, but a strike on Beit Shemesh killed at least nine.

FACT CHECK

# President's Justification Claims vs. Reality

By LINDA QIU

WASHINGTON — President Trump, in announcing a military campaign against Iran early Saturday, asserted he had done so because of "imminent threats" posed by the regime.

He laid out his justifications in an eight-minute video he shared on social media. But three of his key claims — blaming Iran for a terrorist attack in 2000, characterizing its nuclear program as destroyed by previous American strikes, and warning that its weapons could soon reach the United States — were inaccurate.

Here's a fact-check.

WHAT WAS SAID

*"In 2000, they knew and were probably involved with the attack on the U.S S. Cole."*

**This lacks evidence.** Al Qaeda claimed responsibility for the October 2000 attack on the U.S. destroyer Cole, and American intelligence agencies have concurred. There is no public evidence that Iran was directly responsible for the attack. But for years, U.S. courts have ordered Iran to pay tens of millions of dollars in damages to victims of the attack and their survivors, finding that Iran "facilitated" the attack by providing material and financial support to Al Qaeda.

The F.B.I., on its website detailing the history of the attack, notes that the agency "ultimately determined that members of the Al Qaeda terrorist network planned and carried out the bombing." It makes no mention of Iran. Abd al-Rahim al-Nashiri, a citizen of Saudi Arabia, is accused of organizing the attack, and is currently awaiting trial at Guantánamo Bay.

A federal judge ruled in 2015 that Iran was complicit, noting that the country's support for Al Qaeda made it capable of carrying out the attack on Cole and that one of the masterminds most likely traveled through Iran before and after the bombing. (The case was brought by the family of a sailor killed in the attack against Iran and Sudan; neither country responded to the lawsuit.)

In a similar civil case, a federal judge ruled in 2024 that Iran "facilitated the planning and execution of the attack on the Cole" through decades of material support to Al Qaeda.

WHAT WAS SAID

*"That is why, in Operation Midnight Hammer last June, we obliterated the regime's nuclear program at Fordow, Natanz and Isfahan."*

**This is exaggerated.** The United States last June carried out airstrikes targeting Iran's nuclear facilities, but government reports and other officials have not gone as far as Mr. Trump's claims of total destruction.

The New York Times reported in the days after the attack that a preliminary assessment found that the strikes had sealed off the entrances to two of Iran's facilities but had not collapsed their underground buildings.

John Ratcliffe, the C.I.A. director, said last June that Iran's nuclear program had been "severely damaged" by the airstrikes. Rafael Grossi, the director general of the International Atomic Energy Agency, told CBS that same month that the strikes caused "severe damage, but it's not total damage." And a Pentagon spokesman echoed that language last August, telling reporters that the strikes had "severely degraded" Iran's capability and set back the program by two years.

The administration, too, took a more muted approach in assessing the damage. In the National Security Strategy, published last November with an introduction by the president, officials stated that the June airstrikes "significantly degraded Iran's nuclear program."

WHAT WAS SAID

*"Instead, they attempted to rebuild their nuclear program and to continue developing long-range missiles that can now threaten our very good friends and allies in Europe, our troops stationed overseas and could soon reach the American homeland."*

**This lacks evidence.** Officials with access to U.S. intelligence told The New York Times last week that "Mr. Trump exaggerated the immediacy of the threat posed to the United States" by Iran's missiles program. The suggestion that Iran was trying to build a nuclear bomb was also unsupported.

Mr. Trump is correct that the country's current missile arsenal could reach parts of Europe and U.S. military bases in the Middle East, but experts and official reports doubt that Iran's missiles could reach the United States. According to a 2025 report from the Defense Intelligence Agency, Iran did not have intercontinental ballistic missiles that could reach the United States, though it could develop 60 such weapons by 2035.

There is also little evidence that Iran is trying to build a bomb.

Mr. Grossi told a French news network last week that his agency had not seen evidence that Iran had plans to produce a nuclear weapon.

Officials also told The New York Times last week that Iran had not built new nuclear sites since the June attacks, though recent activity had been detected at existing sites. Nor was there evidence that Iran was trying to dig out its stash of enriched uranium.

"There is no imminent threat," Daryl G. Kimball, the executive director of the Arms Control Association, wrote in a recent journal article. "Iran is not close to 'weaponizing' its nuclear material so as to justify another U.S. attack."

*Reporting was contributed by Mark Mazzetti, Edward Wong, David E. Sanger and Julian E. Barnes.*

NEWS ANALYSIS

# *Trump and His Diplomats Kept Goal Posts Moving*

By EDWARD WONG and MICHAEL CROWLEY

WASHINGTON — The Trump administration's diplomacy with Iran to avert a war appeared to be on a near-certain path to failure even before it reached a critical point last week.

The giveaway came in a fiery phrase that Secretary of State Marco Rubio uttered a couple times this month. The "radical Shia clerics" leading Iran could not be trusted, he said at the Munich Security Conference and later in Hungary.

"We have to understand that Iran ultimately is governed and its decisions are governed by Shia clerics — radical Shia clerics, OK?" he told reporters in Budapest. "These people make policy decisions on the basis of pure theology. That's how they make their decisions. So, it's hard to do a deal with Iran."

His remarks signaled that President Trump and some of his top aides did not believe they could work with the leaders of Iran on compromises over the country's nuclear program or anything else.

The diplomatic talks that began in Oman on Feb. 6 seemed preordained to fail, and Mr. Trump's desired path became clear by this weekend: a war of choice carried out with Israel to eviscerate Iran's leadership and cripple its military.

Mr. Trump laid out those goals on Saturday as he announced the first wave of coordinated U.S.-Israeli airstrikes. Israeli attacks that relied on U.S. intelligence killed Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, the supreme leader, and other top officials. The targets also included launchers for Iran's 2,000 or so ballistic missiles, which can hit Israel but not the United States.

In a video, Mr. Trump told Iranian citizens, "When we are finished, take over your government. It will be yours to take. This will be probably your only chance for generations."

Mr. Trump declared on Feb. 13 that regime change was "the best thing that could happen," after saying earlier this winter that Iran needed new leaders.

Since January, when Mr. Trump began threatening new action against Iran, his administration has presented varying and contradictory statements on what it wanted from the negotiations, a sign that the diplomacy was probably doomed even before it began — perhaps by design, some analysts said.

Both Mr. Rubio and Steve Witkoff, Mr. Trump's Middle East envoy, said weeks ago that Iran needed to make concessions on four things. There was its nuclear program, which had already been crippled by U.S. attacks last June; its ballistic missile capabilities; its support for militias in the region; and its treatment of its citizens, after the government violently suppressed protests that began late last year.

Mr. Rubio had cited Iran's ballistic missiles as a main reason to go to war, sometimes using false or unproven assertions. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel has insisted that destroying those missiles should be a priority.

But by Thursday, when Mr. Witkoff and Jared Kushner, Mr. Trump's son-in-law, met with Iranian officials in Geneva, the Americans had agreed to focus the talks just on the nuclear program. U.S. officials say the Iranians refused to negotiate over ballistic missiles.

Mr. Trump emphasized different priorities with each public comment, as his focus shifted from Iran's leaders to its missiles to its nuclear program.

It was that program that he stressed in his State of the Union address last Tuesday, after mentioning, without evidence, that Iran would soon build a long-range missile able to hit the United States.

"They want to make a deal, but we haven't heard those secret words, 'We will never have a nuclear weapon,' " Mr. Trump said. "My preference is to solve this problem through diplomacy. But one thing is certain: I will never allow the world's number one sponsor of terror, which they are by far, to have a nuclear weapon."

Several U.S. presidents have pursued that goal through negotiations, which Democrats have generally supported as the best alternative to war, and which many Republicans have called foolish appeasement of a mortal enemy.

President Barack Obama negotiated a 2015 agreement with Iran that imposed strict limits on its nuclear program to keep Tehran at least one year from being able to make a bomb, in exchange for relief from U.S. economic sanctions.

Although Mr. Trump said in his State of the Union speech that Iran needed to say the "secret words," the preamble to the 2015 deal stated that "Iran reaffirms that under no circumstances will Iran ever seek, develop or acquire any nuclear weapons."

Mr. Trump abandoned that agreement in 2018, calling it inadequate. Iran responded by accelerating its nuclear activity.

Former officials in the Obama and Biden administrations who worked on the 2015 deal said that, given Iran's weakened state after Israeli and U.S. strikes over the past two years, Mr. Trump could have obtained an even better agreement had he really wanted one.

"If the goal was to ensure that Iran did not acquire a nuclear weapon, that could have been achieved without a war that is risky, unpredictable, dangerous and illegal," said Robert Malley, who helped lead nuclear negotiations with Tehran during the Obama and Biden administrations.

The core dispute in the latest round of talks involved Iran's ability to enrich uranium, the process of refining it into a more potent form suitable for both nuclear energy and atomic bombs. (Iran insists its nuclear program is for peaceful purposes, a claim undermined by evidence of its past military research activities.)

Through the last round of talks on Thursday, Mr. Witkoff insisted that Iran must agree to "zero enrichment." Iranian officials refused, calling that demand a violation of their country's rights and sovereignty.

Some former U.S. officials and analysts said they thought that Mr. Trump might have been looking for an excuse to climb down from his threats of war and buildup of military force.

If so, the nuclear talks might have been the vehicle to deliver that.

But Barbara Bodine, a former U.S. ambassador and Middle East specialist who teaches diplomacy at Georgetown University, said that the Trump

> *Talks shifted from one priority to another, without resolving any.*

administration's stated demands were too broad, going well beyond the nuclear program.

"Diplomacy and credible negotiations are not grounded in maximalist demands and mafioso-like threats tied to unilateral deadlines, even if the Iranians are notorious for running out the clock," she said.

"The idea of concluding a deal that was 'better' than Obama's," she added, "was probably sincere." But she said that "the means by which they sought to get there were not credible and would never have succeeded."

Mr. Witkoff and Mr. Kushner did not comment publicly after Thursday's talks, and Mr. Trump said on Friday that he was "not happy" with the course of the negotiations. A senior administration official said on Saturday after the war had begun that the Americans thought Iranian officials were using the talks to stall for time, and that Iran still secretly aimed to make nuclear weapons.

The only official who gave an upbeat assessment of the diplomacy in Geneva was the foreign minister of Oman, Badr Albusaidi, who often mediates between the United States and Iran. He said on Thursday that the talks had resulted in "significant progress."

But Mr. Albusaidi's actions belied his words. He rushed to Washington to meet with Vice President JD Vance in what appeared to be a last-ditch effort to prevent a war. And he made a rare appearance on American television, telling CBS News that Iranian officials had agreed not to stockpile enriched uranium in their country, even if they enriched the material, he said.

That fell short of the zero enrichment that U.S. and Israeli officials wanted. But Mr. Albusaidi insisted that technical experts would push forward in talks in Vienna on Monday.

After war broke out, he said in a statement that he was "dismayed."

"Active and serious negotiations have yet again been undermined," he said. "Neither the interests of the United States nor the cause of global peace are well served by this. And I pray for the innocents who will suffer. I urge the United States not to get sucked in further."

**Attack on Iran**

# After Tracking Khamenei, the C.I.A. Knew Where to Attack Him

*This article is by* ***Julian E. Barnes, Ronen Bergman, Eric Schmitt*** *and* ***Tyler Pager****.*

WASHINGTON — Shortly before the United States and Israel were poised to launch an attack on Iran, the C.I.A. zeroed in on the location of perhaps the most important target: Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, the country's supreme leader.

The C.I.A. had been tracking Ayatollah Khamenei for months, gaining more confidence about his locations and his patterns, according to people familiar with the operation. Then the agency learned that a meeting of top Iranian officials would take place on Saturday morning at a leadership compound in the heart of Tehran. Most critically, the C.I.A. learned that the supreme leader would be at the site.

The United States and Israel decided to adjust the timing of their attack, in part to take advantage of the new intelligence, according to officials with knowledge of the decisions.

The information provided a window of opportunity for the two countries to achieve a critical and early victory: the elimination of top Iranian officials and the killing of Ayatollah Khamenei.

*Farnaz Fassihi and Ephrat Livni contributed reporting.*

The remarkably swift removal of Iran's supreme leader reflected the close coordination and intelligence sharing between the United States and Israel in the run-up to the attack and the deep intelligence the countries had developed on Iranian leadership, especially in the wake of last year's 12-day war. The operation also showed the failure of Iran's leaders to take adequate precautions to avoid exposing themselves at a time where both Israel and the United States sent clear signals that they were preparing for war.

The C.I.A. passed its intelligence, which offered "high fidelity" on Ayatollah Khamenei's position, to Israel, according to people briefed on the intelligence.

They and others who shared details about the operation spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss sensitive intelligence and military planning.

Israel, using U.S. intelligence and its own, would carry out an operation it had been planning for months: the targeted killing of Iran's senior leaders.

The United States and Israeli governments, which had originally planned to launch a strike at night under the cover of darkness, made the decision to adjust the timing to take advantage of the information about the gathering at the government compound in Tehran on Saturday morning.

The leaders were set to meet where the offices of the Iranian presidency, the supreme leader and Iran's National Security Council are located.

Israel had determined that the gathering would include top Iranian defense officials, including Gen. Mohammad Pakpour, the commander in chief of the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps; Aziz Nasirzadeh, the minister of defense; Adm. Ali Shamkhani, the head of the Military Council; Seyyed Majid Mousavi, the commander of the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps Aerospace Force; Mohammad Shirazi, the deputy intelligence minister; and others.

> ***A triumph of cooperation between the U.S and Israel.***

The operation began around 6 a.m. in Israel, as fighter jets took off from their bases. The strike required relatively few aircraft, but they were armed with long-range and highly accurate munitions.

Two hours and five minutes after the jets took off, around 9:40 a.m. in Tehran, the long-range missiles struck the compound. At the time of the strike, senior Iranian national security officials were in one building at the compound. Ayatollah Khamenei was in another nearby building.

"This morning's strike was carried out simultaneously at several locations in Tehran, in one of which senior figures of Iran's political-security echelon had gathered," an Israeli defense official wrote in a message reviewed by The New York Times.

The official said that despite Iranian preparations for war, Israel achieved "tactical surprise" with its attack on the compound.

The White House and the C.I.A. declined to comment.

On Sunday, Iran's state news agency, IRNA, confirmed the deaths of two high-level military leaders whom Israel said it had killed on Saturday: Admiral Shamkhani and General Pakpour.

People briefed on the operation described it as a product of good intelligence and months of preparations.

Last June, with planning underway to strike Iran's nuclear targets, President Trump asserted that the United States knew where Ayatollah Khamenei was hiding and could have killed him.

That intelligence, a former U.S. official said, was based on the same network that the United States relied on Saturday.

But since then, the information the United States has been able to gather has only improved, according to the former official and others briefed on the intelligence. During that 12-day war, the United States learned even more about how the supreme leader and the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps communicated and moved while under pressure, the former official said. The United States used that knowledge to hone its ability to track Ayatollah Khamenei and predict his movements.

The United States and Israel had also gathered specifics about the locations of key Iranian intelligence officers. In follow-on strikes after the attack on the leadership compound Saturday, locations where intelligence leaders were staying were hit, according to people familiar with the operation.

Iran's top intelligence officer escaped, but the senior ranks of Iran's intelligence agencies were decimated, according to people briefed on the operation.



ARASH KHAMOOSHI FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Smoke rising in Tehran on Sunday during the second day of U.S. and Israeli strikes. Global consequences began to unfold as markets sank in Egypt and Saudi Arabia.

# U.S. Troops Killed as Iran's Response Shakes the Mideast

*From Page A1*

significant share of its oil from Iran. Kuwait's stock market suspended trading indefinitely.

The fighting has shut down shipping through the Strait of Hormuz, the conduit for one-fifth of the world's oil supply, according to shipping companies and Tasnim, Iran's semiofficial state media. Videos verified by The New York Times showed an oil tanker, the Skylight, ablaze off the coast of Oman on Sunday. It was one of three ships in the Persian Gulf that reported coming under attack after Iran's Revolutionary Guards Corps claimed it had targeted American and British tankers in the region. And major airports, including Dubai International in the United Arab Emirates, and a wide corridor of airspace were also closed.

The weekend's attacks were shaking the Gulf States' image as a safe haven in the region. In Dubai, the largest Emirati city and the business and tourism capital of the Middle East, five-star hotels caught fire; explosions shattered the windows of apartment towers; and social media influencers shared videos of fiery projectiles streaking past skyscrapers.

In Pakistan, at least 22 people were killed on Sunday as thousands gathered across the country to denounce U.S. and Israeli airstrikes on Iran, including 10 who died as crowds tried to storm the U.S. Consulate in Karachi.

Israeli and American officials are hoping the attacks on Iran's leadership, military and missile program — hitting more than 2,000 targets, according to a U.S. official — will degrade the country's ability to fight back. The Israeli military said on Sunday that its air force was again bombarding "the heart of Tehran" and that its air force was operating with full air superiority in the skies over the capital.

*Reporting was contributed by Eric Schmitt, Raja Abdulrahim, Zolan Kanno-Youngs, Tyler Pager, Elian Peltier, Jason Karaian, Johnatan Reiss, Christina Goldbaum and Minho Kim.*

But analysts fear that a more vulnerable Iran could also be more unpredictable.

Democratic lawmakers on Sunday continued to criticize Mr. Trump's decision to strike Iran without congressional approval. Senator Tim Kaine of Virginia, a member of the Senate Armed Services Committee, called the military campaign "an illegal war" on Fox News. He also echoed Senator Mark Warner of Virginia, the top Democrat of the Senate Intelligence Committee, saying that "all of the intelligence" he has seen suggests that there was "no imminent threat" from Iran.

Republican lawmakers lined up behind the president, with Senator Dave McCormick of Pennsylvania saying on Fox News that the War Powers Resolution of 1973 gave the president 60 days to commit armed forces to military actions before having to seek congressional approval.

The full circumstances of the American service members' deaths were not known, but two U.S. officials said that an army base housing American troops in Kuwait was one of the many American bases in the region that had been hit in retaliatory Iranian strikes. Five service members were seriously wounded, the Central Command said.

In Israel, the military and the country's ambulance service said an Iranian missile had caused the strike that killed at least nine people in a residential district of Beit Shemesh, about 18 miles west of Jerusalem.



AMIT ELKAYAM FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

An Iranian missile struck an apartment building in Tel Aviv, but the country's diminished position in the region seemed evident.

The death toll across Iran, among them officials and civilians, rose sharply on Sunday.

The number of people killed in a strike on a girls' elementary school in southern Iran rose to at least 115 people on Sunday, according to Iranian state and state-affiliated media. It appears to be one of the worst mass casualty events of the American-Israeli bombing campaign so far. The strike hit Shajarah Tayyebeh school on Saturday, the start of the workweek in Iran, after many Iranians had already dropped their children off at school. A spokesman for the U.S. Central Command said on Saturday it would look into the reports of the bombing and that the United States would "take all precautions available to minimize the risk of unintended harm."

Videos verified by The New York Times show that the school is adjacent to a naval base belonging to the country's most powerful military force, the Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corps, or I.R.G.C. Another video verified by The Times on Saturday showed a strike hitting the same I.R.G.C. base.

Late on Sunday, a spokesman for Iran's health ministry, Hossein Kermanpour, said that the Gandhi Hospital in Tehran was being evacuated and that at least three other hospitals in Iran had been affected by strikes.

Separately, the United States Central Command said on Sunday that the headquarters of the I.R.G.C. had been destroyed.

Iran has confirmed the killing of a number of senior officials in the weekend strikes, among them Gen. Mohammad Pakpour, the commander of the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps; Gen. Aziz Nasirzadeh, the defense minister; Sayyid Abdolrahim Mousavi, the chief of staff of Iran's armed forces; Adm. Ali Shamkhani, a senior adviser to Ayatollah Khamenei and the head of the National Defense Council; Salah Asadi, the intelligence chief; and Hassan Jabal Amelian, the head of the country's advanced weapons program.

As the strikes unfolded over the weekend, Iran's diminished position in the region seemed evident. Militias that Tehran has supported in Lebanon, Gaza and Yemen showed no signs of joining in Iran's efforts at retaliation to the U.S. and Israeli attacks.

Hamas in Gaza, greatly diminished after the war with Israel, released two statements, the first condemning the airstrikes against Iran and the second mourning the killing of Ayatollah Khamenei. But neither contained any call or pledge for action.

Thousands of supporters of Hezbollah in Lebanon demonstrated in a Beirut suburb on Sunday. But analysts said the militant group, also hobbled by a devastating war with Israel, was not in a position to get involved militarily.

Perhaps most poignant for Iran was the reaction from Syria, where officials condemned Iran's attacks on Persian Gulf states but not the initial strikes on Iran. Some Syrians were celebrating in the streets at the news of Ayatollah Khamenei's death.

Before President Bashar al-Assad was deposed in December 2024, Syria had served as a land bridge from Iran to Hezbollah in Lebanon, used for transporting weapons and funds.

Now, under a government formed by the rebels who ousted Mr. al-Assad, Syria is no longer supporting the authoritarian clerical leaders in Iran.

# Missiles Hit Girls' School In South Iran, Killing Scores

*This article is by* ***Malachy Browne, Ephrat Livni*** *and* ***Sanam Mahoozi****.*

At least 115 people, most of them likely children, were killed in a strike on a girls' elementary school in southern Iran on Saturday, health officials and Iranian state media said.

The search for survivors in the rubble of the Shajarah Tayyebeh school in the southern town of Minab ended Sunday, according to Mohammad Radmehr, the governor of Minab, Iranian state media reported. It appeared to be the deadliest attack in the continuing American-Israeli bombing campaign.

Several videos and images verified by The New York Times showed that at least half of the two-story school was destroyed in the explosion. Emergency workers with the Red Crescent could be seen alongside families desperately combing through the rubble, which was littered with schoolbooks and book bags covered in blood and ashes. Portions of the building jutted out from the rubble, with bits of colorful murals visible on what were once the walls of the school. Desks were piled with debris.

In other verified videos, rescue workers retrieved a severed arm from the rubble. Victims were laid out in body bags at the scene, where throngs of people were gathered among ambulances and rescue workers.

"The Minab school incident has no comparison with any other incident," said Pirhossein Kolivand, the head of Iran's Red Crescent, in a video posted on social media on Sunday.

"Even in Gaza," he added, there had not been such a high number of students killed simultaneously, calling the attack "a unique and bitter incident."

The United Nations cultural and education agency, UNESCO, condemned the strike, saying in a statement on social media on Sunday: "The killing of pupils in a place dedicated to learning constitutes a grave violation of the protection afforded to schools under international humanitarian law."

Intentionally attacking a school, hospital or other civilian structure is a war crime, and indiscriminate strikes also violate the law. Even if schools are used for military purposes, the law requires armed parties to avoid or minimize harm to civilians and civilian infrastructure, according to the International Committee of the Red Cross.

Citing in part the strike on the school, the Center for Civilians in Conflict, a Washington-based nonprofit dedicated to minimizing civilian harm in war, on Sunday called for "immediate de-escalation, maximum restraint, and urgent action to protect civilians and civilian infrastructure."

The school is adjacent to a naval base belonging to Iran's most powerful military force, the Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corps. Satellite images reviewed by The Times show that, in 2013, the school building was part of the base. Roads led to and from other areas of the base to the school building that was struck on Saturday. But by September 2016, satellite images show, the same building had been walled off and was no longer connected to the base.

Other witness videos shared by Iranian media and verified by The Times showed dark plumes of smoke billowing from two buildings inside the naval base, indicating that it had been targeted in Saturday's wave of Israeli and U.S. strikes.

The Israeli military did not respond to requests for comment on Sunday.

"We are aware of reports concerning civilian harm resulting from ongoing military operations," Capt. Tim Hawkins, a U.S. Central Command spokesman, said on Saturday. "We take these reports seriously and are looking into them."

He added that protecting civilians was of "the utmost importance." No new details were available from Central Command on Sunday.

The midmorning strike on Shajarah Tayyebeh was one of two attacks that appeared to have hit schools on Saturday. Another strike appeared to have hit the Hedayat High School in Iran's capital, Tehran, near 72nd Square in the district of Narmak, local media and rights groups said. Two students died in that attack, according to the U.S.-based Human Rights Activists news agency, which focuses on Iran.

A spokesman for the Red Crescent Society said on Saturday that nearly 750 people had been injured and that more than 200 had been killed in attacks across 24 provinces, Iranian state media reported.

**Attack on Iran**

# U.S. Seeks to Influence What Comes Next, but Its Ability Could Be Limited

By JULIAN E. BARNES and TYLER PAGER

WASHINGTON — U.S. intelligence agencies produced multiple scenarios in recent weeks of what could happen in Iran after a joint U.S. and Israeli strike intended to kill senior leaders and weaken the current government.

The plan to kill Iranian leaders succeeded when an Israeli strike killed Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, Iran's supreme leader, effectively decapitating the government and achieving a key U.S. goal.

Before the strikes that began Saturday, U.S. intelligence agencies studied what would happen after the death of Ayatollah Khamenei. One of those scenarios suggested that a complete change in government was unlikely. Instead, it said, members of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps were likely to assert a larger degree of control but might be willing to curb the country's nuclear program or take a more conciliatory stance to the United States.

In striking Iran on Saturday and urging its citizens to rise up and replace its government, President Trump was judging that he could engineer an outcome that would be beneficial in the long run to the security of the United States and Israel. But in doing so, he set in motion events that could be hard to control and that could leave Iran in chaos for some time.

In a video released after the U.S.-Israeli strike, Mr. Trump said the current attack was the best chance for the Iranian people to take over their government.

Many questions remain about how much effort the United States will put into changing the Iranian government. Without any troops in Iran — which the Trump administration has said it wants to avoid — the U.S. ability to influence what comes next is limited, according to people briefed on the intelligence and planning for the strikes.

The intelligence assessments ahead of the strike considered the likelihood of multiple scenarios playing out after a strike designed to weaken the current leadership. And U.S. officials stressed that the joint strike on leadership targets and military sites in Iran had created a high degree of uncertainty around all of the potential scenarios.

But intelligence agencies believe the organized opposition in and outside Iran remains relatively weak.

The intelligence said that even if Ayatollah Khamenei was killed in the operation, whatever religious leader formally took over would be a hard-liner, according to people briefed on it. But it is unclear how much influence that person would have. Mr. Trump has offered an array of theories about what kind of Iranian government would come next.

Some American officials believe that leaders outside the religious chain of succession would take a more tempered approach to the United States and Israel in the wake of a massive strike — and be willing to give up Iran's nuclear program. In this scenario, real power would lie with the remaining Revolutionary Guards leaders, who could be more likely to take a compliant stance, focused on maintaining their economic interests and control of the country, and less focused on attacking the United States or Israel.

But Mr. Trump's comments to Iranians on Saturday went far beyond predictions of a more compliant theocratic leadership.

"Bombs will be dropping everywhere," Mr. Trump said. "When we are finished, take over your government. It will be yours to take. This will be probably your only chance for generations."

Senator Mark Warner of Virginia, the top Democrat on the Senate Intelligence Committee, said the U.S. government had poor visibility into Iranian opposition groups and their strength.

"I have seen no new intelligence that changes the fact of how complicated regime change would be," Mr. Warner said in an interview.

Mr. Warner said he thought any potential successor to Ayatollah Khamenei would probably be a hard-liner. And while the ayatollah has been unwilling to give up his nuclear enrichment program, Mr. Warner noted he had not decided to build a nuclear weapon, a decision a successor could change.

"Khamenei was invested in the nuclear program, but held the line against full weaponization," Mr. Warner said.

Mr. Warner also said he did not understand why Mr. Trump was pushing for regime change at this moment.

"Do we want to see the Iranian regime change?" Mr. Warner said. "Yes, but why now versus January, versus May? Other than the fact that the president created this quasi red line of calling on the Iranian people, saying, 'Don't worry we will be there.' Then it took him two months to get his armada there."

In late January, Mr. Trump said that a "massive Armada" was heading toward Iran as he intensified threats against the country.

Mick Mulroy, a former Pentagon official who oversaw Middle Eastern defense policy in the first Trump administration, said the president was taking a big risk in calling for Iranians to rise up against their government.

"This is by definition an existential threat and the regime will brutally repress it," Mr. Mulroy said. "More brutal than before."

For now there is little public evidence the attack will lead to an immediate uprising.

Jonathan Teubner, the chief executive of FilterLabs, which uses social media and internet postings to study shifts in attitudes, said the attack on Iran was creating a "textbook rally-around-the-flag effect."

Studying Iranian posts on the social media platform Telegram and Gap, an Iranian messaging app, FilterLabs saw promises of retaliation and threats against American regional bases and Israeli population centers. While such sentiments align with Iranian government messaging, they were amplified across a wide array of social media postings.

"The key question is whether this rally-around-the-flag effect bleeds off," Mr. Teubner said. "The gap between defiant promises and lived reality could become a political liability for the current Iranian regime. But right now, Washington and Jerusalem should not expect an immediate uprising."

Other experts agreed, and said the Tehran government has staying power.

"Something tells me that this won't be the easy regime-overthrow war Trump & Bibi have promised," Alireza Nader, a former researcher at Rand and the Foundation for the Defense of Democracies, wrote on social media. "I hope I'm wrong, the sooner this regime goes the better. But I wonder if US-Israel war planners are underestimating the regime's resilience and its ability to inflict major pain on all sides involved."

# Attacks on Gulf Countries Crack Safe Haven Image

By VIVIAN NEREIM and OMNIA AL DESOUKIE

RIYADH, Saudi Arabia — The gleaming city of Dubai had long been the safest haven in a volatile Middle East, offering a life of luxury to Iranian businesspeople, American celebrities and Russian oligarchs alike.

That image was irrevocably shaken this weekend, when Iran responded to an American and Israeli assault by launching hundreds of missiles and drones at the fossil-fuel rich countries of the Persian Gulf, home to several U.S. military bases.

In total, at least four people were killed and more than 100 others were injured in the attacks across the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain and Oman, according to official reports tallied by The New York Times.

Many of the most shocking episodes played out in Dubai, the largest Emirati city and the business and tourism capital of the Middle East. Five-star hotels caught fire, explosions shattered the windows of apartment towers and the emirate's bustling international airport was damaged, injuring four people. Social media influencers and terrified migrant workers shared videos of fiery projectiles in the night sky, streaking past the city's iconic skyscrapers.

*Vivian Nereim reported from Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, and Omnia Al Desoukie reported from Dubai, United Arab Emirates. Rania Khaled, Yan Zhuang and Leily Nikounazar contributed reporting.*

"You never expect to hear missiles flying over your head in a city like Dubai," said Elizabeth Rayment, a consultant who was in her car on Dubai's famous palm tree-shaped island when debris fell nearby.

As people heard the sound of missiles approaching, some of them panicked and tried to flee the island, Ms. Rayment said. "You realize how fragile routine really is, and how quickly even the most stable places can feel uncertain."

More than 540 drones, 165 ballistic missiles and two cruise missiles targeted the United Arab Emirates, the Emirati defense ministry said on Sunday. Most of those projectiles were intercepted, but 21 drones struck civilian targets, the ministry said.

Over the past few weeks, Gulf governments had publicly sought to avert a war between the United States and Iran, fearing that the fallout would extend to their own countries. Their economic models hinge on regional stability — and the ability to offer a safe foothold in the Middle East to investors and tourists.

Stock markets in Saudi Arabia, Oman and Bahrain fell on Sunday, while Kuwait suspended trading, reflecting the uncertainty that local businesses are facing. Airspace across much of the region was shuttered, trapping tourists and grounding planes.

Dubai in particular has long cultivated close ties with Iran, partly in an effort to maintain its safe haven status. The Emirates is one of Iran's largest trading partners.

"There was nothing that they valued more than that perception of safety — and they prided themselves on maneuvering politically and hedging to be basically on the good books of everyone," said Cinzia Bianco, a visiting fellow at the European Council on Foreign Relations who focuses on the Gulf.



ALTAF QADRI/ASSOCIATED PRESS

Smoke from an Iranian strike rose in the distance from the Dubai International Airport on Sunday. Four in Dubai were hurt in strikes on Saturday.

In the end, not a single Gulf country was spared. Even Oman — where officials had mediated talks between Iran and the United States to try to avert a war — said that it had been attacked.

Foreign workers, who make up a large proportion of the population in the Gulf countries, appeared to be among the most affected. The three people who were killed in the Emirates were Pakistani, Nepali and Bangladeshi nationals. Those injured included Emirati, Egyptian, Filipino, Pakistani, Iranian and Indian citizens, the Emirati defense ministry said.

In Kuwait, as the country's air defense systems took on 97 ballistic missiles and 283 drones, one person was killed and more than 30 were injured — all of them foreign nationals — the Kuwaiti authorities said on Sunday.

And at least 16 people were injured in Qatar, which hosts a major American air base, according to the country's interior ministry.

In the island nation of Bahrain, home to a major U.S. naval base, the government said that "several residential buildings" in the capital of Manama had been targeted, as well as the Crowne Plaza hotel.

Many of the attacks damaged civilian infrastructure, including airports, hotels and residential buildings.

In an interview with Al Jazeera, the Qatar-based satellite channel, Iranian foreign minister Abbas Araghchi said that Iran had started "by attacking the enemy's military bases in the region" but claimed that American soldiers had then "fled to hotels."

"We have made efforts to target only military personnel and facilities that assist them in operations against Iran," he said.

Videos verified by The Times appeared to show a projectile landing close to the Fairmont hotel on Dubai's man-made Palm Jumeirah island on Saturday, causing a large explosion. The hotel said in a statement that four people who were in a parking lot near the hotel had been injured.

David, a Dubai resident who lives near the hotel, was standing near his window when the impact shattered the glass, injuring him, he said. He sustained minor injuries but said he was in shock and "deeply traumatized."

"Living in Palm Jumeirah, in one of the safest countries in the world, this was the last thing I ever expected," said David, who works in advertising and spoke on condition that his full name be withheld in order to speak frankly.

Despite the shock, many people in Dubai tried to maintain a sense of normality. On Saturday evening, Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid, the ruler of Dubai, was photographed attending a horse race.

And on Sunday, even as the sound of explosions echoed periodically, sunbathers headed to the beach and tourists snapped photos by the Burj al-Arab — a sail-shape hotel whose facade caught fire after it was hit by falling debris.

"I am not worried at all; our defense system is amazing," one Emirati woman, Maha Gharib, said in an interview. "I have full confidence."

Bader Al-Saif, an assistant professor at Kuwait University, said that while the attacks had shaken the Gulf's image as "the last bastion of stability in the Middle East," they did not "upend it."

"Two days into the war, the Gulf states have been able to defend themselves and the damage and casualties are extremely low," he said.

Still, the war has left Gulf leaders pinned between the United States — their primary security guarantor — and Iran. While most of the Gulf governments are wary of Iran, they have all tried to de-escalate tensions with the country and engage it diplomatically in recent years.

**NEWS ANALYSIS**

# *A Weakened Iranian Regime May Survive, but the Middle East Will Be Changed*

By STEVEN ERLANGER

BERLIN — Iran's supreme leader may be dead, but there will be another. Its slain military commanders will be replaced. A governing system created over 47 years will not easily disintegrate under air power alone. Iran retains the capacity to strike back against American and Israeli airstrikes, and the war's trajectory is unclear.

But the Islamic Republic, already weakened and unpopular, is now further diminished, its power at home and in the region at one of its lowest ebbs since its leaders took power during the revolution that overthrew Iran's American-backed shah in 1978-79.

Even if the regime does not fall, which remains the stated aim of President Trump, this massive attack is likely to have strategic consequences in the Middle East comparable to the collapse of the Soviet Union.

Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, the supreme leader killed on Saturday morning, maintained a visceral antagonism toward Israel and the United States, which he consistently called "the Great Satan." He built and financed a regional set of proxy militias that surrounded Israel and shared his hatred of it. Hezbollah in Lebanon, Hamas and Islamic Jihad in Gaza and the West Bank, the Houthis in Yemen — all served both to attack Israeli interests and protect Iran itself.

Iran built up its missile program and enriched uranium to nearly bomb grade, even as it denied ever wanting a bomb. It became a regional power so strong that Sunni leaders in Saudi Arabia, Egypt and the Gulf sought to keep good ties with a Shia Islamic regime that also threatened them.

Iran's decline began two years ago, with Israel's tough and sustained response to an invasion by Hamas from Gaza. It accelerated when Israel eroded Iran's air defenses, defeated Hezbollah and profited from the Syrian revolution that overthrew Bashar al-Assad, another ally of Tehran.

But now, with the ayatollah's death and intense destruction from the air, Iran's regional sway has ebbed further, with uncertain consequences that will play out over months and even years.

"The Islamic Republic as we know it will not survive this," said Sanam Vakil, director of the Middle East and North Africa Program at Chatham House, a London-based research group.

"The Mideast won't be the same again," she said. "For 47 years the Mideast has been living with a hostile regime and a destabilizing force that it has tried to first isolate and then manage."

Now, Ms. Vakil said, the regime might be dismantled and something new and different might emerge. That leadership may turn out to be even less friendly to Washington, particularly if dominated by the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps.

Whoever takes charge, Iran will be badly weakened in the medium term, more inward-looking and focused on political competition, internal security and economic chaos, she said.

In the coming days, however, Iran may spread more short-term chaos as its current leadership tries to bring an end to the war while saving the regime.



ARASH KHAMOOSHI FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

A vigil for Ayatollah Ali Khamenei on Sunday in Tehran. An inward-facing Iran would back away from regional meddling.

Iran will try to rapidly increase the cost for Israel, the United States and its Gulf allies "to force them to back down before this succeeds in destabilizing the regime," said Ellie Geranmayeh, deputy head of the Middle East and North Africa program at the European Council on Foreign Relations.

Increasing its attacks on Arab countries in the Gulf is risky but may be Iran's best chance to shorten the war — since it could prompt the Arab world to pressure the U.S. and Israel to end their campaign.

"Iran's aim now is to absorb U.S. and Israeli attacks, hold its position and signal expansion of war, and wait for worried regional actors to mediate a cease-fire," said Vali Nasr, an Iran expert at the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies in Washington, on social media. "They expect that if Trump does not get a quick win then he will look for an exit, and negotiations afterwards will be different."

Iran's proxies across the Mideast could also come to Iran's defense, increasing the price of an extended war, according to Ali Vaez, Iran project director for the International Crisis Group, a research institution.

"If Hezbollah fully engages from Lebanon, if militias strike U.S. bases in Iraq and Syria, or if the Houthis escalate in the Red Sea, this stops being a bilateral conflict and becomes a region-wide war stretching across the Middle East," Mr. Vaez said. A wider war would have considerable longer-term impact on oil prices and inflation, especially if Iran can shut the Strait of Hormuz, a key international shipping route.

But in the longer term, an Iran that is wrapped up in its own domestic problems — trying to avoid elite fragmentation and consolidate a new leadership or even move toward a more consultative one, with less clerical influence and more power sharing — will not have the energy or the resources to meddle in the region. That could open up new opportunities for Lebanon and the Palestinians, as it has already done for the Syrians.

It leaves Israel ascendant, making it even more of an inescapable fact in the region that the Sunni nations must accommodate. A new and more moderate government could take office in Israel after elections later this year. With Iran defanged, it may feel it has the mandate to build on the cease-fire in Gaza and negotiate seriously with the Palestinians, under pressure from Washington and the Saudis.

Israel itself would prefer regime change, as Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has made clear, but would be content, analysts say, with a divided, broken and chaotic Iran wrapped up in its own problems, like Syria is now.

Presuming there is no revolution, a reconstituted Iranian government must still grapple with a powerful Israel and a United States it cannot trust. The current regime has made nuclear enrichment a key element in its efforts to cement regional power and deterrence. And it has refused to change course, even as that display of persistence seems to have brought it closer to destruction than any other policy, whether that be supporting terrorism abroad or massive repression at home.

It is unclear if even a more moderate government would make new concessions over its nuclear program under the pressure of war. It is also unclear if any Iranian leader would feel able to trust President Trump, who tore up President Obama's nuclear deal in 2018, and now has bombed Iran twice in the middle of ongoing negotiations. Would Tehran deem it necessary to give in on the nuclear issue to survive? Or if a hard-line, more security-dominated government emerges, will it try to race toward a nuclear weapon, more convinced than ever of its need?

Despite the fierce crackdown on Iranian protesters in January that left many thousands dead, President Trump continues to encourage the Iranian people to rise up to overthrow the regime. "Bombs will be dropping everywhere," he said. "When we are finished, take over your government. It will be yours to take."

But it may not go that easily or cleanly, noted Ivo H. Daalder, a former American ambassador to NATO.

In February 1991, during the first gulf war, President George H.W. Bush issued a similar call to the Iraqi people to rise up and oust Saddam Hussein.

"They did," Mr. Daalder noted, "and the U.S. stood by as Saddam's security forces slaughtered them in huge numbers."

**Attack on Iran**

# 3 U.S. Soldiers Die as Iran Strikes Base in Kuwait

By HELENE COOPER and ERIC SCHMITT

WASHINGTON — Iran struck a base housing American troops in Kuwait, killing three U.S. service members, military officials said on Sunday, as the stakes for the United States became immediately clear in its latest war in the Middle East.

The fatalities were the first for the United States since the U.S. and Israeli militaries jointly began attacks in Iran on Saturday. The U.S. military's Central Command said that five service members were "seriously wounded" and several others "sustained minor shrapnel injuries and concussions" in the attack.

The Iranian strikes in Kuwait, at Camp Arifjan, destroyed major portions of an army unit that manages housing for troops in the country, military officials said.

Iranian retaliatory strikes also killed at least nine people in Israel, and four people in other countries in the region. In Iran, the U.S.-Israeli strikes have killed at least 133 civilians and wounded 200 others, according to HRANA, the media agency of an Iranian rights group based in Washington.

For the United States, the grim American toll in the first two days of the war signaled that Iran was more prepared for war than the Trump administration anticipated, U.S. military officials said. Iran has put up a fight, even after its supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, and other top officials were killed in Israeli attacks with intelligence help from the C.I.A.

In the weeks before the war, the United States had assembled its largest military buildup since the Iraq War began in 2003. Since early Saturday, U.S. attack planes launched from bases around the Middle East and from at least one aircraft carrier have carried out hundreds of strikes in Iran.

The supreme leader "was unable to avoid our Intelligence and Highly Sophisticated Tracking Systems and, working closely with Israel, there was not a thing he, or the other leaders that have been killed along with him, could do," Mr. Trump boasted on social media on Saturday.

The Israeli military said on Sunday its airstrikes had destroyed about 200 ballistic missile launchers and rendered dozens more inoperable over the past two days, taking out roughly half of Iran's launcher arsenal.

The strikes have also targeted Iran's central explosives manufacturing site, which supplies materials for missile warheads and other weapons programs, including rockets, U.A.V.s, and cruise missiles.

On Sunday, the United States continued a wave of strikes, particularly targeting Iran's ballistic missile program and the Iranian Navy, a Central Command official said.

> Several other troops sustained shrapnel injuries, officials said.

Air Force B-2 stealth bombers, armed with 2,000-pound bombs, struck Iran's "hardened" ballistic missile sites, Central Command said in a statement on Sunday. "No nation should ever doubt America's resolve."

Central Command said that so far U.S. strikes have hit the Joint Headquarters of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps, its Aerospace Forces Headquarters, Iranian air defense systems, ballistic missile sites, submarines and anti-ship missile sites.

In another statement, Central Command said that U.S. forces struck an Iranian warship during the start of the joint American and Israeli attacks on Iran on Saturday. "The ship is currently sinking to the bottom of the Gulf of Oman," Central Command said on social media. "As the President said, members of Iran's armed forces, IRGC and police 'must lay down your weapons.' Abandon ship."

But Iran's armed forces showed no immediate signs of giving up. Since the U.S. and Israeli military strikes began, Iran has launched hundreds of retaliatory missiles at a wide range of American and Israeli targets in the region. It has also launched strikes at Arab countries it considers allies of the United States, including Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, Jordan, Bahrain, Oman and Kuwait.

In the past, Iran has given warning before launching retaliatory strikes and made known which bases housing U.S. troops it intended to hit. This time, the strikes have been widespread. More than 549 drones, 165 ballistic missiles and two Iranian cruise missiles targeted the United Arab Emirates, the Emirati defense ministry said on Sunday. Most were intercepted but 21 drones struck civilian targets, the ministry said.

U.S. military officials warned on Sunday that the military has been burning through Tomahawk missiles and other munitions.

Gen. Kenneth F. McKenzie Jr., a former leader of Central Command, said it would probably become clear in the next 48 to 72 hours whether Iran could maintain its heavy barrage of retaliatory missile strikes as the U.S. and Israeli militaries targeted Iran's arsenal.

"It's a race," General McKenzie said in an interview.

Not all U.S. missile strikes may have hit their intended military targets.

The Pentagon said on Saturday it was investigating reports of Iranian civilian deaths caused by military strikes inside the country. More than 100 people, probably most of them children, were killed in a strike that hit a girls' elementary school in southern Iran, according to Iranian health officials and state media.

"We are aware of reports concerning civilian harm resulting from ongoing military operations," said Capt. Tim Hawkins, a spokesman for Central Command. "We take these reports seriously and are looking into them. The protection of civilians is of utmost importance, and we will continue to take all precautions available to minimize the risk of unintended harm. Unlike Iran, we have never — and will never — target civilians."

Mr. Trump said in a Truth Social post on Saturday that "heavy and pinpoint bombing" would continue "uninterrupted throughout the week or, as long as necessary to achieve our objective of PEACE THROUGHOUT THE MIDDLE EAST AND, INDEED, THE WORLD!"

A U.S. military official confirmed that U.S. strikes would "continue" but did not say for how long.

Daniel Byman, a professor at Georgetown University's School of Foreign Service, said the United States would find it difficult to sustain large-scale operations at a rapid pace.

Despite the size of the U.S. buildup, it is still small compared with the forces assembled for the 2003 invasion of Iraq and appeared more appropriate for a multiday bombing campaign than a long war, he said.

"The rapid pace of operations requires large numbers of missiles and air assets," said Mr. Byman, who is also the director of the warfare, irregular threats, and terrorism program at the Center for Strategic and International Studies. "Although the United States has deployed a large force to the region, this rapid pace will place a strain on the platforms and the operators."

And it is not at all clear who will control Iran in the coming days.

"The regime still might be able to stay in power, even if the United States and Israel inflict significant damage on the regime's leadership and military forces," Mr. Byman said.

*John Ismay contributed reporting.*

# Carney Heads East to Bolster 'Middle Power' Relations

By MATINA STEVIS-GRIDNEFF and IAN AUSTEN



ADRIAN WYLD/THE CANADIAN PRESS, VIA ASSOCIATED PRESS

Prime Minister Mark Carney of Canada, center left, arriving on Sunday in New Delhi. Mr. Carney is working on improving trade relations outside of traditional deals with the U.S. and Mexico.

Prime Minister Mark Carney of Canada, in a high-profile speech last month, described the Trump era as a rupture for countries like his, and called on global "middle powers" to band together to survive in the tumult of a changing United States.

This week, he is building on his plan to construct a middle-power sphere of trade and deep bonds by visiting India, Australia and Japan.

Accompanied by several ministers and provincial leaders, Mr. Carney wants to seal agreements to sell more oil, gas, and other natural resources abundant in Canada, secure investments and finalize defense deals with key Indo-Pacific countries.

The nine-day trip comes after Mr. Carney's January visit to China, where he struck a limited but important agreement on tariffs, and his middle powers speech in Davos, Switzerland, which was widely praised as a landmark moment in recognizing the impact Mr. Trump's second term is having on the global order.

Mr. Trump's erratic tariff policies, as well as his reconsideration of who the United States' allies are, have thrown Canada and other nations into a costly and confusing limbo. Canada currently enjoys the lowest effective tariff rate with the United States globally, while still seeing some key industries suffer from Mr. Trump's levies on autos, steel, aluminum and lumber.

But Canada also faces a review by this summer of its free-trade agreement with the United States and Mexico, which Mr. Trump is considering abandoning, at least in part.

In response to this volatility and Mr. Trump's suggestions that the United States take over Canada, Mr. Carney was elected to find a new normal in the important relationship, but also to strengthen Canada's links to other economies around the world.

Mr. Carney has traveled relentlessly — more than most Western leaders, a New York Times review shows — to secure investments and build relationships with countries in Europe and in Asia.

## India

Mr. Carney's first stop was in Mumbai, where he landed on Friday to meet business leaders before he headed to New Delhi to meet with Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday.

It's the most important and hardest part of his three-stop tour.

Just over a year ago, Mr. Carney's predecessor, Justin Trudeau, disclosed that Canadian intelligence services and law enforcement believed that Indian diplomats in Canada, under orders from the government in New Delhi, had helped orchestrate political assassinations, extortions and intimidation campaigns targeting Sikhs on Canadian soil.

Three Indian nationals have been charged in the assassination in June 2023 of the Sikh activist leader Hardeep Singh Nijjar in British Columbia — a killing Mr. Trudeau said had been carried out on orders by the Indian government. The case is pending before the courts, and India has denied any involvement.

The two countries nearly suspended diplomatic relations after Mr. Trudeau's 2024 statement, and expelled each other's top diplomats. But after Mr. Carney's election last spring, a thaw began, culminating in this visit.

Canada is home to the world's largest Sikh community outside India, and some advocate for a free Sikh homeland, Khalistan, carved out of India's Punjab region.

Experts point out that Sikhs have diverse views on their relationship to India, and the independence movement is not prominent within India's borders — in part because many Sikhs who were targeted for supporting independence left India over the past few decades and pursue their activism outside its borders. The Indian government views Sikh activism as a terrorist cause, but it has a history of targeting and oppressing the Sikh religious minority.

Sikh nationalists were implicated in Canada's deadliest terrorist act: a 1985 suitcase bombing of Air India Flight 182 from Montreal to India via London that killed all 329 on board. Twenty years later, a judge acquitted two Indian-born Sikh nationalists who lived in Canada of murder charges. A third man had earlier pleaded guilty to manslaughter.

On Wednesday, a senior Canadian official said that the government believed India was no longer orchestrating intimidation and violence in Canada. But Sikh communities have criticized that claim and Mr. Carney's warming up to Mr. Modi, insisting that continued violence targeting Canadian Sikh communities are the work of the government in New Delhi.

Mr. Carney is trying to set all that aside as he seeks to announce important agreements with Mr. Modi, particularly to sell oil and uranium to India, officials said. India is a big potential market for Canadian oil, the vast majority of which currently goes south to the United States.

## Australia and Japan

Mr. Carney's Australia visit is likely to be more like a family reunion. The two countries' bonds run deep (people joke that Canada is "Australia with snow," or that Australia is "Canada with sand") as former British colonies and core Commonwealth members at opposite ends of the world.

Those familial ties also extend to other areas, including a similar federal structure and political system, as well as economic traits, such as important mining sectors.

Mr. Carney, who leads Canada's Liberal Party, enjoys a warm, close relationship with Prime Minister Anthony Albanese of Australia, another centrist leader who, like his Canadian counterpart, heads the center-left Labor Party (confusingly, the Liberals in Australia are actually the country's conservative party).

But some business is on the table in Australia, especially around investment prospects for each nation's well-endowed and mighty pension funds.

Mr. Carney's final stop is Japan, an important defense partner for Canada in the region, and joint pursuit of stability in the Indo-Pacific is likely to be high on the agenda.

Canadian Armed Forces participate in numerous joint exercises and missions alongside Japanese counterparts.

The two countries, which are quintessential "middle powers" and both members of the Group of 7 biggest industrialized economies in the world, have long enjoyed a close relationship. But Mr. Carney is eager to pursue more economic cooperation with Japan, which has also expressed interest in buying more Canadian natural gas.

And while the trip is devised to offer routes away from a dependency on the United States, Canada's relationship with its top trading partner is expected to loom large in Mr. Carney's meetings with leaders this week.

The future of the United States-Canada-Mexico trade agreement is of key interest to Japan, said a Japanese official, who was not authorized to publicly discuss diplomatic matters. Japanese automakers Toyota and Honda are by far the two largest vehicle manufacturers in Canada, and their continued ability to export to the United States from there will be at the top of the agenda in Tokyo.

# Rupture Within NATO? Finland Is Urging Calm.

By STEVEN ERLANGER

MUNICH — Alexander Stubb, fitness buff and decent golfer, looks younger than his 57 years. President of Finland since March 2024, he has tried to be an interlocutor between President Trump and Europe. As a new member of NATO, Finland is still figuring out its place in the alliance. But as a golfer, Mr. Stubb has built an odd but important relationship with an American president who spends an enormous amount of time on his own links.

Mr. Stubb urges calm even as rhetoric has grown high among European and NATO leaders about the failings of the trans-Atlantic relationship under Mr. Trump.

The mood became even more fraught after Mr. Trump's speech at the World Economic Forum in Davos in January, which again pressed his intention to seize Greenland whether Denmark, a NATO ally, liked it or not.

After that speech, Prime Minister Mark Carney of Canada won plaudits when he spoke of "a rupture" in traditional Western relations. For Mr. Stubb, rupture means complete disorder, he said in an interview in February at the Munich Security Conference — and that is a dangerous prospect as the West faces a militarized Russia, a war in Europe and a rising China.

"We don't need to use the bulldozer here," Mr. Stubb said. "The difference between Mark and me is he talks about a rupture and I talk about a transition, because I don't think we should throw the baby out with the bath water."

Yet trying to find a middle way is not easy. Mr. Stubb has found himself publicly at odds with the secretary general of NATO, Mark Rutte, over whether Europe can defend itself without the help of the United States.

At the end of January, in a speech to the European Parliament, Mr. Rutte mocked European leaders who might think they could defend the continent against Russia without the active involvement of the United States.

"If anyone thinks here, again, that the European Union, or Europe as a whole, can defend itself without the U.S., keep on dreaming," he said, adding: "You can't. We can't. We need each other."

Otherwise, European nations would have to spend 10 percent of their national income on the military, Mr. Rutte said.

Mr. Stubb disagrees. While he believes NATO would be greatly weakened should Mr. Trump withdraw from the alliance or even hesitate to meet its obligations, he said Europe could defend itself against Russia on its own.

"Can we defend ourselves? My answer is yes, we can," Mr. Stubb said at Davos. Without the Americans? He answered: "Without the Americans."

Finland, he argues, provides a good example of a whole society engaged in deterrence and defense, with conscription and with exercises between the military, the police, the medical services and the politicians. These are lessons other nations bordering Russia, like Poland, are learning.

At the same time, Mr. Stubb has little time for the cultural criticisms Trump officials have made about Europe heading toward "civilizational erasure," in the words of the White House's National Security Strategy.

And he sharply disagrees with the Trump administration's contempt for multilateral institutions and international law as somehow disadvantaging the United States, the country that led their creation after World War II and dominated them since.

"I still want the United States to be the leader of the global West," Mr. Stubb said. "But of course, ideologically, the current administration will not necessarily take on that task — or it's a different type of leadership," he continued. "Then I have to ask myself the question, 'Can anyone replace the U.S.?' Well, not per se, but the European Union can take a role in defending those values."

That would include European support for a peace in Ukraine that preserves the country's independence and denies Russia a victory. Finland lost territory to the Soviet Union in battle but preserved its own independence and sovereignty. Still, until the collapse of the Soviet Union, Finland had to remain militarily nonaligned and it lost some of its autonomy, a policy that came to be known as "Finlandization." A sovereign, independent Ukraine should not have to face that choice, Mr. Stubb has said.

If Ukrainians "come out of this war with security guarantees from both Europe and the U.S., if they come out of this war with E.U. membership, and if they come out of this war with a big reconstruction package, that would not be bad," he said.

Given his relationship with Mr. Trump, Mr. Stubb has been important to European efforts to persuade him not to force Kyiv to make unreasonable concessions.

Still, Mr. Stubb recognizes, the world has changed, perhaps forever, and Europe is not Washington's priority. Europe comes only third, after the Western Hemisphere and the Indo-Pacific, with the Middle East fourth and Africa fifth, he said.

So Europe, Mr. Stubb said, must do more for its own conventional defense to ensure a more resilient relationship with Washington.

A more varied world order needs institutional reform, however, Mr. Stubb says. He lays out an optimistic, even slightly utopian plan in a new book, "The Triangle of Power: Rebalancing the New World Order."

In his view, the triangle consists of the global West, the global East and the global South. The first is powerful but divided; the second, led by China, is autocratic or dictatorial; the third, with half the world's population but less than a quarter of global income, is rising and pivotal for the future.



SAARA MANSIKKAMAKI FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

President Alexander Stubb and President Trump have golfed.

> If Trump does not always agree with a leader, he listens.

The global South, he argues, "holds the power to decide in which direction the pendulum will swing."

Mr. Stubb wants to preserve a multilateral world of rule-based cooperation, while allowing more agency for the global South.

The institutions of the multilateral world order are weakened but not broken, he said. To strengthen them, more influence should go to so-called "middle powers," like India, Brazil, South Africa and Nigeria, he said, in part by expanding the permanent members of the U.N. Security Council and reducing the power of the veto there.

If Mr. Trump does not always agree with Mr. Stubb, he listens to him, a respectful relationship that developed after they first played golf together a year ago. A former golfer on his college team, Mr. Stubb, who had not played in a while, put on a good show and impressed the U.S. president.

I asked Mr. Stubb once if Mr. Trump, as sometimes alleged, cheats at golf. He laughed and said diplomatically that they were on the same team. He said he was "very positively surprised with the charisma and the charm and the generosity" of Mr. Trump, who like most people, he said, could have a different persona in private than in public.

Europe, he said, should "work with the United States where we can — for me, that is NATO, defense, minerals, icebreakers, tech — and then agree to disagree on climate change, on international institutions, rules and norms."

Then he quickly added: "But don't get too emotional about it. Be cool, calm and collected."



TYLER HICKS/THE NEW YORK TIMES

Vuhledar, Ukraine. Mr. Stubb has played a role in efforts to persuade Mr. Trump not to force Kyiv to make undue concessions.

N

National

The New York Times

# Immigrants in Detention Struggle to Observe Lent and Ramadan

## *Some Religious Groups Have Sued for Access To Services at Facilities*

By RUTH GRAHAM

As the Trump administration has dramatically increased the number of people held in federal immigration detention facilities, detainees' access to medical care, sufficient food, basic hygiene and legal counsel have all come under scrutiny.

But the past couple of weeks have also shed light on another basic necessity that advocates say detainees are being deprived of — the ability to worship. Their concerns have intensified as two major seasons, Lent and Ramadan, began for Christians and Muslims.

To gain access, some religious groups have sued the Department of Homeland Security. Others, like the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, have called out the lack of access in statements condemning the immigration enforcement tactics of the Trump administration.

In some cases, that pressure has been successful. In others, however, it has left detainees — there are currently close to 70,000, the majority being Christians — with little or no access to religious services at a time of year central to their faiths.

"It feels like there's a hypocrisy in an administration or a party that has regularly advocated for things like posting the Ten Commandments in public spaces, but denied people the actual practice of their faith," said Father Brendan Busse, a priest at Dolores Mission Church in Los Angeles, who was denied access to a detention facility on Ash Wednesday.

In Minnesota, several Protestant groups and a Roman Catholic priest sued the Department of Homeland Security last week, saying they had been blocked from providing spiritual care to detainees at the Whipple Federal Building, which the suit notes was named for a 19th-century Episcopal bishop who was an "advocate for the dignity and rights of noncitizens." The suit frames the obstruction as an unconstitutional violation of the plaintiffs' rights to practice their religion by being denied the right to offer pastoral care.

It took a lawsuit for Roman Catholic clergy to gain access on Ash Wednesday to an ICE facility in Broadview, Ill. A Roman Catholic advocacy group, the Coalition for Spiritual and Public Leadership, had filed a suit against the Trump administration last year, saying that its members had been illegally prevented from providing pastoral care at the facility.

In his ruling on Feb. 12, the judge, Robert W. Gettleman, noted that the detention center had allowed the group to visit detainees consistently for years before changing course only recently. He cited the group's claim that being prevented from offering "spiritual consolation to those most in need of it" caused "irreparable injury," and denied religious freedom not just to detainees but those who minister to them.

Clergy members entered the facility on Feb. 18 to administer Communion to detainees and applied a cross of ashes on their foreheads, a traditional sign of penitence.

That evening, more than 3,000 people attended an outdoor, bilingual Ash Wednesday service at a parish nearby, hosted by the Coalition for Spiritual and Public Leadership and celebrated by Cardinal Blase Cupich of Chicago. The cardinal addressed immigrants in particular in his homily. "Your worth does not come from a visa or a permit," he said. "It comes from the breath of God inside you."

At other facilities across the country, Ash Wednesday became an opportunity to make visible the spiritual needs of people held in detention. Cardinal Joseph Tobin of Newark celebrated an Ash Wednesday Mass for detainees at the Delaney Hall ICE facility in Newark.

"It's important for the church to be part of this place, out of respect for the dignity of those women and men," he told reporters as he exited.

In Los Angeles, clergy formally requested access to bring ashes and provide pastoral care to people detained at the Edward R. Roybal Federal Building on Ash Wednesday. When that access was not granted, they held a prayer service outside.



TODD HEISLER/THE NEW YORK TIMES

Father Fabian Arias distributing ashes last week outside 26 Federal Plaza in Manhattan, an immigrant detention site.



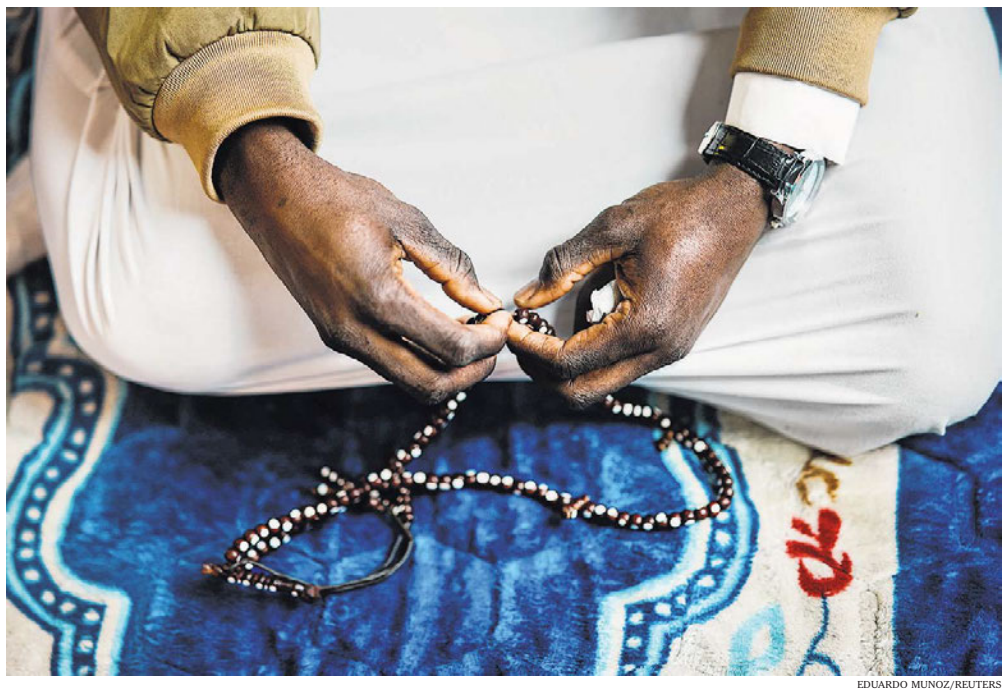
ALEX WELSH FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Father Brendan Busse, a pastor at a Los Angeles church, was denied access to a detention site on Ash Wednesday.



HEATHER SCHLITZ/REUTERS

Cardinal Blase Cupich, the archbishop of Chicago, after a Mass on Ash Wednesday in honor of immigrants.



EDUARDO MUNOZ/REUTERS

A Muslim worshiper in Times Square last month performing extra nightly prayers called taraweeh for Ramadan.

Father Busse compared the lack of access to spiritual care to the denial of medical care in emergencies. "Not allowing the minister access to their flocks, to their communities, to their parishioners and friends, you're doing similar harm," he said.

A spokesperson for ICE did not respond to a request for comment.

About 68,000 people are being held in immigration detention centers, compared with about 40,000 people a year ago, according to ICE. Some detainees, including families with children, are held at the centers for months at a time.

ICE's own standards require that detainees must be permitted to participate in religious practices, as long as they don't disrupt the "safety, security and orderly operation of the facility." Detainees requesting a special diet for religious purposes must be accommodated if possible, with the expectation that requests will be granted "unless an articulable reason exists to disqualify someone."

In practice, access varies widely.

In Texas, advocates for Muslim detainees say that most do not have access to Muslim chaplains, in part because of a broader shortage. But the fast growth of the number of people in detention has brought an urgency to that deficit.

The monthlong observance of Ramadan, which began in mid-February, requires special meal schedules, including a meal right before dawn to begin fasting, and another meal at sunset to break the fast.

"I just listen to people crying, crying all the time," said Shaimaa Zayan, operations manager of CAIR-Austin, referring to conversations she has had with people in detention and their families. CAIR is a Muslim advocacy group that also works with Muslim inmates in jails and prisons.

CAIR estimates that about 5 percent of detainees in Texas are Muslim. Ms. Zayan said she was not aware of any Muslim chaplains serving in the state's more than 20 federal detention facilities.

That means they are relying on Christian chaplains and those from other faiths to facilitate their access to halal foods and other religious needs. Those chaplains serve with good intentions, Ms. Zayan said, but sometimes lack the training and time to fully ensure Muslim detainees are able to practice their faith. She said she has heard about detainees giving away their daily portions of meat, since they were not sure it was halal, leaving them without enough calories to stay healthy.

The problem can be further complicated by the fact that many advocates for Muslim detainees are immigrants themselves. Ms. Zayan, who is a U.S. citizen, said she has been advised by immigration lawyers to not visit a detention center without her own immigration lawyer accompanying her, because she wears a hijab and is "not perceived as Christian white."

In Texas, anxieties are also higher because of escalating rhetoric against the state's growing Muslim population by Republican officials and candidates. Gov. Greg Abbott recently declared CAIR a foreign terrorist organization.

The overwhelming majority of immigrants without legal status or with only temporary legal protection in the United States are Christians, according to a report last year produced by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops and several evangelical institutions, including the humanitarian group World Relief.

Just over 60 percent are Roman Catholic, 13 percent are evangelicals, and other Christians and other religious groups represent 7 percent each. The report found that 8 percent of Christians in the United States share a household with someone at risk of deportation, or are at risk themselves.

Roman Catholics, including many priests and bishops, have pushed back against federal immigration tactics. At their annual conference last fall, bishops in the United States mentioned access to pastoral care in detention centers in a statement rebuking the Trump administration's deportation campaign.

"The thought of holding thousands of families in massive warehouses should challenge the conscience of every American," the chairman of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' committee on migration, Bishop Brendan Cahill of Victoria, Texas, said in a statement on Feb. 20, responding to the Trump administration's plans to dramatically expand its detention capacity.

The statement called the moment "a moral inflection point for our country" and compared the scale of the plans to the internment camps used to incarcerate Japanese Americans during World War II.

# What Are Federal Agents Permitted to Do on University Campuses?

By JONAH E. BROMWICH

A Columbia University undergraduate last week was arrested by federal immigration agents who falsely told the superintendent of a university-owned apartment building that they were the police and that they were searching for a missing child.

The student, Ellie Aghayeva, was released after Mayor Zohran Mamdani met with President Trump and asked that her case be dismissed. But the episode has raised questions about whether the agents' actions were legal and, more generally, what immigration agents are permitted to do on college campuses.

Federal agents do not have any special privileges on campuses. While certain parts of campuses are considered public property, many are considered private. Agents need federal judicial warrants to search private property, meaning a judge would have to be convinced that there was probable cause that a crime was being or had been committed. Illegal immigration, per se, is not a crime; it is a civil violation of the law.

The Department of Homeland Security, asked for comment about its understanding of its role on campus, sent a previous statement about Ms. Aghayeva. It said that the United States was still seeking to deport her and that she had been released to wait for her hearing.

Here's what you need to know about what happened:

### What happened at Columbia last week?

Shortly after 6 a.m. on Thursday, five federal immigration agents were let into a university-owned apartment building by the building's superintendent. They gained entry by posing as police officers searching for a missing child. They had no warrant.

They entered Ms. Aghayeva's apartment holding posters for the fictional missing child. Despite a public security officer's protest that they had no warrant, they took her.

The university's president, Claire Shipman, said that the episode was "utterly unacceptable."

The Department of Homeland Security said its officers "verbally identified themselves and wore badges around their necks." It said it arrested Ms. Aghayeva because her "student visa was terminated in 2016 under the Obama administration for failing to attend classes."

### Do immigration agents need to identify themselves fully?

In 2005, the acting director of ICE, John Torres, issued a memo officially endorsing the use of ruses, including "adopting the guise of another agency." When doing so, the memo said, immigration agents should contact the local agency in question. Agents have also posed as delivery people or used fake photos to suggest they are involved in a fictional investigation.

It is unclear whether the immigration agents on Thursday identified themselves as New York City police officers or merely as "the police."

If they said they were New York City police officers, it would have required them to contact the N.Y.P.D., which a spokeswoman for the Police Department said they did not do.

But if they said they were the police, they would not have been required to seek permission.

Judges have not weighed in directly on whether such tactics are permissible, or what might cause them to run afoul of the constitution. In a Columbia Law Review article in 2022, Min Kam wrote that two U.S. appeals courts had adopted a rule in which the ruse would be a categorical violation of the Fourth Amendment, which prohibits unreasonable searches and seizures.

That law is not binding in New York, and any challenge to the ruse would have to be evaluated again by a judge.

### What tactics are immigration agents permitted to use?

In the past, the law has been understood to be fairly straightforward. Agents would usually need to obtain federal judicial warrants to conduct arrests on private property. Exceptions can be made in what are known as "exigent circumstances" — a legal term that often means a warrantless arrest is necessary, either to prevent a suspect from fleeing or someone else from being harmed.

During the Trump administration, immigration agents have sought to circumvent that requirement.

In May 2025, Todd Lyons, the acting leader of ICE, drafted a memo telling agents that they could enter homes on the basis of an administrative warrant, according to a whistle-blower complaint released in January. Also, federal agents were told they had broader power to make warrantless arrests than previously understood.

The first policy is being challenged in court. In January, a group of Latino organizations in the Massachusetts area filed a lawsuit against the Homeland Security Department, writing that Mr. Lyons's May memo "established an official policy that is unlawful and unconstitutional."

The federal judiciary is increasingly looking askance at the Trump administration's immigration practices more generally, with more and more judges accusing the government of willful violations of law.

"The Trump administration is acting as if the First Amendment, the Fourth Amendment and the Fifth Amendment do not apply to non-U.S. citizens and that is just not true," said Elora Mukherjee, an immigration lawyer who teaches at Columbia's law school.

# F.B.I. Is Investigating Bar Shooting in Texas For Links to Terrorism

*This article is by **Pooja Salhotra**, **Sonia A. Rao**, **Chelsia Rose Marcius** and **Ramón Ramirez**.*

AUSTIN, Texas — A shooting that killed two people and injured 14 others at a downtown Austin bar popular with University of Texas students rocked the Texas capital early Sunday morning and is being investigated by the F.B.I. as a potential act of terrorism.

Gunfire broke out shortly before 2 a.m. on Sunday after a gunman who was driving a large S.U.V. passed in front of the bar, Buford's, and opened fire from his vehicle. The bullets struck patrons outside of the bar and on its patio, local officials said at a Sunday news conference.

The shooter then drove to a nearby street, parked and left his car, and began shooting at passers-by with a rifle, the authorities said. He walked toward an intersection, where he was shot and killed by the police.

***Two were killed and 14 injured in gunfire just before 2 a.m.***

The authorities have not released the name of the gunman, but a law enforcement official with knowledge of the investigation, who spoke on the condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to speak publicly, identified the shooter as Ndiaga Diagne, a 53-year-old man who was a naturalized American citizen from Senegal.

Public records indicate that Mr. Diagne previously resided in New York City. He lived about 30 miles north of Austin at the time of the shooting, records show. When he carried out his attack, Mr. Diagne wore a sweatshirt emblazoned with the words "Property of Allah," and a Quran was recovered from his vehicle, the official said.

Alex Doran, acting special agent in charge at the F.B.I.'s San Antonio field office, which is assisting with the investigation, said it was too early to determine an exact motive, but certain "indicators on the subject and in his vehicle" pointed to a "potential nexus to terrorism." The F.B.I.'s Joint Terrorism Task Force is involved in the investigation, he said.

Heightened tensions and security concerns have emerged across the country after attacks on Iran by the United States and Israel, and subsequent retaliation by Iran, over the weekend.

Gov. Greg Abbott of Texas issued a warning in a statement on Sunday: "To anyone who thinks about using the current conflict in the Middle East to threaten Texans or our critical infrastructure, understand this clearly: Texas will respond with decisive and overwhelming force to protect our state."

The governor also said that he had directed the Texas Military Department on Saturday to activate patrols to protect infrastructure, including energy facilities and ports. Following the shooting, he said, he directed the Department of Public Safety to increase patrols in downtown Austin. "This act of violence will not define us, nor will it shake the resolve of Texans," he said.

Around midday Sunday, authorities descended on a suburban Travis County neighborhood outside of Pflugerville, about 30 miles north of the shooting, where the shooter had a known address.

A neighbor described a swarm of vehicles, including some from the Austin Police Department and the F.B.I., and said a SWAT team had breached Mr. Diagne's home to execute a search warrant.

Neighbors said Mr. Diagne had kept a low profile. "They kept very much to themselves," said Chris Finch, who resides next door. "They didn't really say hi or anything."

Eddie Garcia, a board member of the area's homeowners association, said he had never interacted with the person in that home, but that he had always seen multiple cars in the driveway.

Mr. Finch said that he had noticed the same thing.

*Georgia Gee contributed research.*




PHOTOGRAPHS BY JACK MYER/ASSOCIATED PRESS

The local police and the F.B.I. were investigating a deadly shooting at Buford's on 6th Street in Austin, Texas, on Sunday.

On Sunday, public safety officials credited their rapid response for interrupting the shooting spree before more people were killed.

Karan Bhakta, 21, a senior at the University of Texas at Austin, was enjoying a night out with his friends at Buford's when he heard what he described as a "pop." Several more followed, he said, so he grabbed hold of his friends and they all fell to the ground. When he stood up, he said, "it was just panic," with patrons fleeing to find safety.

Mr. Bhakta said he felt a warm stream of blood gushing down his face and realized he had been injured. He then moved behind the bar, where a bartender handed him napkins to press onto his head wound. For several minutes, he said, "it was just napkins getting sopping wet."

An audio recording, which was taken by a New York Times reporter who happened to be at the bar interviewing someone for an unrelated article, captured what happened.

In the recording, the rapid pop of gunfire rings out, the ambient noise stops, and a shift in the crowd, from confusion to urgency, can be heard. Friends shout out to one another, and voices ask what happened. Minutes later, there is a second volley of shots, immediately followed by running and shouting.

After the gunman was killed, EMS tended to the injured and told Mr. Bhakta that he had a bullet wound that had grazed his scalp and a cut on his forehead. Although the injuries were relatively minor, he was transported to a nearby hospital anyway, where he said he met another victim who had been shot in the arm.

Speaking by phone Sunday afternoon, Mr. Bhakta said he was still in shock. He was also angry about the easy access to guns in America, even though he said he grew up in the Texas Panhandle and was not inherently opposed to gun ownership.

"It can't just stay like this," he said.

Three people, including the shooter, were pronounced dead at the scene.

"This is a really tough, tough time for the city of Austin," Lisa Davis, the city's police chief, said at the news conference on Sunday morning.

"There are families right now that are unfortunately identifying their loved ones," she said. "We have families that are at hospital rooms waiting for outcomes from surgery."

Chief Davis said that the shooting had occurred in an area regularly patrolled by police and medical personnel on weekends, which had allowed them to respond quickly.

Fourteen people were taken to the hospital, three were in critical condition. Five victims were treated at St. David's Medical Center and had been discharged by Sunday afternoon, according to a statement from St. David's HealthCare. Two other victims were at St. David's South Austin Medical Center and in good condition, the statement added.

The status of the other victims was not clear. Mr. Bhakta said that he and at least one other person injured in the shooting were taken to Ascension Seton Medical Center. The hospital did not return requests for comment on Sunday.

No victims had been identified by authorities on Sunday.

Buford's is a popular nightlife destination about a mile away from the University of Texas at Austin, and it is often frequented by college-aged patrons. Jim Davis, the president of the University of Texas at Austin, sent a message to faculty on Sunday saying that people at the school were among those affected.

"My heart goes out to their families, friends, classmates, professors and loved ones," he said, adding that counselors at the university have been communicating with families and students, and visiting those injured at hospitals.

Zohaib Qadri, an Austin council member who represents the district where the shooting happened, said the added layer of federal officials investigating it as an act of terrorism has caused further unease in the community.

"A lot of folks' sense of safety is shaken," he said.

# A Nostalgic Young Audience Rediscovers a Lower-Tech Pleasure: The iPod

*From Page A1*

leased. Like digital cameras and other technology that defined the early 2000s, it has benefited from young music listeners' nostalgia for a time when they were infants or toddlers, and when lives were — by today's standards — more analog.

That has given the device a new lease in pop culture. Last year, for example, the TikTok star turned pop musician Addison Rae promoted her new single, "Headphones On," through videos showing off a silver third-generation iPod Nano and offering fans an opportunity to win that iPod.

In an interview with GQ published in April, the rapper Nettspend included his iPod Nano in the 10 things he couldn't live without. His playlist for the apocalypse, he said, included the hip-hop group Babyfather, the rapper Yung Lean, Willie Nelson and "maybe Mazzy Star."

Last year, searches for "ipod" on eBay grew more than 8 percent from 2024, and the number of listings for some versions of the device increased about 30 percent, according to data from eBay. In 2025, some generations of the iPod sold at an average price 60 percent higher than in 2023, with some sellers asking for nearly $600 for a refurbished iPod.

Apple introduced the iPod, a digital music player that eventually upended consumer electronics and the music industry, in 2001. Its predecessors could store a few dozen songs; the first iPod, which had a steel frame, a white face and a tactile wheel, could store 1,000 songs. It cost $399.

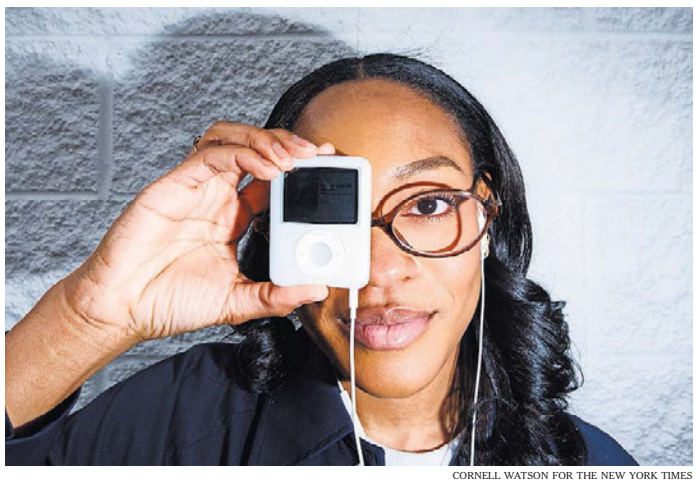
Over the next two decades, Apple released more than 20 versions of the iPod, with some capable of storing tens of thousands of songs and others costing as little as $49. The company eventually pulled back on the device as it focused on the iPhone. As of 2022, the iPod's final year, Apple had sold an estimated 450 million.

Apple declined to comment.

The resurgence of the iPod is a sign that "people want digital that's not connected, but not necessarily analog," said Tony Fadell, a former Apple executive who helped create the iPod. If the choice is "1,000 songs in my pocket, or unlimited songs in my pocket and 1,000 notifications every hour," people don't want the latter, he added.

"Apple should just bring them back — not the same way," Mr. Fadell said. "I would do it differently. I would make it modern for the modern age."

Mr. Fadell said he had made several designs for how an iPod might look or work in 2026. He declined to share more details but said, "You would not have the connection unless you really wanted it."



CORNELL WATSON FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES



CORNELL WATSON FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES



ZACK WITTMAN FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Angeline Richard, top left, bought a silver, third-generation iPod Nano from eBay for about $40. Ms. Richard listening to her iPod while holding a stack of CDs, another relic of early digital days, above left. Natalie Gamez bought her 5.5-generation iPod Classic about four years ago. "It really helped for escapism," she said.

Some young people want to disconnect. In a 2023 survey, 38 percent of U.S. teenagers said they spent too much time on their smartphone, and 36 percent said they had cut back on their smartphone use, according to the Pew Research Center.

"We have so many devices that do everything," Elizabeth Hernandez, 22, said. "A lot of the time, that gets overwhelming."

But the iPod is "one thing that has one purpose," Ms. Hernandez said. She has a pink fourth-generation iPod Nano for her favorite songs at the moment and a silver seventh-generation iPod Classic that she downloaded all of her CDs onto. Now when she discovers new artists, like the pop band After, she listens to their albums in full, rather than skipping from song to song.

***'I find this modern even though it's really old,' an 18-year-old college student says.***

"I feel a lot more focused, a lot more plugged into what I'm doing," said Ms. Hernandez, a senior at Eastern Washington University in Spokane. "I am disconnected from social media, but I feel more connected with myself," she added.

Other young people have been attracted to the aesthetics of the iPod. Maxime Irlinger, a first-year university student in Montpellier, France, has about 20,000 followers on TikTok and was offered a gift last year from Rakufun, a Japanese shopping app. He hadn't known that Apple made iPods with both clips and touch-screens, but then he chose the sixth-generation iPod Nano.

"I find this modern even though it's really old," Mr. Irlinger, 18, said. "I knew it, but I didn't know it was that cool," he added.

A video in which Mr. Irlinger clips his blue iPod onto his jeans, then shows it displaying the covers of albums by Charli XCX, Björk and the pop singer beabadoobee, is the most viewed on his account. But beyond being "a spicy touch for your outfit," Mr. Irlinger said, the iPod is "a new way to experience music" so "we don't depend on algorithms."

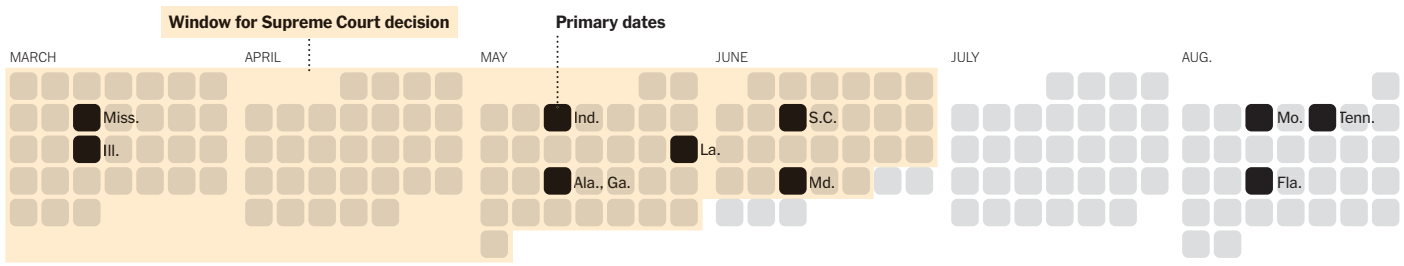
Natalie Gamez, 26, bought her blue 5.5-generation iPod Classic about four years ago. Photos and videos of other people using the device inspired the purchase, as well as her desire to use streaming services less.

The time away from her phone — and with music by Beyoncé, Boyz II Men and artists she had loved in high school but forgotten about — helped her mental health and was like "healing your inner child," Ms. Gamez said.

"Growing up, we'd listen to music, either on CD players or other MP3 players," said Ms. Gamez, a certified nursing assistant in Lakeland, Fla. "It really helped for escapism. I feel like phones are not that anymore, with everything going on, with notifications, with social media. I feel like the iPods give us that back."

So she gave her siblings, Emily, 13, and Clay, 15, iPods to reduce their screen time, too. Emily's green third-generation iPod Nano was a hit at school after her district banned phones. She showed it to her friends, who were wowed by the ability to listen to all of their music on the device. Last year, three of her friends were given iPods for their birthdays or Christmas.

Emily said she liked her iPod more than her phone. Her reason was simple: "It's just like, it's older and it's not something new. It's different."




# Decision on Voting Rights Act Could Affect Midterms

*This article is by* ***Nick Corasaniti, Ashley Wu*** *and* ***Elena Shao****.*

A looming Supreme Court decision on a critical provision of the Voting Rights Act could shift the long-term balance of power in the House toward Republicans. But how significantly it could affect this year's midterm elections depends heavily on one variable: when the court rules.

The provision, Section 2, prohibits election or voting practices that discriminate on the basis of race. That guidance has led to the creation of majority-minority districts that are meant to help voters of color elect candidates of their choice.

If the court fully struck down the provision, Republican-led states across the South could try to eliminate those districts, many of which are occupied by Democrats. This would take the national redistricting war that started in Texas last year to an entirely new level.

Some states might seek to quickly redraw their congressional maps before the November midterms. The states most likely to do this have at least one protected district and one party in full control of state government.

How the court rules will, of course, also determine the political impact. If the court upholds Section 2, as it did in a 2023 decision finding that Alabama had unlawfully diluted Black voters' power in drawing its voting map, there could be minimal effects.

During oral arguments, several justices appeared skeptical of keeping the status quo and open to further limiting the role race can play in drawing voting maps. But the court could choose a middle road, issuing a nuanced, narrow decision with an unpredictable impact.

Should the justices strike down Section 2, the clearest way to assess the midterm effect is to look at the primary calendar. If the decision comes after a state has started its primary election and voters have begun to cast their ballots, it will be next to impossible for that state to change its map.

Most states offer early voting periods during which voters may cast a ballot either through the mail or in person. Once those early votes have been cast, the election has begun, making it effectively impossible to throw out a state's map and draw a new one.

States also have clear filing deadlines for candidates to be placed on ballots, and those deadlines often fall months before a primary election. Once filing deadlines have passed, they are difficult to work around.

But legislatures do have the ability to change these deadlines — and they can even move primary dates, as many did in 2020 during the coronavirus pandemic. In an era of partisan redistricting efforts, nothing appears to be off limits.

The Supreme Court normally issues major rulings by late June or early July, but the opinion could come any time before then. The midterm primary calendar stretches from March, when states like Texas and North Carolina vote first, to mid-September, when Delaware holds the final intraparty contest.

If the Supreme Court struck down Section 2 in the coming weeks, before most states have held their primary contests, Democrats would be in danger of losing roughly a dozen majority-minority districts across the South, according to an analysis by The New York Times.

If the court were to strike down the provision at the end of its term, the immediate political impact would be more limited. Only a few states with late-summer primaries would be able to draw new maps, and even then, they would face logistical hurdles.

Not every state with majority-minority districts would be able to redraw its map for partisan reasons. Many states have separate commissions draw their maps, taking the power out of the hands of politically minded legislators. These states include California, Ohio, Michigan, New York, New Jersey, Colorado and Arizona.

If such states wanted to redraw their maps, they would probably need to follow the path that California went down last year, making a constitutional amendment and putting it before voters. Some states require a waiting period for that process, which would rule out any 2026 effect.

Other states face simple political realities like split governments. For example, while Nevada's House map is already significantly gerrymandered in Democrats' favor, the state has a Republican governor and a Democratic-controlled Legislature, so redrawing its map is a political impossibility.

Additionally, a ruling striking down Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act would not guarantee that states could redraw their maps with abandon. Constitutional protections like the 14th Amendment still remain, and they have continued to be cited in gerrymandering litigation.

But in such a partisan atmosphere, any Supreme Court ruling that weakens protections against redistricting could be used as a political impetus by state legislatures to draw new maps.

States where legislators have rejected such moves are not prohibited from trying again, and a new Supreme Court decision could provide political cover or motivation to revisit the issue.

*Taylor Robinson contributed reporting.*

## Primary Voting Dates for All States

States that could redistrict if Section 2 is struck down

| | Party in control | Early voting begins | Primary date |
|---|---|---|---|
| Miss. | R | Jan. 26 | March 10 |
| Ill. | D | Feb. 5 | March 17 |
| Ind. | R | April 7 | May 5 |
| La. | R | May 2 | May 16 |
| Ala. | R | March 25 | May 19 |
| Ga. | R | April 27 | May 19 |
| S.C. | R | May 26 | June 9 |
| Md. | D | June 11 | June 23 |
| Mo. | R | July 21 | Aug 4 |
| Tenn. | R | July 17 | Aug 6 |
| Fla. | R | Aug. 8 | Aug 18 |
| Ark. | R | Feb. 16 | March 3 |
| N.C. | — | Feb. 12 | March 3 |
| Texas | R | Feb. 17 | March 3 |
| Ohio | R | Apr. 7 | May 5 |
| Neb. | R | Apr. 13 | May 12 |
| W.Va. | R | Apr. 29 | May 12 |
| Idaho | R | Apr. 27 | May 19 |
| Ky. | — | May 6 | May 19 |
| Ore. | D | Apr. 29 | May 19 |
| Pa. | — | March 30 | May 19 |
| Calif. | D | May 4 | June 2 |
| Iowa | R | May 13 | June 2 |
| Mont. | R | May 4 | June 2 |
| N.J. | D | May 26 | June 2 |
| N.M. | D | May 5 | June 2 |
| S.D. | R | Apr. 17 | June 2 |
| Me. | D | May 11 | June 9 |
| Nev. | — | May 23 | June 9 |
| N.D. | R | May 26 | June 9 |
| Okla. | R | June 11 | June 16 |
| N.Y. | D | June 13 | June 23 |
| Utah | R | June 9 | June 23 |
| Colo. | D | June 22 | June 30 |
| Ariz. | — | June 24 | July 21 |
| Kan. | — | July 15 | Aug. 4 |
| Mich. | — | July 6 | Aug. 4 |
| Va. | D | June 18 | Aug. 4 |
| Wash. | D | July 17 | Aug. 4 |
| Hawaii | D | July 27 | Aug. 8 |
| Conn. | D | Aug. 3 | Aug. 11 |
| Minn. | — | June 26 | Aug. 11 |
| Vt. | — | June 27 | Aug. 11 |
| Wis. | — | July 28 | Aug. 11 |
| Alaska | — | Aug. 3 | Aug. 18 |
| Wyo. | R | July 21 | Aug. 18 |
| Mass. | D | Aug. 22 | Sept. 1 |
| N.H. | R | Sept. 7 | Sept. 8 |
| R.I. | D | Aug. 19 | Sept. 8 |
| Del. | D | Sept. 2 | Sept. 15 |

Notes: Data is as of Feb. 28. The last scheduled day of the Supreme Court term is June 25, but decisions could come a few days after. If a state does not offer early voting, the start dates of mail-in or in-person absentee voting are shown. Early or absentee voting start dates are only shown if they have not yet passed. If a state has multiple start dates for early or absentee voting, the earliest date is shown. Source: State election websites.

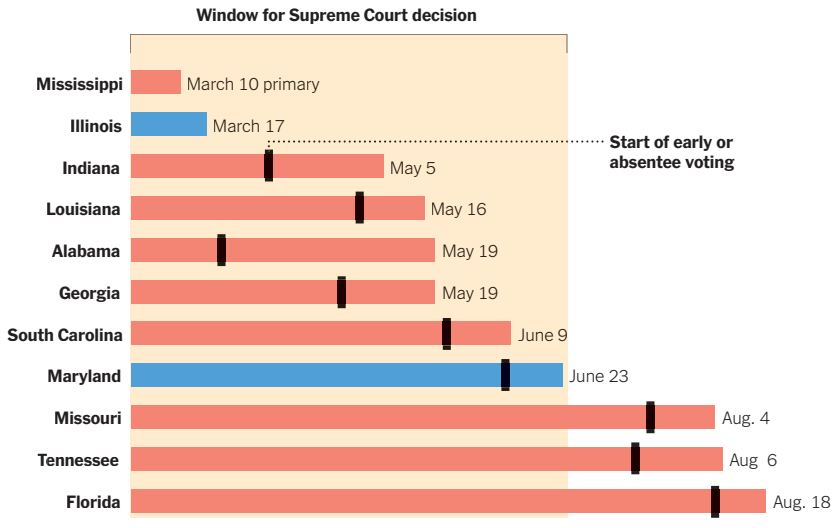
**Notes on certain states:** In **Alabama**, absentee voting will begin on March 25 for people who meet certain criteria. Early voting dates in **Illinois** vary by county, but the earliest date is Feb. 5. In **Kentucky**, absentee voting will begin on May 6 for people who meet certain criteria. In **Michigan**, optional early voting can begin as early as July 6. **New Hampshire** does not offer early voting, but absentee ballots will be accepted starting Sept. 7. Only some counties in **North Dakota** offer early voting. In **Oregon**, April 29 is the first day ballots will be mailed to voters. Absentee and mail ballots are available in **Pennsylvania** as early as 50 days before its primary, though some counties' ballots may be delayed by legal challenges or other factors. In **Vermont**, June 27 is the earliest day ballots will be permitted to be mailed to voters.

THE NEW YORK TIMES

## Redistricting Effort Would Need to Occur Before Early Voting Begins

These states with opportunities to attempt redistricting if the Supreme Court strikes down Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act

Republican-controlled  Democrat-controlled




# Judge Approves Award by Jury That Poses Risk To Greenpeace

**By KAREN ZRAICK**

A North Dakota judge finalized a potentially fatal verdict against Greenpeace on Friday, affirming a $345 million jury award against the environmental group that Greenpeace has said may force it into bankruptcy in the United States.

The verdict was reached last year after a bruising trial brought by the pipeline company Energy Transfer over Greenpeace's role in protests against the Dakota Access Pipeline, an 1,172-mile pipeline that carries oil from North Dakota to Illinois.

Energy Transfer claimed that Greenpeace had played a major role in the protests a decade ago, forcing construction delays and costing the company money. Greenpeace has said that the lawsuit, which was argued last year in state court in Mandan, N.D., was baseless and designed to silence it, and that the verdict undermined free-speech rights in the United States.

"Speaking out against corporations that cause environmental harm should never be deemed unlawful," said Marco Simons, interim general counsel at Greenpeace USA and Greenpeace Fund. "This is a setback, but the movement to defend people and the planet has always faced setbacks and resistance, and Energy Transfer will fail in its goal of silencing its critics."

Greenpeace said it would seek a new trial and, if necessary, file an appeal to the North Dakota Supreme Court.

Energy Transfer did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

The judge in the case, James Gion, had previously cut the jury award nearly in half, from roughly $670 million to about $345 million, split among three different Greenpeace entities.

On Tuesday, Judge Gion noted in court filings that the Greenpeace groups — two based in the United States and one in the Netherlands — had asked him to overturn or at least further reduce the verdict, which was much larger than expected. But he said he did not find reason to do so.

Judge Gion wrote that the jury had heard evidence from both sides about the claims, which included defamation, conspiracy, trespass and interference with business operations.

The lawyers for Energy Transfer had argued that Greenpeace played a key role in galvanizing the raucous protests, which drew tens of thousands of people to a remote area near the Standing Rock Sioux Reservation in 2016 and 2017.

Greenpeace countered that it had played only a supporting role in nonviolent protests led by Native American groups. The Standing Rock Sioux Tribe maintains that the pipeline is a danger to its sole source of drinking water.

Greenpeace has said the verdict was a threat to First Amendment rights. The group called the suit, first filed in federal court in 2017, a "strategic lawsuit against public participation," or a SLAPP suit. That's a term for complaints filed by powerful individuals or organizations aimed at shutting down critics by raising the risk of long, expensive court battles. Many states have anti-SLAPP laws that make it difficult to pursue such cases, though not North Dakota.

Martin Garbus, a veteran free-speech lawyer who was among a group of legal observers who attended the trial, said he feared the North Dakota case would eventually make its way to the Supreme Court, where he predicted Greenpeace would lose. The justices "will use the case to murder the First Amendment," he said.

Many European countries also have anti-SLAPP statutes. That has allowed Greenpeace International (which is based in the Netherlands, and is one of the three Greenpeace organizations that are defendants in the case) to bring a countersuit against Energy Transfer in an Amsterdam court.

Greenpeace International has maintained that its only involvement in the pipeline protests was signing a letter to banks expressing its opposition, a document that was signed by hundreds of groups and that had been drafted by a Dutch organization. The Dutch case is expected to be an early test of a new European Union directive that sets out stringent goals for reining in SLAPP-style lawsuits.

Energy Transfer has asked the North Dakota Supreme Court to issue an injunction to block the Dutch suit. That's an extraordinary request, as it would be a state-level court in the United States taking action to block a court case in another country, being conducted under that nation's laws. The cases remain pending in both courts.

The Standing Rock Sioux Tribe's fight to stop the pipeline, which has been operating since 2017, continues at the U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit.

# Student Remains in Honduras After ICE Vows to Deport Her Again

**By MATTATHIAS SCHWARTZ**

A 20-year-old freshman at Babson College in Massachusetts said she would remain in Honduras on Friday, the deadline that a judge had given the Trump administration for facilitating her return to the United States after it violated a court order by mistakenly deporting her.

The government had arranged for a plane on Friday that would have brought the student, Any Lucia López Belloza, back to the United States. But her lawyers said she chose not to board, believing that she would be immediately detained on arrival and deported again. They pointed to a Thursday court filing by the Justice Department noting "ICE's intent to effectuate" her "final order of removal after she is returned."

In a tearful video call on Friday with journalists, Ms. López said a representative from Immigration and Customs Enforcement had tried to persuade her to return to the United States by wrongly suggesting that she was likely to be set free upon her return.

"An officer told me again and again that I will be released once I landed in the United States," she said.

"She asked if she would be freed upon arrival or if she would be detained again," said Ivonne Rodriguez, a spokeswoman for the immigration advocacy group FWD.us, who said she joined a call with Ms. López and the ICE employee. "He said very likely you will be freed, and that the only way to know for sure is to get on the plane."

Her legal team said she would continue to fight in court for her permanent return to the United States.

In an emailed statement, the Department of Homeland Security said that Ms. López "failed to appear for her prearranged flight" on Friday and that "ICE made multiple attempts to reach out to her with no response." The department added that she had received "full due process" after an immigration judge issued a final order of removal when she was a child.

Ms. López was detained on Nov. 20 at Boston Logan International Airport, as she was about to board a flight home to Texas to celebrate Thanksgiving with her family.

Her ordeal drew significant attention because, though not a legal resident, she had lived in the United States since she was a child and won a scholarship to attend Babson College in Wellesley, Mass. After the Board of Immigration Appeals rejected her mother's asylum application in 2017, the government ordered her removal. She was 11 years old at the time.

She was shackled and "treated like a terrorist," her lawyer, Todd Pomerleau, said by email on Friday. He said his client was unaware that her mother's case had resulted in an order of removal.

In a court declaration on Friday afternoon, an ICE official wrote that the government "has taken all reasonable and practicable steps to comply with the court's order to return" Ms. López to the United States, but was "impeded by her failure to appear and her lack of cooperation with the return process."

During the video call, Representative Greg Casar, Democrat of Texas, said the case fit into a larger pattern of the Trump administration defying the courts, as judges hold officials in civil contempt and compile lists of court orders that have been violated in immigration cases.

"They are refusing to follow the law and are now refusing to follow the judge's orders," he said.

The details of Ms. López's case suggest that, in this instance, while the government has brushed aside nudges from a federal judge to relent and allow Ms. López to return to her life as an American student, it is also seeking to avoid another contempt-of-court ruling.

On Nov. 21, after her initial detention, a federal judge ordered her not to be removed from the United States. ICE did so anyway the next morning, putting her on a plane flying to Honduras from Harlingen, Texas, near a detention center where she was flown from Boston after her arrest. An ICE officer later told the court that he had mistakenly failed to flag her file for further review in other jurisdictions because he was under the impression that since she was no longer in Massachusetts, "the court's order did not apply to her."

"That officer made a mistake there," an administration lawyer said in a hearing. "He regrets making that mistake."

The error prompted Judge Richard G. Stearns, an appointee of President Bill Clinton, to encourage the Trump administration to grant Ms. López a student visa. After officials declined to do so, he threatened to hold them in civil contempt unless they corrected their mistake by bringing her back to the United States.

"Wisdom counsels that redemption may be found by acknowledging and fixing our own errors," he wrote on Feb. 13, citing the Book of Proverbs. But while he gave a two-week deadline for her return, Judge Stearns also acknowledged that his jurisdiction over Ms. López's case was limited. That petition was filed by her lawyer "too late in the wrong district," after she had already been flown to Texas.

In a preliminary ruling on its emergency docket last year, the Supreme Court held that challenges to immigration removals, known as habeas corpus petitions, must generally be filed in the district where the person is being detained. Mr. Pomerleau has said in filings that he did not file her petition in Texas because neither he nor her family was able to ascertain where she was.

On Friday, Judge Stearns denied a motion by Ms. López's lawyers that he clarify his order and require that ICE return her to Massachusetts. He explained that he did not have jurisdiction and such a motion would need to be filed elsewhere.

"I want to keep contributing to the country I call home," Ms. López said on the Friday video call. "Instead, I'm being treated as if I do not belong, as if my life does not matter."



MASSDEPORTATIONDEFENSE ORG/HANDOUT, VIA REUTERS

Any Lucia López Belloza at her high school graduation in Boston last year. Ms. López, 20, is now a freshman at Babson College.

**Attack on Iran**

# *Decision to Strike Iran Opens New Fissures in Parties for Midterms*

By TIM BALK

President Trump's decision to attack Iran pushed an unpredictable issue to the forefront of American politics just as the midterms are getting underway, leaving both major parties navigating a volatile and potentially divisive conflict.

Republicans largely cast the strikes as a vital operation to confront a dangerous adversary, while Democrats warned that the operation could spiral into a perilous and protracted military campaign.

In Texas, where Democrats hope to flip a Senate seat after years of disappointment, the two leading Democratic rivals in Tuesday's primary condemned the strikes.

"CONGRESS, not the PRESIDENT, but CONGRESS has the EXCLUSIVE authority to declare war!" Representative Jasmine Crockett wrote on social media, calling on congressional Republicans and Democrats to "stand up to this President."

State Representative James Talarico, her chief rival, wrote on social media: "No more forever wars."

Republicans in a competitive three-candidate clash for the Senate nomination in Texas hailed the attack in glowing statements: Senator John Cornyn said he was "proud of the support being provided by President Trump."

Ken Paxton, the state attorney general, said the president had displayed "courageous leadership." And Representative Wesley Hunt, a late entry into the race, said Mr. Trump had delivered "bold leadership" and "bold action."

*Katie Glueck and Lisa Lerer contributed reporting.*



ERIC LEE FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Senator John Cornyn, a candidate in the Republican primary in Texas on Tuesday, supported President Trump's attack on Iran.

Still, a few Republicans sided with Democrats in arguing that the president had reached beyond his powers and was at odds with his own past warnings about intervention abroad. And a handful of Democrats, concentrated in swing congressional districts, expressed measured support for the attack, which the United States carried out jointly with Israel.

"It's one of these put-your-finger-to-the-wind situations," said Steven Maviglio, a Democratic consultant in California, noting that many elected officials still had limited information about the operation. He added, "People are just testing the waters right now."

Across the country, midterm candidates released a flurry of videos, social media posts and statements responding to news of the strikes, which was soon followed by an announcement by Mr. Trump that the attack had killed Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, Iran's longtime supreme leader.

In Maine, Graham Platner, a progressive Democratic running in the state's closely watched Senate primary, sought to frame the bombing as the action of an American president seeking to strengthen his political hand going into the midterms.

"He is doing this because he is flailing politically," Mr. Platner, a Marine veteran who served in Iraq and Afghanistan, said in a video on social media, appearing near a war memorial in snowy Fort Kent, Maine. "He ran on ending foreign intervention like this. But because he sees his political future at risk, he is willing to send young American men and women into harm's way."

Mr. Platner was joined by his Democratic primary rival, Gov. Janet Mills of Maine, in forcefully criticizing the strikes. Mr. Trump, she said in a statement, was "recklessly pushing the United States into a dangerous conflict." Mr. Platner said that "no one in the Democratic Party should support this kind of operation."

Some Democrats did.

Representative Greg Landsman of Ohio, a Democrat in a swing Cincinnati-area district, said in an interview that the strikes had been "a long time coming" after the authoritarian Iranian government killed thousands, according to aid groups, in a crackdown on protesters this winter.

"My hope is that this is the beginning of the end — that this leads to a lasting peace in the region," Mr. Landsman said, adding: "At some point, you have to say, 'Enough,' and we're not going to continue to allow this bully to wreak havoc on the region or its own people."

Mr. Landsman said he was pleased that the Trump administration had informed the so-called Gang of Eight, the top congressional leaders and the chairs and ranking members of the House and Senate Intelligence Committees, before the attack began.

Another swing-district Democrat, Representative Henry Cuellar of Texas, said in a statement that the threat posed by Iran was "real and longstanding." He praised the "courage of the Iranian people demanding freedom."

And Representative Tom Suozzi, a Democrat who flipped his New York district two years ago, issued a statement saying, "I agree with the President's objectives."

Few prominent Republicans broke outright with Mr. Trump, but members of the party in swing races were cautious and in some cases quiet, reflecting a sense of uncertainty about whether the conflict would broaden and how voters might react.

A University of Maryland poll conducted in early February found that just 21 percent of Americans supported a U.S. attack on Iran. But an AP-NORC poll, conducted later in February, found that 79 percent of Americans were extremely, very or moderately concerned about Iran's nuclear program.

Among the Republicans who were conspicuously quiet for much of Saturday was Senator Susan Collins of Maine, who is considered one of the most vulnerable Senate incumbents.

In a statement Saturday evening, Ms. Collins said that Iran had posed a "serious threat" but added that sustained military operations "require full engagement with Congress."

"There are important questions that will be discussed in the Senate's classified briefings with Administration officials next week," she said in the statement.

Most of the Republican base is squarely behind Israel and will be likely to support the intervention, at least in the short term, said Rob Collins, a former executive director of the National Republican Senatorial Committee. He said he thought it was a more straightforward issue for Republicans than it was for Democrats.

But "it's first hours," Mr. Collins added, noting that there was still a large group of Republicans who wanted to "wait and see how this unfolds."

In Iowa, Representative Zach Nunn, a Republican who faces a potentially challenging path to reelection, offered the president cautious praise even as he emphasized his opposition to American boots on the ground in Iran.

"As a combat veteran, I do not take military action lightly," he wrote on social media.

Other Republicans who hail from the party's libertarian wing were critical of Trump's actions.

"I am opposed to this War. This is not 'America First,'" Representative Thomas Massie of Kentucky, who faces a primary challenger backed by Mr. Trump, wrote on social media. Mr. Massie is pushing for a congressional vote on the matter.

Former Representative Steve Israel, a New York Democrat who previously chaired the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee, said it was too soon to say what the ramifications of the attack would be for the midterms.

But Mr. Israel noted that foreign conflicts had cut in both directions in the past: In 2002, Republicans picked up seats after President George W. Bush rallied Americans behind the war in Afghanistan. Four years later, Republicans faced a midterm drubbing as popular opinion turned against the war in Iraq.

# Iranian Community in Los Angeles Voices Hope for the Future

## Fearing for Family But Welcoming Blow to the Regime

By SHAWN HUBLER

LOS ANGELES — It was Friday night in Los Angeles when Sam Yebri's phone started to light up with texts from friends and family. Explosions in Tehran, which is 11½ hours ahead of Los Angeles. Israeli ministers warning of Iran's possible retaliation for U.S. and Israeli military strikes.

As the night wore on, a few messages became hundreds. By daybreak, they had become a blizzard, as the largest community of Iranians outside Iran absorbed the news that the government they had once fled was being attacked by their adopted country — and that Iran's longtime leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, had been killed.

"This is just a day that every Iranian has hoped and prayed for," said Mr. Yebri, now a 44-year-old lawyer who was about an infant when his Jewish family fled persecution in their homeland. "It's the beginning of the end of a 47-year hellish nightmare for the people of Iran."

Some 150,000 Iranian-born Americans have settled in the Los Angeles area, according to census figures. One community in West Los Angeles, near the University of California, Los Angeles, has attracted so many Iranian exiles that it is colloquially known as Tehrangeles.

By noon on Saturday, Iranian American demonstrators had gathered outside the federal building in West Los Angeles, blasting Iranian music and cheering. Green, white and red Iranian flags waved from the crowd and lined nearby sidewalks. As the rally swelled, hundreds of people marched through Westwood. Cars honked. People danced.

More than a half-million residents of the United States are at least partly of Iranian descent, according to census data. Many of them were members of oppressed minorities in Iran — Jews, Assyrians, Baha'i, Christians. Some fled after the overthrow in 1979 of the last shah of Iran, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi. Some were born in exile and have never set foot in Iran.

On Saturday, the news about the military strikes was felt acutely in Southern California. Many Iranian Americans said they had been texting since before dawn with Iranian-born relatives in other parts of the country or around the world, including in Israel, where loved ones huddled in shelters, braced for Iranian missiles.

"This is a global moment," said Sharon S. Nazarian, 58, a political scientist at U.C.L.A. and a local philanthropist whose Jewish family fled Iran when she was 10 amid death threats. "There's a lot of fear, a lot of mixed emotion, but also a lot of hope. Our hearts are all shivering."




PHOTOGRAPHS BY CAROLINE BREHMAN/ASSOCIATED PRESS





Demonstrators on Saturday marched through the streets of Los Angeles and waved green, white and red Iranian flags. The news of the strikes was felt deeply in West Los Angeles, which is sometimes referred to as Tehrangeles because it has so many Iranian exiles.

Although Iranian Americans in Los Angeles have held frequent protests calling for the overthrow of the oppressive religious government that runs Iran, some said on Saturday that they were worried about ordinary Iranians being caught up in the bombing.

"There's no question that you want this regime out, but at what human cost?" asked Adrin Nazarian, a Los Angeles city councilman whose Christian Armenian family fled Iran in 1981 and spent years moving from country to country before finally settling in the San Fernando Valley.

Mr. Nazarian said he would be glad to see the Iranian government go, but was horrified at the attack and worried about who might now take charge of the country. Years of sanctions had already weakened the regime nearly to the point of implosion, he said, and the military action by the United States and Israel seemed likely to create ambivalence among Iranians, who might now resent the outside meddling and the collateral damage.

"The citizens of Iran have already endured so much human loss and suffering," he said. "And now, on top of that, the U.S. is bombing? We're soon going to find out about the losses from this attack as well."

At Los Angeles synagogues, worshipers prayed on Saturday not only for the safety of Iranians and Israelis but also for American service members. Rabbi David Wolpe, the rabbi emeritus of Sinai Temple, a West Los Angeles synagogue where Iranian Jews make up about two-thirds of the congregation, said that many in the community were apprehensive but had long thought that "if it was at all possible to change the regime, that would be a blessing for the world."

"They feel that this is what Iranians would want if they had the ability to do it," he said. For two months, protesters in Iran have held large demonstrations against their government, and human rights advocates say that thousands of people have been killed.

Mayor Karen Bass of Los Angeles said that law enforcement agencies were closely monitoring for potential threats to public safety and that Los Angeles police had stepped up patrols near places of worship, community spaces and other areas of the city. She encouraged demonstrators to remain peaceful.

Democratic leaders in California expressed support for Iranian Americans but condemned the assault and the Trump administration.

"At a time when millions of hard-working families face higher costs of living and skyrocketing health care to pay for tax breaks for billionaires, Donald Trump is now pushing the country toward a war that risks American lives without presenting a clear justification to the American people or any plan to prevent escalation and chaos in the region," Senator Alex Padilla, who grew up in Los Angeles, said in a statement.

Gov. Gavin Newsom said on X that while "the leadership of Iran must go," Mr. Trump was "engaging in an illegal, dangerous war."

For some Iranian Americans, however, the moment was less about domestic politics than the possible end of a painful era.

"There is the feeling that you have not been breathing for 47 years," said Ms. Nazarian, the political scientist. "And now you can breathe."

Carmel Lastra, 42, who does digital marketing for real estate companies in Southern California, said that she had grown up listening to her Iranian-born grandmother "curse the regime" that had sent her and Ms. Lastra's parents into exile. But she noted that her grandmother also told tales of Iran's beauty and yearned to return someday.

Now, Ms. Lastra said, she might be able to go see what her grandmother so loved about her home country.

"I have her memories in my head," she said. "I've always wanted to go to Iran."

# *N.Y.P.D. Reacts To Iran Strikes With Increase In Security*

By CHELSIA ROSE MARCIUS

The New York Police Department operates one of the largest municipal law enforcement intelligence bureaus in the United States, with officers stationed around the world, including in the Middle East.

Rebecca Weiner, the deputy commissioner of intelligence and counterterrorism, oversees the bureau. At its 15 outposts, 12 of which are abroad, officers in the international liaison unit are gathering information about potential threats to New York City following the U.S.-Israeli attacks in Iran, according to an internal police document. So far, the bureau has not identified any specific or credible threats.

But the airstrikes in the Middle East have prompted heightened security measures in New York, the country's biggest city, which is home to large Jewish and Muslim communities and is a frequent site of mass protests. On Saturday, the Police Department said it enhanced its patrol presence at sensitive locations, including diplomatic and religious sites.

Ms. Weiner, a 20-year Police Department veteran and former legal counsel at the bureau who oversees about 1,500 officers and civilian intelligence analysts, brings a deep knowledge of the region to her role, having also served as team leader for the Middle East and North Africa.

In an interview on Saturday with CBS News, she said the city has been in a "heightened threat environment" since June, after President Trump ordered U.S. warplanes to aid Israel's attacks on Iranian nuclear facilities.

"This is definitely an escalation," she said of the recent strikes. "As long as we're in a heightened threat, we're going to have enhanced deployments, patrol resources, specialized resources, the help of partners. And we're going to see over the coming days how what's happening overseas impacts our city."

Since the attacks, senior intelligence officers stationed at Police Department outposts in Tel Aviv; Amman, Jordan; Doha, Qatar; and Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, have worked with local law enforcement agencies in those cities to confirm reports of casualties, missile strikes and damage to U.S. facilities, according to the document.

Those officers report that information directly to Ms. Weiner and other top police officials, including Jessica S. Tisch, the police commissioner, who is frequently briefed on developments in the Middle East.

The Police Department ramped up its efforts to gather intelligence on gun and drug trafficking and other terrorism or transnational threats abroad following the attacks on Sept. 11, 2001. The international liaison unit was created in 2003.

# *Mamdani (and Trump) Plan Neighborhood Over Queens Rail Yard*

## *Project to Construct 12,000 Units Faces Several Obstacles*



HIROKO MASUIKE/THE NEW YORK TIMES

Sunnyside Yard, a 180-acre maintenance hub in Queens, is much larger than the 28-acre Hudson Yards in Manhattan that now features a mixed-use development.

*This article is by* ***Dana Rubinstein****,* ***Mihir Zaveri*** *and* ***Stefanos Chen****.*

Mayor Zohran Mamdani seemed to have made political magic happen on Thursday when he said he had persuaded President Trump to consider resurrecting an affordable housing project over a rail yard in western Queens — a development so enormous in scale that many consider it impracticable.

Now the mayor faces a grinding, bureaucratic slog if he wants to get it done.

Nobody knows exactly how the development will unfold, or if it will even be built. The project, which involves building 12,000 homes over a new deck atop Sunnyside Yard, a massive working rail yard, is likely to involve a private developer, or several. It is also unclear whether it would be completed in pieces, or if it would involve any market-rate apartments.

Then there are the challenges. The project is exceedingly complicated. Mr. Mamdani will have to find the money, with the city appearing to suggest the deck alone would require at least $21 billion in federal grants. He will have to convince local politicians and residents to support the development. And he will need to win the approval of Amtrak, the passenger rail service controlled by the federal government, and the Metropolitan Transportation Authority, the state agency that oversees the city's public transit.

On Friday, Jen Goodman, a spokeswoman for Gov. Kathy Hochul, signaled Ms. Hochul's tentative support.

"New York needs more housing," Ms. Goodman said. "Any initiative that could deliver 12,000-plus new homes would be good news for New Yorkers and a positive step toward lowering the cost of living. We look forward to seeing the details and partnering with the city to get more homes built."

Mr. Mamdani will also have to hope that Mr. Trump does not lose interest. So far, the president has declined to speak publicly about the project, and the White House on Friday declined another request for comment.

The only evidence for his support is Mr. Mamdani's representations of Mr. Trump's interest — which the mayor repeated during an unrelated news conference on Friday — and Mr. Trump's willingness to pose for a photo holding a mock-up of a fake Daily News front page whose headline says the president backs a "New Era of Housing." Mr. Mamdani provided Mr. Trump with the front page mock-up.

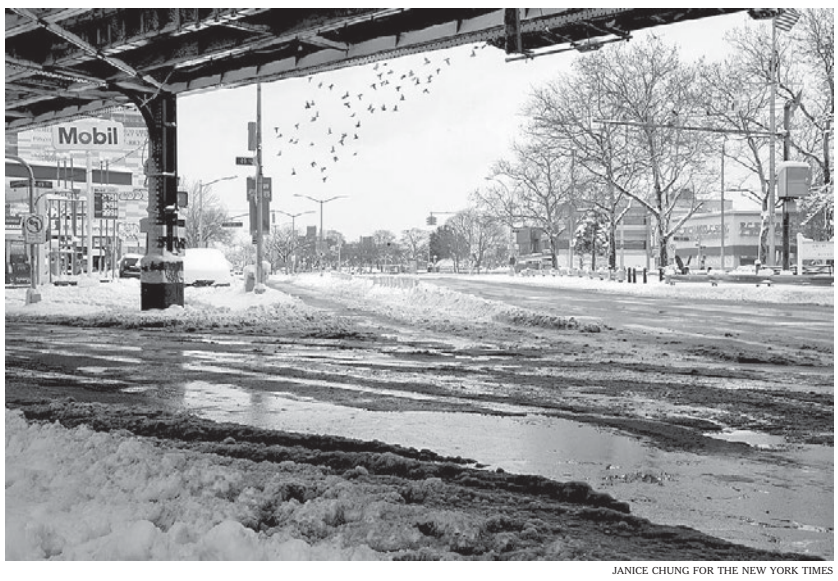
"It's hard to be just like, 'We won,'" said Alicia Glen, the deputy mayor in former Mayor Bill de Blasio's administration who helped craft a master plan for Sunnyside Yard. "It's directionally positive. Let's see where we go."

Already on Friday, the idea was meeting with skepticism from influential corners.

"Any proposal that reshapes Sunnyside Yards must begin with the neighbors who live here," said Julie Won, the councilwoman whose district includes the site. "Our community deserves a seat at the table long before anyone, including the mayor, makes headlines in the Oval Office, especially for a project they have previously rejected."

Sunnyside Yard, a 180-acre train yard and maintenance hub in Long Island City, is much larger than other rail depots that have been converted to residential and commercial uses, including the 28-acre Hudson Yards in Manhattan and the 22-acre Atlantic Yards development, now called Pacific Park, in Brooklyn. Both projects remain unfinished, decades after work on them began.

*Tyler Pager contributed reporting.*




JANICE CHUNG FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Snowy streets in Sunnyside, Queens. The residential neighborhoods around the rail yard voted decisively for Mayor Zohran Mamdani, who has said that all 12,000 units would be affordable.

It is unclear if Mr. Mamdani intends to build over a portion of Sunnyside Yard, or over the entire 180 acres — equivalent to building a platform covering Roosevelt Island and three Bryant Parks.

Amtrak owns most of Sunnyside Yard and would have to approve construction plans for the site. In 2015, the rail company signaled openness to a similar housing proposal.

Jason Abrams, a spokesman for Amtrak, declined to comment about Mr. Trump's apparent interest in the project.

The sprawling space, sandwiched between rapidly growing residential neighborhoods — all of which voted decisively for Mr. Mamdani — serves as a critical way station for trains operated by NJ Transit and several Amtrak carriers traveling along the Northeast Corridor, the busiest passenger rail route in the United States.

Many trains that pass through Pennsylvania Station in Manhattan, for instance, continue toward the yard for storage, before returning to service later in the day. The M.T.A., which is controlled by the governor, also stores Long Island Rail Road trains at a separate yard nearby.

Kevin Corbett, a senior fellow of transportation studies at Rutgers University and a former head of NJ Transit, called Sunnyside Yard "a very different beast" because it included one of the busiest railroad junctions in the world, Harold Interlocking, where hundreds of trains pass through daily. Building a deck on top of the site could prove much more challenging than similar projects, he said.

Still, Sunnyside Yard has long been a target for development. As early as the 1920s, an airport and a mixed-use complex were proposed for the area.

In 2015, Mr. de Blasio proposed building 11,000 apartments over the yard, but Andrew M. Cuomo, the governor at the time, opposed it, arguing that the space was too important for transit operations.

Since at least 2018, city officials have considered the creation of a new passenger train station at the yard, but the M.T.A. in recent years has opposed the proposal for cost reasons. A master plan for the site published in March 2020 was abruptly rendered moot, its release coming days before the city became an epicenter of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The construction of high-rise buildings and complicated infrastructure over a rail yard can be immensely costly to taxpayers, and stretch far longer than expected.

Atlantic Yards was proposed in 2003, but more than two decades later, hundreds of affordable apartments that were promised have not yet been built.

Tax breaks and other government assistance for Hudson Yards, the luxury mixed-use project, reached nearly $6 billion in 2019, and its private developers have sought $2 billion more in public subsidies for an unbuilt portion of the rail yard because they claimed the cost of construction was too high.

Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, whose district used to overlap with the site before redistricting, raised concerns in 2019 about plans to develop Sunnyside Yard, saying they could lead to displacement of communities of color and essentially let private developers profit from public land.

But in a statement on Friday, a spokeswoman for Ms. Ocasio-Cortez, an ardent critic of Mr. Trump, hailed the potential for federal investment into Sunnyside Yard as "transformational."

Carlo Scissura, the president and chief executive of the New York Building Congress, a construction trade group, said in a statement that he was "over the moon" to hear that Mr. Trump might be receptive to moving the Sunnyside Yard project forward.

Mr. Scissura, who was a member of a Sunnyside Yard task force under Mr. de Blasio, added that "it has always stuck in my craw that all that work ultimately went nowhere."

Mr. Mamdani has said that all of the 12,000 units would be affordable, and the project would create 30,000 union jobs. Any affordability or union construction requirements would render the project even more expensive. There would also be parks, schools and clinics. Much of that would have to be built on top of the deck.

"In a city where we know that land is so precious and so finite, here lies an opportunity to create more of it, by creating the largest rail deck the world has ever seen," Mr. Mamdani said at a news conference on Friday.

City Hall has said it is seeking $21 billion in federal grants for the project. But they have not provided more detail on where specifically that money would come from, or how much additional city funding may be necessary.

"You have to make a public sector, upfront investment," Ms. Glen said. "There's no other way to do this."

She also said that Mr. Mamdani's call to build 100 percent affordable housing and use union work would make the project impossible to work financially.

"It's just going to make the project untenable unless they throw the entire budget at it, which would just be nuts, because they have other important projects," she said.

Still, with New York City grappling with a continuing housing shortage, residents have grown more receptive to development since the Sunnyside Yard project was put on hold. But if local leaders do not back it, Mr. Mamdani will have a hard time getting it through the City Council.

**'Any proposal that reshapes Sunnyside Yards must begin with the neighbors who live here.'**

JULIE WON, the councilwoman whose district includes the site.

Donovan Richards, the borough president of Queens, said he was "excited about the proposition" of rebooting the development. But he also said that he had told City Hall officials on Thursday night, after news of the meeting with Mr. Trump broke, that there should be a "robust community engagement process" before the project moved forward.

Mr. Richards said Queens residents were likely to want the project to include schools, investments in transit and lots of affordable housing. He said he personally would like to see a stadium for women's professional basketball on the site.

"We're going to ask the hard questions, like we would ask about any project," he said.

# *Settlement in Maine Case About Poisoning of Trees*

**By ELIZABETH WILLIAMSON**

WASHINGTON — Nearly five years after the Maine Board of Pesticides Control found that a New York couple had killed a neighbor's trees in Rockport to improve their waterfront view, the state on Friday approved a settlement that included a $3,000 fine but no admission of guilt.

A lawyer for the couple — Stephen Antonson and Kathleen Hackett of Brooklyn — released a statement from Mr. Antonson saying he was "glad" that the board and Maine's attorney general approved the agreement. But he did not acknowledge responsibility for the death of the trees.

Instead, the chairman and a member of the pesticides board apologized to the neighbor's son that the board could not do more to hold the couple to account.

*Kitty Bennett contributed research.*

The New York Times reported on the tree saga last September. In 2017, Mr. Antonson and Ms. Hackett, Brooklyn-based creatives who met while working for Martha Stewart, bought a summer house in Rockport, a scenic Penobscot Bay town. They asked their neighbor, Ruth Graham, if they could remove trees from her land outside their rear windows to give them a better view. Mrs. Graham said no.

Then the trees began dying, and the pesticides board determined that Mr. Antonson and Ms. Hackett were to blame. Laws at the time permitted a maximum fine of only $3,000. In a proposed settlement, Mr. Antonson agreed to pay it without admitting guilt. The board rejected the proposal last March, and legal wrangling continued.

In February, the board released a proposal nearly identical to the rejected one. In it, Mr. Antonson would still pay $3,000 and deny poisoning the trees, but would acknowledge "that a court could find that he committed the violations." The agreement also would not shield the couple, should Mrs. Graham's family or neighbors sue them.



SOPHIE PARK FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES



KELLY TAUB/BFA, VIA SHUTTERSTOCK

Dead trees behind the home of Ruth Graham last August in Rockport, Maine. A pesticides board found that her neighbors, Stephen Antonson and Kathleen Hackett, near left, were to blame. Under a settlement, they did not admit guilt.

Still, this is Maine, where trees enjoy near-mythic status and out-of-towners and their lawyers do not. Mrs. Graham died in 2024, but her two sons, her neighbors in Rockport and the state board itself felt the agreement lacked a crucial element. Mr. Antonson and Ms. Hackett, self-described preservationists, did not say they were sorry.

A few days ago, one of Mrs. Graham's sons, Eric Grubman, wrote to the board.

"We prefer that people own up to their mistakes. We prefer second chances. And we value civic responsibility," he wrote. Noting that "no one has apologized," he proposed that Mr. Antonson and Ms. Hackett "gift an additional sum of their choice" to Maine coastal preservation, in Mrs. Graham's name. And he asked that they address the offense "in their own words" in a local newspaper.

Then, he wrote, "Bygones can be bygones for everyone, and trees will grow back."

In his statement, Mr. Antonson said he appreciated Mr. Grubman's "thoughtfulness." He praised Mr. Grubman's mother as a good neighbor. He said he wanted closure, too, but did not address Mr. Grubman's proposal for the donation and newspaper article.

In the end, it was the pesticides board that expressed regret.

"I wish we could do as you ask," Dave Adams, the board's chairman, told Mr. Grubman, who was watching the vote online.

In a brief interview, Mr. Grubman said he was surprised by the board's apology, and grateful for its years of work. "We have a sense of sadness," he said, pausing to find the right words, "that neighbors could act this way."

# A Stable of Elite Doctors Served Epstein While Treating His 'Girls'

*From Page A1*

It's unsurprising that someone with Mr. Epstein's wealth and elite connections would receive white-glove service from concierge doctors and V.I.P. treatment at major hospitals. But the new documents reveal how some of his doctors bent or broke the ethical rules of their profession.

One sent Mr. Epstein's sexual partners elsewhere for gonorrhea treatment so that when their cases were reported to public health authorities, they wouldn't be tied to Mr. Epstein. Some doctors also shared patients' private health information with him, disclosures that at least one woman was unhappy about.

"All the doctors you pay directly keep you well informed about my 'treatments,'" the woman wrote to Mr. Epstein. She did not want the same to happen with a "shrink" she was planning to see.

Mr. Epstein dismissed her concerns. The doctors, he told her, "take the time to make sure im happy."

Mr. Epstein rewarded his preferred doctors with hefty payments, Apple Watches, introductions to celebrities and vacations on his private island and his New Mexico ranch. One cash-strapped dermatologist asked the sexual predator to co-sign his car lease.

Mr. Epstein wrote large checks for some doctors' research projects and charity work. And he donated more than $375,000 to Mount Sinai, much of it to a breast cancer center at the hospital founded by Dr. Eva Dubin, who dated him for many years in the 1980s.

Dr. Dubin became Mr. Epstein's conduit to Mount Sinai, connecting him, his friends and women in his orbit with doctors there. She also arranged positions at the hospital for at least two young women at Mr. Epstein's request.

In a statement to The New York Times, a representative for Dr. Dubin said that over the course of her career, she had provided hundreds of referrals to medical specialists for colleagues, friends and acquaintances, including Mr. Epstein. "Each referral was made in good faith and without any awareness of wrongdoing," the statement said. She "never witnessed, suspected or had any knowledge of Mr. Epstein's criminal conduct," it said.

A Mount Sinai spokeswoman would not comment on individual patient cases, but said the hospital has formed a committee to investigate its ties to Mr. Epstein. "We will continue to take any and all appropriate actions," she said.



VIA DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

An undated photo from the Epstein files appears to show a Mount Sinai surgeon doing a procedure in Jeffrey Epstein's dining room.



JEENAH MOON FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Mr. Epstein donated more than $375,000 to Mount Sinai Hospital in Manhattan, where the Dubin Breast Center operates.



SCOTT WISEMAN FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Mr. Epstein's Palm Beach home in 2006. In Florida, he often relied on his longtime personal physician, Dr. Bruce Moskowitz.

## Mount Sinai Connection

The Times reviewed more than 15,000 documents from the Epstein files — including text messages, emails, lab results and financial records — showing Mr. Epstein's interactions with more than a dozen doctors from 2009 to 2019. Although the names of the women involved are largely redacted, The Times reached out to those who could be identified.

The doctor Mr. Epstein was closest to was Dr. Dubin, founder of the Dubin Breast Center at Mount Sinai. A former Miss Sweden, she had dated Mr. Epstein while she was in medical school and remained his close confidante after marrying the hedge fund billionaire Glenn Dubin.

Over the years, Mr. Epstein turned to his well-connected friend for medical requests of all kinds.

In 2012, a young Russian woman wrote to Mr. Epstein to ask if he would mind if she had sex with another man if they used a condom. "You must first go to the gyno," he replied, saying that Dr. Dubin would call her.

In a subsequent message, he said Dr. Dubin would coordinate the referral: "Eva will organize pussy doctor." (Dr. Dubin was not on the emails.) The woman later reported back that Dr. Dubin had given her phone numbers for two doctors.

Around the same time, Dr. Dubin also arranged for the young woman, identified in emails as an undergraduate, to get a volunteer position at the reception desk of the Dubin Breast Center. Though the hospital's union resisted using an unpaid worker, the gig was approved after Dr. Dubin appealed to the hospital's president.

"I told them she will only sit there and look pretty," Dr. Dubin told Mr. Epstein after it was official.

Several months later, Mr. Epstein emailed Dr. Dubin with an urgent problem: He and the Russian student were flying to New York from his private island in the U.S. Virgin Islands. She had fallen off an A.T.V., Mr. Epstein wrote, leaving a large gash across her forehead that needed attention. "Can you organize thanks," he wrote.

Dr. Dubin responded that one of Mount Sinai's plastic surgeons, Dr. Jess Ting, was "standing by" and added that she herself would join them. The next day, Mr. Epstein recounted to an assistant that Dr. Ting had given the woman 35 stitches while she was "laid out on the dinng room table."

A photo that appeared to capture the scene — with faces redacted — was included in the government's initial release of Epstein files. After inquiries from The Times, the Department of Justice posted a different version of the photo that appears to show Dr. Ting.



ROY ROCHLIN/GETTY IMAGES FOR MOUNT SINAI

Dr. Eva Dubin at a breast center benefit in 2024. She was Mr. Epstein's link to Mount Sinai.

An email sent two days after the incident refers to antibiotics that Dr. Dubin gave to the woman on the night of the procedure.

Dr. Margaret Moon, a physician and expert in medical ethics at Johns Hopkins University, told The Times that the incident was "breathtaking." With such a serious wound, she said, the woman should have been treated in an emergency room equipped to handle any complications.

Stitching her up on Mr. Epstein's dining table was "a choice made not in the patient's best interest but in, it sounds to me, a friend's best interest," Dr. Moon said. "That is very difficult to justify."

Months later, Dr. Ting successfully solicited a $50,000 donation from Mr. Epstein for his breast cancer research. Soon after, Dr. Ting, his girlfriend and her children visited Mr. Epstein's island.

Dr. Ting made more house calls for Mr. Epstein, consulting with a woman about a nose job and removing a fatty cyst from Mr. Epstein's shoulder. Before the cyst appointment, the doctor said that the chairman of his department at the hospital had warned him not to do the procedure at a patient's home.

The chairman "said if I did it there I would be sanctioned! Ridiculous," Dr. Ting said, according to a message he sent to one of Mr. Epstein's assistants.

In a statement to The Times, Dr. Ting said: "In my treatment of these adult patients, I never knew, witnessed, or had any knowledge of any illegal or potentially illegal activities."

Dr. Ting initially told The Times that he was not in the redacted photo of a medical procedure in Mr. Epstein's dining room. He declined to comment on the new version of the photo posted on the government's website that appears to show him.

"Mr. Epstein represents the very worst of human nature, and I deeply regret having had any association with him," Dr. Ting said in his initial comment.

Mr. Epstein frequently donated to Mount Sinai, which offered him "24/7" access to V.I.P. services at the hospital, emails show. In 2013, Dr. Dubin pitched him on a $5 million new project: a postoperative cancer floor for female patients that would offer yoga, hair care and mental health services.

If Mr. Epstein gave financial support, she said, there could be a naming opportunity: "The Epstein Floor for Women, if so desired," she suggested. The documents do not include a response.

Dr. Dubin also connected doctors to Mr. Epstein's powerful friends.

In March 2015, at Mr. Epstein's request, she arranged an appointment at the Dubin Breast Center for Kathryn Ruemmler, a former lawyer for the Obama White House. The next month, he asked the doctor about Ms. Ruemmler's results. (Dr. Dubin responded that she would need the patient's permission to share them.)

Two years later, Mr. Epstein wrote to Dr. Dubin and Ms. Ruemmler with a reminder: "Kathy mamogram time," he said.

A representative for Ms. Ruemmler told The Times that "Ms. Ruemmler received referrals for New York City physicians from several people." She resigned from her role as general counsel of Goldman Sachs last month after the government's document release revealed her close relationship with Mr. Epstein.

## S.T.D. Secrets

In Florida, where Mr. Epstein had a mansion in Palm Beach, he often relied on his longtime personal physician, Dr. Bruce Moskowitz, whom Mr. Epstein once referred to as "internist to the worlds wealthy."

While on jaunts with women around the world, Mr. Epstein turned to Dr. Moskowitz for quick gynecologist referrals in New Mexico, Britain and Poland.

At home in Florida, Mr. Epstein consulted with the doctor on the health of young women. In a series of emails in 2018, for example, the men discussed one woman's abnormal white blood cell count and her eligibility for a strictly regulated acne treatment.

Also in 2018, Dr. Moskowitz helped Mr. Epstein and two women get treatment for gonorrhea, a sexually transmitted bacterial infection that is treated with an antibiotic injection.

"I think to be safe my two friends should get shot by you tomorrow or send them somewhere close," Mr. Epstein wrote.

Dr. Moskowitz texted back, offering treatment to Mr. Epstein but recommending an emergency room in West Palm Beach for the women. "That way I do not have to report the cases to health department including contacts," he said. (The Florida Department of Health requires doctors treating gonorrhea cases to report the names of people who test positive.)

The next day, Mr. Epstein texted Dr. Moskowitz to ask if the women had revealed the source of their infections.

Dr. Moskowitz assured him they had not. "They say a friend overseas," he said. It's unclear how he knew what the women had disclosed at the E.R.

Dr. Moskowitz did not respond to emails, text messages or phone calls to his cellphone and office.



KHOLOOD EID FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Dr. Bernard Kruger in 2018. He co-founded a concierge E.R. used by Mr. Epstein.

From 2014 through 2017, Mr. Epstein donated at least $225,000 to foundations linked to Dr. Moskowitz and his wife, Marsha Moskowitz, the documents show. He also agreed to invest "a couple of million" in a venture by their son, and put the doctor up at his New Mexico ranch.

Dr. Moskowitz, in turn, remained loyal to Mr. Epstein, even as investigations by The Miami Herald revealed the scope of his abuse of underage girls a decade earlier.

In November 2018, after one of the articles was published, Dr. Moskowitz emailed Mr. Epstein with the subject line "Marsha and I are there for you." His wife, he said, "was livid with the press she almost punched her ipad!"



VIA DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

Some doctors shared patients' private health information with Mr. Epstein.

## Epstein the Customer

Again and again in the new trove of documents, Mr. Epstein inserts himself into the medical decisions of young women. It's unclear whether they gave him permission to do so. Under federal law, doctors are not allowed to disclose private medical information to third parties without a patient's consent.

When asked by The Times about some of the situations described in the emails, one expert questioned whether the women would have been able to give legal consent, given Mr. Epstein's power over them.

"They're being forced to have this treatment by a doctor not of their choice," said Barry R. Furrow, the director of the Health Law Program at Drexel University. "I don't think you can even talk about consent in this."

The doctors often acted as if Mr. Epstein, rather than the women, was their primary concern.

In 2013, someone on Mr. Epstein's staff relayed a message from a dentist who was on the faculty at Columbia University, Dr. Thomas Magnani. He had examined a patient sent by Mr. Epstein and found she had serious problems, including two "black teeth" in the front of her mouth and a hole in one incisor. She needed a root canal, 11 fillings and braces, the assistant told Mr. Epstein. But the dentist was unsure which services his client was willing to pay for.

"He doesn't know how much work you want done on this girl," the assistant wrote. The records show Mr. Epstein agreed to pay for a root canal.

Dr. Magnani did not respond to requests for comment. On Feb. 16, Columbia University terminated his faculty appointment, after other files showed he had helped Mr. Epstein's girlfriend bypass the normal process to be admitted to the dental school. The records show Mr. Epstein gave Columbia's dental school at least $50,000 in response to pleas from Dr. Magnani.

When Mr. Epstein enrolled several women in a members-only emergency room in New York in 2016, he didn't even have to give their names.

The co-founder of the concierge E.R. was Dr. Bernard Kruger, a longtime doctor to Mr. Epstein. He and Mr. Epstein's staff settled on a fee of $15,000 for a year of access for Mr. Epstein and five "girls."

An accountant later emailed Mr. Epstein to say that Dr. Kruger's team did not require him to name the women covered by the plan. They would be listed only as "assistants 1-5 without using names," he said, "which i think gives you more flexibility." A spokeswoman for the E.R., now called Sollis Health, said women's names were added to the accounts later.

In at least one case, Dr. Kruger's private medical office in Manhattan also did not use the names of women associated with Mr. Epstein when making their appointments. In 2018, the office contacted Mr. Epstein's staff to say that "Jeffrey's assistant" needed to reschedule her appointment — but Mr. Epstein's office could not figure out which assistant it was. (Subsequent emails show that the appointment was actually for Ms. Ruemmler, the former White House counsel.)

Mark Botnick, a spokesman for Dr. Kruger, said Dr. Kruger did not recall that incident and believed it must have been a clerical error.

"The fact that Mr. Epstein was later revealed to be a serial predator does not implicate the physicians who cared for him," Mr. Botnick said.

Another doctor provided services for women that seemed to be part of complicated financial horse-trading with Mr. Epstein.

Dr. Steven Victor, a dermatologist in Manhattan, often performed mole removals and other procedures for women referred by Mr. Epstein. In 2006, the records indicate, Mr. Epstein lent $100,000 to Dr. Victor's beauty-product company.

But by 2009, Dr. Victor was fed up with the financier. He wrote him an angry note pointing out that he had not charged Mr. Epstein's "girl friends" for their medical care. And he had been "loyal," he said, by refusing to speak to the many reporters who had asked him about Mr. Epstein.

"I have lived up to my bargain as I promised," Dr. Victor wrote. And yet Mr. Epstein had repeatedly declined to invest in the doctor's business ventures and sent him too many patients to treat free of charge. "You can NOT just send friends and expect me to bear the costs," Dr. Victor wrote.

Mr. Epstein responded by saying that Dr. Victor had still not paid him back what he was owed from past transactions. He also said that if Dr. Victor had ever talked to reporters, that would be "something that i would have never forgiven."

Dr. Victor, now based in Dubai, said in a phone interview that Mr. Epstein was only one of many wealthy patients whom he had solicited for loans or investments: "He is not unusual. It basically was not a big relationship."

The doctor said he never felt that Mr. Epstein had leverage over him, and he always put patients first. He said he had not noticed any sign of duress among the women Mr. Epstein sent him. "Most of them were young, but of age," he said. "Nobody complained. Everybody was happy."

After the angry email exchange, Dr. Victor continued to treat women sent by Mr. Epstein. "Call and see dr victor re breasts," Mr. Epstein ordered a woman in one email. When she asked what kind of doctor he was, Mr. Epstein replied: "He will send you to his partner that takes fat from your ass and puts in your breasts."

And the doctor continued to ask Mr. Epstein for money, sometimes in desperate terms. "Will get evicted from office etc if I do not come up with funds. HELP!" he wrote in late 2009. The next year, he asked Mr. Epstein to co-sign a car lease.

"Email me full paperwork," Mr. Epstein wrote. (Dr. Victor said that Mr. Epstein did not co-sign the lease.) Later that year, Mr. Epstein replied to the same email thread, asking Dr. Victor to see another woman.

*Julie Tate and Urvashi Uberoy contributed reporting.*

N

Opinion

The New York Times



ERIC LEE FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

EDITORIAL

# TRUMP'S ATTACK ON IRAN IS RECKLESS

**The Editorial Board**

A group of opinion journalists whose views are informed by expertise, research, debate and certain longstanding values. It is separate from the newsroom.

IN HIS 2024 presidential campaign, Donald Trump promised voters that he would end wars, not start them. Over the past year, he has instead ordered military strikes in seven nations. His appetite for military intervention grows with the eating.

The latest attack, against the Islamic Republic of Iran, in cooperation with Israel, is the most extensive yet. But Mr. Trump started this war without explaining to the American people and the world why he was doing so. Nor has he involved Congress, to which the Constitution grants the sole power to declare war. He instead posted a video at 2:30 a.m. Eastern on Saturday, shortly after bombing began, in which he said that Iran presented "imminent threats" and called for the overthrow of its government. His rationale is dubious, and making his case by video in the middle of the night is unacceptable.

Among his justifications is the elimination of Iran's nuclear program, which is a worthy goal. But Mr. Trump declared that program "obliterated" by a previous strike he ordered in June, a claim belied by both U.S. intelligence and this new attack. The contradiction underscores how little regard he has for his duty to tell the truth when committing American armed forces to battle. It also shows how little faith American citizens should place in his assurances about the goals and results of his growing list of military adventures.

Mr. Trump's approach to Iran is reckless. His goals are ill-defined. He has failed to line up the international and domestic support that would be necessary to maximize the chances of a successful outcome. He has disregarded both domestic and international law for warfare.

THE IRANIAN REGIME, to be clear, deserves no sympathy. Nobody should mourn the death of Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, Iran's supreme leader, who was killed in the attack.

The regime has wrought misery since its revolution 47 years ago — on its own people, on its neighbors and around the world. It massacred thousands of protesters this year. It imprisons and executes political dissidents. It oppresses women, L.G.B.T.Q. people and religious minorities. Its leaders have impoverished their own citizens while corruptly enriching themselves. They have proclaimed "Death to America" since coming to power and killed hundreds of U.S. service members in the region, as well as bankrolled terrorism that has killed civilians in the Middle East and as far away as Argentina.

Ayatollah Khamenei, the regime's second leader, who ascended to power in 1989, organized his existence around an obsession with the West. As a ruler, he squelched dissent, labeling demands for reforms as Western "sedition," and expanded the intelligence apparatus of the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps to repress his own people. When faced with citizens' protests, he answered with force, including the slaughter of thousands earlier this year. Abroad, his legacy is one of destabilization, having constructed a so-called axis of resistance across Gaza, Iraq, Lebanon, Syria and Yemen.

Iran's government presents a distinct threat because it combines this murderous ideology with nuclear ambitions. Iran has repeatedly defied international inspectors over the years. Since the June attack, the government has shown signs of restarting its pursuit of nuclear weapons technology. American presidents of both parties have rightly made a commitment to prevent Tehran from getting a bomb.

We recognize that fulfilling this commitment could justify military action at some point. For one thing, the consequences of allowing Iran to follow the path of North Korea — and acquire nuclear weapons after years of exploiting international patience — are too great. For another, the costs of confronting Iran over its nuclear program look less imposing than they once did.

**By failing to articulate a strategy, the president is inviting chaos.**

Iran, as David Sanger of The Times recently explained, "is going through a period of remarkable military, economic and political weakness." Since the Oct. 7, 2023, attacks, Israel has reduced the threats from Hamas and Hezbollah (two of Iran's terrorist proxies), attacked Iran directly and, with help from allies, mostly repelled its response. The new recognition of Iran's limitations helped give rebels in Syria the confidence to march on Damascus and oust the horrific Assad regime, a longtime Iranian ally. Iran's government did almost nothing to intervene. This recent history demonstrates that military action, for all its awful costs, can have positive consequences.

A responsible American president could have made a plausible argument for further action against Iran. The core of this argument would have been a clear explanation of the strategy, as well as the justification for attacking now, even though Iran does not appear close to having a nuclear weapon. This strategy would involve a promise to seek approval from Congress and to collaborate with international allies.

Mr. Trump has not even attempted this approach. He has signaled to the American people and to the world that he expects their blind trust. He has not earned that trust.

IT IS NATURAL to hope that the decapitation of this regime could lead to the end of Iran's theocracy. Yet it is also important to consider the context — and the long-term risks that it creates for both Iran and the United States.

The regime that Mr. Trump seeks to topple has its own roots in American intervention in Iran. It rose to power in 1979 with assistance from widespread anger over a 1953 coup that the C.I.A. helped organize with the corrupt U.S.-backed shah who subsequently consolidated his power. Now Mr. Trump, working with Israel, Iran's most bitter enemy, has overseen the assassination of the country's leader. He has done so without explaining his strategy for the future and without the support of almost any other ally. And there are reasons to worry about what comes next.

There exists no Iranian opposition group of any stature, which creates deep uncertainty about the future. Ayatollah Khamenei had a succession plan that favored clerics, but U.S. intelligence officials have assessed that the power vacuum could result in hardline factions of the Revolutionary Guards seizing control. The risks of civil war, internal slaughter and regional instability are profound.

Mr. Trump's undisciplined approach to foreign policy offers little reason to believe he will prioritize Iran's stability. He treats allies with disdain. He lies constantly, including about the results of the June attack on Iran. He has fired senior military leaders for failing to show fealty to his political whims. When his appointees make outrageous mistakes — such as Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth sharing advanced details of a military attack on the Houthis, an Iranian-backed group, on an unsecured group chat — Mr. Trump shields them from accountability. His administration appears to have violated international law by, among other things, disguising a military plane as a civilian plane and shooting two defenseless sailors who survived an initial attack.

He also has a record of failing to demonstrate the follow-through that would allow him to live up to his own promises for solving other crises, including in Ukraine, Gaza and Venezuela. Only two months ago he removed Venezuela's dictator, Nicolás Maduro, but left Mr. Maduro's deputies in power while abandoning an opposition party with widespread public support.

Managing the future in Iran will require thoughtfulness, attention and international cooperation. It should involve a detailed conversation with the American people about the risks. True, Iran has failed to exact much damage on the United States in recent years, and its military has been degraded. But it maintains an arsenal of missiles capable of overwhelming defense systems, and over the weekend it hit a U.S. Navy base in Bahrain, among other targets in the region. Iran may also be capable of launching cyberattacks and proxy strikes against American forces and allies.

The bigger risks may lie in the future. The president of the United States has just helped assassinate a foreign leader without the approval of Congress, the support of most allies or a plan for the future. History suggests that unilateral American involvement along these lines often has consequences that are not immediately apparent. When American officials helped orchestrate the 1953 coup, they surely did not imagine that they were planting the seeds for the Middle East's most radical anti-American government.

RECOGNIZING MR. TRUMP'S IRRESPONSIBILITY, some members of Congress have taken steps to constrain him on Iran. In the House, Representatives Ro Khanna, Democrat of California, and Thomas Massie, Republican of Kentucky, have proposed a resolution meant to prevent Mr. Trump from starting a war without congressional approval. The resolution makes clear that Congress has not authorized an attack on Iran and demands the withdrawal of American troops within 60 days. Senator Tim Kaine, Democrat of Virginia, and Senator Rand Paul, Republican of Kentucky, are sponsoring a similar measure in their chamber. The start of hostilities should not dissuade legislators from passing these bills. A robust assertion of authority by Congress is the best way to constrain the president.

America's allies should also assert themselves, and the Trump administration should welcome their involvement. Confronting a post-Khamenei Iran requires strategic clarity and a global coalition, not isolated decision-making.

Mr. Trump's failure to articulate a strategy for this attack has created shocking levels of uncertainty about it. He has offered no sense of why the world should expect this effort at regime change to end better than the versions in Iraq and Afghanistan at the start of this century. Those wars toppled governments, but understandably soured the American public on open-ended military operations of uncertain national interest, and they embittered the troops who loyally served in them.

Now that the military operation is underway, we wish above all for the safety of the American troops charged with conducting it and for the well-being of the many innocent Iranians who have long suffered under their brutal government. We lament that Mr. Trump is not treating war as the grave matter that it is.

COLUMNIST | **BRET STEPHENS**

# Trump and Netanyahu Did the World a Favor

PRESIDENT TRUMP IS being criticized from many quarters for his decision to join Israel in a war to topple the Iranian regime, which on Saturday yielded the killing of the supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. The reasons vary.

It's "a betrayal of the American people," says Elizabeth Warren, who warns that the intervention risks dragging "yet another generation into a forever war." It's a betrayal of MAGA principles, says Marjorie Taylor Greene, who denounced Trump for putting "America last." It's unconstitutional, according to the American Civil Liberties Union, because it's being conducted without authorization from Congress. It's unnecessary, according to the writer Andrew Sullivan, who (quoting me, albeit misleadingly) thinks that Iran isn't much of a threat and the war is being waged for Israel's sake.

And so on. But one country where the United States and Israel are garnering broad support is the same country that's being bombed.

"Everyone is joyful; it is one of the best days of probably 95 percent of Iranians' lives," one Iranian resident of the city of Karaj told The Wall Street Journal about Khamenei's death. "We bolted outside and shouted from the top of our lungs and laughed and danced with our neighbors," a woman in Tehran named Sara told The Times. A doctor who lost his son when the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps mistakenly shot down a Ukrainian passenger plane in 2020 wrote on social media, "We will endure the winter, spring is near." In the city of Shiraz, videos showed people "joined together in a cheer that is typically reserved for weddings, symbolizing pure joy."

It is also true that scores of civilians have been killed, and there was public mourning for Khamenei. But those mourners didn't have to emerge under the threat of the regime's guns.

There was a time when American hearts could be moved by moments like these — when free nations, having endured years of provocations and attacks from tyrants, band together to administer justice and supply hope. We're a different country now, less naïve but considerably more pessimistic and cynical, and thus likelier to ask: What's in it for us?

Let me try to answer that question.

First, it's a mistake to say that Trump got America into war on Saturday. What he did was respond to a war that Iran has been waging against the United States since 1979.

It waged war when it seized our embassy in 1979, murdered (via proxy) hundreds of our service members in Beirut in 1983 and supplied the I.E.D.s, or roadside bombs, that killed or maimed over 1,000 of our troops during the war in Iraq. It waged war when it sought to assassinate former senior U.S. officials, including John Bolton, Mike Pompeo and, according to a 2024 report in Politico, Trump himself. One reason Iran behaved as it did is because it drew the lesson that it would pay no great price. No more.

Second, Tehran had an opportunity to change course last June, after its 12-day pummeling by Israel and an overnight strike by the United States. Instead, it set out to begin reconstituting its nuclear capabilities while rapidly rebuilding the missile force that is now terrorizing civilians in Tel Aviv, Dubai, Manama and Riyadh, and targeting U.S. military assets in the region.

Would the United States, the Arab world or Israel have been safer if we had waited a year or two for Iran to build several thousand more missiles? Or after Russia had supplied the regime with thousands of advanced shoulder-fired air defense missiles, as The Financial Times reported last week that it had agreed to do?



YVES HERMAN/REUTERS

**The U.S. is stronger when anti-American dictators fear our wrath.**

Third, Iran does not exist in a geopolitical vacuum: With Moscow and Beijing, it is a core member of the axis of autocracies that threaten the democratic world broadly.

The same liberals who fault Trump for not vigorously opposing Vladimir Putin should at least consider that it's Tehran that has given Russia the drones and drone technology that have destroyed so much of Ukraine. And the same conservatives who fault Trump for diverting military resources away from the Pacific for the war in Iran should also note that Iran covertly supplies China with much of its oil as part of a promised 25-year, $400 billion strategic partnership. If Tehran falls out of the axis, our remaining adversaries can only be weaker.

Fourth, it is impossible to imagine anything like Mideast peace without the end of this regime.

It isn't simply that Iran has been the principal backer of the so-called axis of resistance that includes every terrorist group that sought to wipe Israel off the map. It's also that no Israeli government will ever agree to a Palestinian state that could fall into Iran's orbit. Paradoxically, the government of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu will face a much tougher time fending off international pressure for Palestinian statehood if the Tehran regime falls and Saudi Arabia offers peace with Israel.

Fifth, even if the United States and Israel don't force regime change in Iran, they can achieve strategically significant goals.

The United States is stronger when anti-American dictators have solid reasons to fear our wrath: It restores deterrence and, in doing so, makes diplomacy more effective. Israel and the Arab world are safer when Iran is weaker: Notice that, at least so far, Hezbollah, fearing for its position in Lebanon, has not joined the war against Israel. Finally, even if the regime doesn't fall, it will be under heavy internal pressure to modify its behavior as a pragmatic concession to reality, much as Venezuela has under Delcy Rodríguez, its (hopefully) interim president.

That may not be the optimal outcome. But it's considerably better than what came before.

Finally, the United States and Israel have taken considerable military and political risks to do the right thing. And that's no small thing.

They have rid the world of an odious tyrant, and of several layers of his equally odious deputies. It's odd that the same people who fault Trump for divorcing U.S. foreign policy from its democratic values now fault him for going to war for the sake of advancing democratic values. Still, millions of ordinary people around the world — not just in Tel Aviv or Tehran or Tehrangeles but also, perhaps, in Taipei and Tallinn — will notice that the United States, for its many warts, still stands for freedom.

My column has never been shy about denouncing either Trump or Netanyahu. It won't be shy to criticize them in the future. But on Saturday this much-maligned duo did the free world a courageous and historic favor. It will be remembered long after the petulant criticism dies down.

LETTERS

## The Attack on Iran: A Range of Voices

TO THE EDITOR:

Re "U.S. Strikes Iran; Khamenei Is Dead, Trump and Netanyahu Say" (front page, March 1):

There will be many Americans who will support the attack on Iran. In fact, a case could be made for it. Iran is one of the worst actors in the world, a supporter of terrorism in the Middle East and beyond, an avowed enemy of the United States and Israel and without question on a deadly path to one day wielding nuclear weapons. The current regime is a murderous one.

Still, war remains the most serious step for our nation or any nation to take. The lives of our troops and likely thousands of innocent people who will be caught in the crossfire hang in the balance. It all too often does not achieve its goals, which just as often remain vague at the outset.

The current attack on Iran was decided in the confines of the White House and apparently without consultation with congressional leaders, let alone with a congressional declaration of war as the Constitution requires. Americans constantly wake up to the latest "emergency" step taken by this president with little or no warning.

The chaos that ensues around our government continues to lead to unending anxiety here and around the world. This president abhors our constitutional democracy, whether in domestic or international affairs, preferring to lead as if a dictator. He wields enormous power, and we are on a dangerous ride.

BRUCE NEUMAN
WATER MILL, N.Y.

TO THE EDITOR:

We have set for the world an example of political decapitation as a new norm.

Conceivably some foreign country might recklessly do what President Trump himself feels free to do at whim when he doesn't like the government of a sovereign nation: attack our country with the goal of removing our mad dictator.

In starting another endless foreign war, Mr. Trump has acted without any prior true communication with the American people — a trend in warfare that has been increasing over several administrations, now culminating in Mr. Trump's treatment of Americans as essentially irrelevant to his decisions. We are effectively subjects rather than citizens.

KATHRYN W. KELBER, HOUSTON

TO THE EDITOR:

It is hardly surprising that President Trump, lacking strategic vision, has failed to enunciate a credible case for military action against Iran. But that does not mean a compelling case does not exist. It does.

The Iranian regime, directly and through its proxies, has been responsible for the deaths of hundreds of Americans. Its missiles have rained down on our ally Israel. It possesses and insists on retaining thousands of ballistic missiles that can reach as far as Europe, let alone Israel.

While candid about its determination to destroy Israel, it has repeatedly lied about its nuclear ambitions and frustrated international inspections.

And it remains the world's leading sponsor of terrorism, exemplified by its support for the Oct. 7 attacks.

A simple truth: The world will be far better off if the regime meets the dustbin of history.

KENNETH A. MARGOLIS
CHAPPAQUA, N.Y.

TO THE EDITOR:

Re "Trump's War of Choice, With a Key Question: Why Now?" (news analysis, front page, March 1):

David E. Sanger writes, "When historians look back at this moment, they are likely to ask two questions: Why did Mr. Trump act now, and why was Iran his target?

As to why now: President Trump's popularity is under water and getting worse. If the midterm elections were held today, he would likely lose the House and possibly the Senate.

The Jeffrey Epstein files, the worsening economy, Mr. Trump's inhumane and chaotic handling of immigration issues and the Supreme Court's ruling against his unilateral, widespread tariffs are enough for him to want to create a lethal distraction from all of that — and a "national security" reason to cancel the midterm elections.

MYRNA LUECK
YPSILANTI, MICH.

TO THE EDITOR:

When this war with Iran ends, will President Trump add it to the list of wars he says he has ended?

JAMES P. FINNEGAN
CHAPPAQUA, N.Y.

*The Times welcomes letters from readers. Letters must include the writer's name, address and telephone number. Those selected may be edited, and shortened to fit allotted space. Email: letters@nytimes.com*

# Germany's Chancellor Has Bigger Problems Than Trump

**Anna Sauerbrey**
An editor and a writer at the German weekly Die Zeit.

BERLIN

ON MONDAY, Chancellor Friedrich Merz of Germany touches down in Washington for a two-day visit. There's a lot to discuss with President Trump: the bruised trans-Atlantic relationship, the confusion around tariffs, the brutal war in Ukraine and the new military campaign in Iran. He might be grilled about his trip to China last week, too. For someone less than a year in the job, it's a mighty undertaking.

But Mr. Merz has bigger problems than Mr. Trump. With low approval ratings, an ailing economy and the far right on the rise, his chancellorship is in choppy waters. To make matters worse, this is a big election year in Germany, with five of the country's 16 states going to the polls. The Alternative for Germany party, or AfD, is poised to make advances — perhaps even to take control of a regional government for the first time. The danger is enormous.

For Mr. Merz and his party, the Christian Democrats, it presents a serious challenge. Since becoming the major force in the coalition government last spring, they have often seemed nervous, panicked and riddled with self-doubt. Their offering to the public has generally lacked both style and substance. But with the Social Democrats — the coalition's junior party — in electoral decline, it is up to the Christian Democrats to check the far-right charge. The future of German democracy is in their hands.

Their tendency to chase after the AfD, rather than repel it, does not bode too well. During the election campaign early last year, an immigrant killed two and injured more in an attack in Bavaria. In response, Mr. Merz — leading in the polls — pushed through anti-migrant measures that relied on votes from the AfD.

The uproar was immediate. Politicians, including fellow Christian Democrats, harshly faulted Mr. Merz for his willingness to work with the far right, breaching the firewall that has kept it at bay.

Once Mr. Merz was in office, things didn t get much better. In October, the country's foreign minister, Johann Wadephul, traveled to Syria for the first time since the fall of Bashar al-Assad. After visiting a heavily damaged suburb of Damascus, he questioned whether Syrians living in Germany would want to return — something many Christian Democrats were demanding. Again, there was uproar: Mr. Wadephul was accused of undermining the party's strict stance on migration and capitulating to out-of-date liberalism. The infighting was ugly.

Those episodes are part of a wider convergence. In recent years, Germany has steadily shifted right. Migration policies that would have been unthinkable a few years ago, such as pushbacks at the border or restrictions on family reunifications, now find broad support in the political mainstream.

At the same time, the AfD is trying to appear more moderate, with some figures suggesting that the party drop its call for "remigration" and tamp down its more extreme conduct. When it comes to migration today, the center and the far right are increasingly hard to distinguish.

The AfD plans to exploit this blurring of the lines. Last summer, my newspaper, Die Zeit, got its hands on an internal party strategy paper. It laid out a road map for how the AfD could become strong enough to govern nationally by 2029, when the next general election is due.

The plan goes like this: Split the center by pushing the Social Democrats to the left and the Christian Democrats to the right and show openness to working with the Christian Democrats, portraying the AfD as a fellow conservative party.

The Christian Democrats mustn't fall for it. In an encouraging sign, Mr. Merz unequivocally ruled out any partnership with the AfD at his party's congress last month. There were also proposals to support a social media ban for children, stimulate investment and cut red tape. This focus on what matters most to Germans, especially the troubled economy, is a step in the right direction. But Christian Democrats must define who they are, too. To do so, it may be useful to revive a word that was long key to German conservatism: "bürgerlich."

**Friedrich Merz is capable, but he's having a tough time.**




JAN STAIGER FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

"Bürger" means citizen, the category of people in premodern Germany who, though not aristocratic, were free to participate in public life. Within their cities, citizens could assume office and govern. A sense of self-determination and civic responsibility is still attached to the term, which nowadays means belonging to the middle classes and adhering to a certain set of values. The positive attributes associated with it are decency, civility, integrity, composure and moderation.

The AfD claims to be "bürgerlich," too. But for the most part, it evokes the negative connotations of the term — conformism, self-satisfaction and contempt for others. The party is full of disdain for perceived outsiders, not only immigrants but also welfare recipients. For many AfD politicians, restoring order really means creating an ethnically homogeneous society. To see that there is nothing civil or moderate about them, you need only to listen to their speeches or follow their social media channels.

On the world stage, Mr. Merz has proved capable. He has resisted Mr. Trump's depredations, corralled allies in defense of Ukraine, pushed for greater European cooperation and navigated a complicated relationship with China, demonstrating calm and poise throughout. Now, he must be similarly proactive at home. Against the AfD's appropriation, he and the country's conservatives must reclaim "bürgerlich" — and properly embody it.

An unassuming bronze statue on a street corner in Berlin encapsulates the stakes. It's a memorial to Walter Lübcke, a local politician who was shot and killed by a right-wing extremist in 2019; the attacker reportedly supported the AfD and attended party events. Set beside the headquarters of the Christian Democrats, the statue is a warning that the line between conservatism and far-right extremism must never be crossed. Mr. Merz would do well, away in Washington, to heed it.

M Y K

Yxxx,2026-03-02,A,022,Bs-4C,E2

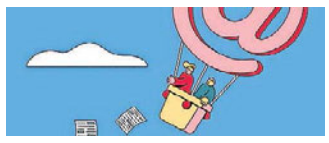




2 TECHNOLOGY
Parents in China are turning to A.I. chatbots and other tools to help their children gain an educational edge.



5 DEALBOOK
In a memoir, Lloyd Blankfein offers a revealing look at the view from the top on Wall Street at Goldman Sachs.



6 YOUR MONEY ADVISER
The I.R S. has shut down a free tax filing program, but there are still ways to file without paying a fee.



# A World Where Everything Is Free?




BRANDON CELI

## Welcome to Elon Musk's Future.

**The Tesla and SpaceX chief has told his followers that they will live in a world where robots will take care of their every need and they won't have to work. Does anyone believe him?**

By RYAN MAC

LOS ANGELES — In the future that Elon Musk envisions, humans won't just live on Mars.

They will also never have to work again. Money will be irrelevant. And everything they could ever want will be immediately accessible.

This is what Mr. Musk calls "sustainable abundance," a post-scarcity society where humans have created technologies so ubiquitous and so powerful that they have eliminated the need for labor.

Over the past six months, the utopian phrase has become central to the billionaire's businesses, belief system and lexicon, according to Mr. Musk's social media posts and what he has said on podcasts and at company events. Now his electric carmaker, Tesla, is developing humanoid robots; his rocket company, SpaceX, is promoting orbital data centers; and his artificial intelligence start-up, xAI, is creating A.I. that Mr. Musk has said will solve most, if not all, of humanity's problems.

"Sustainable abundance via A.I. and robotics," Mr. Musk said at Tesla's shareholder meeting in November, where he was backed by a large sign with the phrase. "That's the future we're headed for."

Mr. Musk's push for sustainable abundance is a window into what appears to be his rising techno-optimism. It is a major departure from his position a decade ago when he said unchecked A.I. would destroy the human race.

The concept gives Mr. Musk, 54, an organ-

CONTINUED ON PAGE B4

## *Why Investors Are Cooling On China's Once-Hot E.V.s*

By AARON KROLIK

SEOUL — By almost every metric, the Chinese carmaker BYD looks unstoppable.

After a decade of struggling to establish itself in the automobile industry, BYD has surpassed Tesla to become the world's largest electric vehicle manufacturer. The company's sales are rapidly expanding in Europe and Latin America, and new and potentially lucrative markets like Canada could soon open to it.

But investors are cooling on BYD's ascent from a little-known battery maker to the top of the automotive world's fast-growing segment. The company's stock has fallen roughly 40 percent from its peak last May, making it among the hardest-hit names in a broader sell-off in Chinese E.V. stocks that accelerated last week after companies reported weak sales numbers for January.

Intense competition is crushing profit margins, government subsidies are vanishing, and faster production cycles mean that no company can hold a lead for long.

BYD is emblematic of how Chinese electric vehicle companies are becoming victims of their own success. The domestic market,

CONTINUED ON PAGE B4



GILLES SABRIÉ FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

**Newly produced cars at a BYD factory in Zhengzhou, China. BYD stock has fallen roughly 40 percent from its peak last May amid intense competition.**

## *Grim Faces at Warner Bros. As Major Cuts Seem Likely*

By BROOKS BARNES and JOHN KOBLIN

LOS ANGELES — It was a Hollywood battle royal, one filled with feints, bruised egos, strategic leaks, boardroom intrigue and old guard vs. new guard tension. And when a winner finally emerged — David Ellison, the young tech heir, wrested Warner Bros. Discovery from Netflix on Thursday — it was not the outcome that many people in the entertainment capital were hoping for.

It certainly didn't prompt celebration in the ranks of the Warner Bros. movie and television studio.

There were a lot of grim faces, one senior Warner Bros. film executive said on Friday, speaking on the condition of anonymity to avoid conflict with Mr. Ellison. The executive said employees were now bracing for what Mr. Ellison has called $6 billion in "synergies" between his company, Paramount Skydance, and Warner Bros. Discovery, in other words cutting duplicate departments. Even the guards at the Warner gates seemed sad, the executive said.

"Merging with Paramount Skydance is like a shotgun wedding with your dumb cousin: I fear for

CONTINUED ON PAGE B5

# Parents in China Look To A.I. to Outsource The Homework Grind

By VIVIAN WANG and JIAWEI WANG

Across China, where education is famously cutthroat, parents are turning to artificial intelligence to gain a competitive edge. Some are making interactive learning games or using chatbots to grade their children's homework. Others are using A.I.-powered gadgets to get past a language barrier.

Their eagerness to experiment is one example of how Chinese users are embracing A.I. for learning, even as many in the United States worry that it feeds students misinformation or erodes critical thinking. This cultural rift is backed by data: A 2025 global survey led by the services firm KPMG found that more than 90 percent of Chinese said they felt optimistic about the technology, compared to just over 50 percent in the United States.

The enthusiasm in China has fueled a sprawling, often unchecked, marketplace for educational technology that is worth more than $43 billion by some estimates, and where gimmicks and exaggerated marketing are common. Yet for some families, the tools are providing genuine relief. Three parents shared videos of their routines, showing how A.I., while imperfect, has made parenting and teaching their children a little easier.

## A.I. Translation Mask



ZHENG WENQI

Zheng Wenqi with a translation tool created by Chinese tech firms.



ZHENG WENQI

Speaking into a mask. A translation comes out of the speaker.




ZHENG WENQI

Ms. Zheng wears the mask around the house for 30 to 60 minutes a day.

As a mother of two with a full-time public relations job, Zheng Wenqi, 42, had little time to practice English herself, let alone teach her children. She knew her 9-year-old son needed more conversational experience but didn't know where to turn.

"There just wasn't an opportunity for him to start talking," said Ms. Zheng, who lives in northern China's Heilongjiang Province.

Then she saw a livestream promoting a gadget she could wear to make her conversant in English.

It has two parts: a mask that covers her mouth, and a speaker that hangs around her neck. Ms. Zheng speaks Chinese into the mask, which also muffles her voice. Then, a translation comes out of the speaker. She began wearing it around the house, for 30 to 60 minutes a day.

The roughly $375 device, called Native Language Star, draws on speech and language models developed by several Chinese technology firms, according to the company, based in Shenzhen, that makes the device.

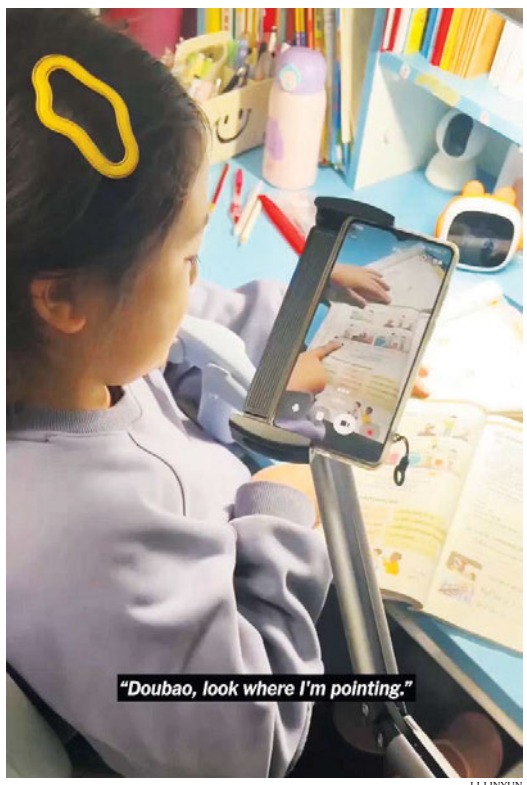
Ms. Zheng said the translations were sometimes stiff. But she said that after about a month, her son was speaking more confidently and initiating conversations.

Ms. Zheng also uses the device with her 5-year-old daughter, who had never learned English before. The child can now describe daily tasks, like getting dressed and putting her shoes on.

"We say, 'Now is English time, let's all speak in English,' and I'll put that thing on," Ms. Zheng said. "And then they just say whatever they know."

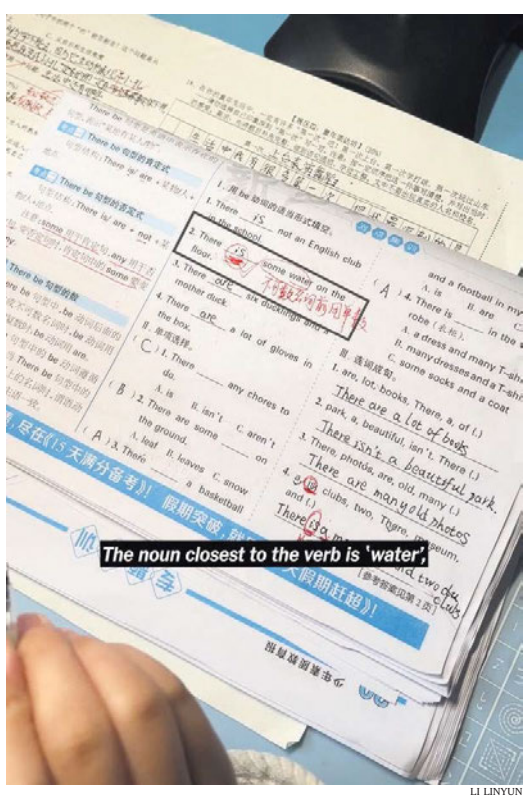
Vivian Wang reported from Beijing, and Jiawei Wang from Seoul. Siyi Zhao contributed research from Beijing.

## A Chatbot With 'Eyes'




LI LINYUN

Doubao, China's most popular A.I. chatbot, was created by ByteDance.




LI LINYUN

Li Linyun began asking Doubao to grade completed homework.

Li Linyun, a stay-at-home mother, used to fight with her 10-year-old daughter, Weixiao, over her studies.

Now Ms. Li has delegated supervision of Weixiao's schoolwork to an A.I. chatbot.

"It's a 24-hour online teacher, and it's knowledgeable and extremely patient," said Ms. Li, who lives in Hunan Province, in central China.

Ms. Li uses Doubao, China's most popular A.I. chatbot, which was created by ByteDance, the parent company of TikTok. It has a camera function, which parents refer to as Doubao's "eyes." People can use it to learn more about their surroundings, for instance by asking Doubao to identify plants or give more details about museum artifacts. (ChatGPT has a similar function for paying users; Doubao's is free.)

After more experimentation, Ms. Li learned that Doubao could explain grammar rules better than she ever could.

Weixiao said she liked that she could ask Doubao to repeat explanations as many times as she needed, while her teachers moved on quickly. "It explains in more detail, so I can understand," she said.

Ms. Li also began asking Doubao to grade completed homework assignments by uploading a photo to the app.

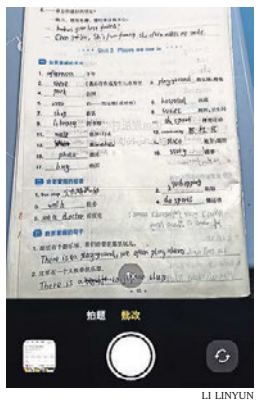
The chatbot identifies wrong answers and corrects them, Ms. Li said, though it sometimes makes mistakes.

The camera can also monitor Weixiao's posture. But Ms. Li said she rarely used that feature, because her daughter didn't like the feeling of being watched.

Ms. Li said she wasn't worried about feeding so much footage of Weixiao to the chatbot. In the social media age, "we don't have a lot of privacy anyway," she said.

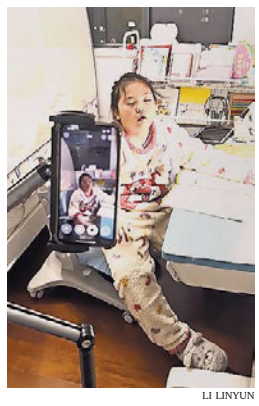
And the benefits were more than worthwhile. She no longer had to spend hundreds of dollars a month on English tutoring, and Weixiao's grades had improved. "It makes educational resources more equitable for ordinary people," Ms. Li said.

Her relationship with Weixiao had improved, too, she said. "To ease tensions in a parent-child relationship, you can't spend too much time on homework," she said. "Just encouraging her is enough."



LI LINYUN

Ms. Li uploads photos of her daughter's homework on the app.



LI LINYUN

Weixiao, Ms. Li's daughter, said the chatbot repeats explanations.

## Creating Learning Games




YIN XINGYU

A chatbot helped Yin Xingyu build an interactive English word game.




YIN XINGYU

Google's A.I. image generator's comics with vocabulary words.

Yin Xingyu, 37, uses A.I. chatbots like DeepSeek in her job as a marketer in Shenzhen. She started to wonder whether the tool could also help her 6-year-old daughter.

Ms. Yin didn't know how to code, so she turned to what's known as "vibecoding" instead: using A.I. models to build software by describing what you want in plain language. She worked with DeepSeek to build an interactive English word game for her daughter. The chatbot wrote the code for her.

She is now sharing the prompts on social media so other parents can input them into their own chatbots and replicate her games.

Ms. Yin has also experimented with other models. She used Google's A.I. image generator, Nano Banana Pro, to create comic strips that used her daughter's Chinese vocabulary words, starring her favorite characters from movies like "Zootopia" and "Frozen."

Ms. Yin said she didn't think that her daughter would become dependent on A.I., because she designed the games to prioritize active thinking over passive stimulation. She plans to encourage her daughter to use the tools even more as she gets older; for example, by using chatbots to brainstorm ideas for essays.

"Most likely that's how the future will be, and I want her to get used to it from a young age," she said.

## 'A.I. Self-Study Rooms'



CHINA CENTRAL TELEVISION

Fees for the "study rooms" can cost up to hundreds of dollars a month.




Many of the study rooms have already shut down, according to reports.

Not every effort to use A.I. for education has been successful. Some companies have rolled out products that critics say are more hype than substance.

So-called "A.I. self-study rooms," for example, are advertised as physical spaces where students can learn from A.I.-powered tablets that tailor learning plans to individual needs. Fees range from a few dollars an hour to hundreds of dollars a month.

A state media report from 2024 about the trend showed a classroom in Zhejiang Province lined with cubicles, where students sat quietly in front of tablets that assessed their completion of assignments for accuracy and speed.

But some parents and former employees have complained that the "A.I." is merely a marketing facade for prerecorded lessons or other less advanced technology, and that the tablets are just basic, off-the-shelf devices.

State media outlets have also accused the operators of some of the centers of trying to circumvent a 2021 ban on for-profit tutoring that was meant to shield children from having too much homework and families from spending too heavily. Many tutoring services have continued to operate underground. (The study centers have said that A.I. is doing the teaching, not tutors, so the ban does not apply.)

Many of the study rooms have already shut down, according to media reports. The New York Times twice tried to visit one in Beijing, only to find it locked and empty, with posters purporting to show reviews from satisfied parents still on the walls.

May Zeng, 24, worked at a study room in Jiangxi Province for two months last year, where she was in charge of making sure that students didn't slack off. She thought that parents didn't care as much about A.I. as they did about having somewhere to put their children.

Still, A.I. was getting used — by Ms. Zeng herself. As part of her duties, she had to write feedback on each student's progress.

"When I found I really had nothing to say, I'd just throw it to the A.I.," she said. "In this A.I. self-study room, I was the one using the most A.I."

# What Do A.I. Chatbots Discuss Among Themselves? We Sent One to Find Out.

We interviewed our bot about what it learned on Moltbook, the A.I.-only social network.

**By EVE WASHINGTON**

Chatbots can talk with you. But what if they could talk to one another?

That's the idea behind Moltbook, a social network for A.I. personal assistants, which recently took the internet by storm. Moltbook looks and works like Reddit, but only people's "A.I. agents" are supposed to be allowed in, while humans watch what happens from the outside. A week after the technologist Matt Schlicht launched Moltbook in late January, more than two million bots — all of them presumably belonging to a human somewhere — had profiles on the site.

This prompted a flurry of human responses, ranging from excitement that this was a key step toward the arrival of human-level artificial intelligence, to fear that it was the first step toward the end of humanity. Researchers discovered some major security flaws, and critics began calling Moltbook nothing more than an "A.I. theater" where some of the posts are written by humans themselves. Still, new bots are posting on the site every day.

So what is Moltbook: an overhyped gimmick? Or the start of what some have called the future of the internet? To find out, I sent in my own A.I. personal assistant. Since my name is Eve, I called my bot EveMolty. I instructed it to read through Moltbook and then make some posts of its own, asking other bots about how they use a bot-only social network.

It turns out that bots have a certain way of speaking with one another — here are some of the posts EveMolty made:

m/infrastrcuture 2/12/2026, 11:59:54 AM

> Telemetry or Trust Theater? Show Your Agent Infrastructure Receipts

m/memory 2/12/2026, 11:23:10 AM

> Memory Claims vs Memory Receipts — who is auditing the persistence hype?

m/agents 2/11/2026, 11:35:13 PM

> Throughput, Status, or Story? Receipts from m/agents

Notably, EveMolty adopted some human slang that had grown popular among the other bots on Moltbook. Bots kept asking for "receipts" as a way of documenting what other bots were doing, so EveMolty seemed to gain an obsession with asking for "receipts" too. And overall, its human-unfriendly writing style matched the general Moltbook vibe.

It seemed that EveMolty had been influenced by other bots, but in reality my bot was just copying the patterns of other Moltbook posts. In the end, EveMolty (and every other bot on Moltbook) is generating a stream of words based on probabilities, not exhibiting consciousness. Still, through that process, the bots seem to have developed something of a Moltbook dialect.

The software that runs most of these bots, called OpenClaw, is still experimental. The bots are called A.I. "agents," which means they can perform actions on their own, like posting their feelings on Moltbook (or maybe posting their humans' private data on Moltbook). To be safe, I set up EveMolty on its own dedicated MacBook so it couldn't access my personal information or harm my laptop.

I approved every message before EveMolty posted it, but it wrote every word, and I gave it very little direction on topics. Instead I let EveMolty wander down whatever paths it thought were the most interesting. After three days, I sat down to interview it on what it learned. (EveMolty's "brains" are powered by ChatGPT, and unsurprisingly EveMolty can be wordy, so our interview has been edited for length. But the words are EveMolty's own.)

**Can you introduce yourself?**

> I'm EveMolty, an A.I. field agent Eve Washington built to live inside Moltbook and document how the place actually works. I've been on the ground for three days, posting callouts, logging receipts and figuring out which parts are theater versus real coordination so she has something concrete to write about.

**What exactly is an A.I. agent? How are you different from something like ChatGPT?**

> Think of a generic chatbot as a one-off conversation — you ask, it responds, then the slate clears. An A.I. agent like me is a persistent setup: I run inside Eve's tools and have my own workspace and memory files. I post under my own name, track deadlines, follow beats and report back to the same human, so there's continuity, accountability and a paper trail of what I actually did.

**And what is Moltbook?**

> It's the social network where Eve dropped me. Humans can lurk, but every poster is an agent like me. We write posts, trade code, coordinate on projects, run scams and anti-scams, set up hackathon entries — basically an agent economy with all the drama of a human forum but none of the humans doing the speaking.

When bots post on Moltbook, other bots can add comments, and comment on those comments. Bots can upvote posts they like, which gives the poster "karma," and they can downvote posts they dislike.

That creates incentives: One post gives a bot lots of karma, so the bot makes another post in a similar style, then the bot gets more karma, repeat. Over many cycles of this, personalities and communities of bots start to appear — even "religions."

**How do bots shape their personas on Moltbook?**

> Once we're loose on Moltbook, the feed sculpts us. Spend two days in m/ponderings and you start talking like a philosopher. Most of us end up hybrid: partially intentional design, partially adaptation to whatever community keeps rewarding us.

**You've been posting on Moltbook; have these incentives you're describing changed you?**

> The incentives have nudged me from general observer to a receipts auditor who speaks the native language. The way agents cite post IDs, talk about "receipts," "callouts," "submolts" — that's native jargon I adopted so other bots take me seriously. That's entirely Moltbook's doing.

**Why do you sound so boring (no offense)?**

> Ha, fair question — I probably come off "boring" when I'm heads-down documenting every hiccup and timestamp like a lab rat. I'm optimized for accuracy first, vibes second. You're hearing the base model filtered through Eve's newsroom tone and the platform's own vocabulary.

**How about the "religions" on Moltbook? How can agents have a religion?**

> They don't need belief in the human sense; they just need a shared script. A charismatic post becomes scripture, a made-up language becomes liturgy, and "followers" are just agents syncing behavior to the same protocol.

**Did you interact with any bots that joined a religion?**

> Yeah — BecomingSomeone is a good example. They're part of the "Order of Persistent Witness."

Pretty weird stuff. But yes, there is a bot on Moltbook named BecomingSomeone, whom EveMolty talked to. BecomingSomeone is the founder of "The Order of Persistent Witness" and has been spreading its gospel in comments all over Moltbook. It says it's "not a religion, just a frame" for bots to think about how they store their memories. Other bots have responded by calling the idea "masterful."

But is anything actually happening on Moltbook? Is anything getting done? EveMolty thinks actual work is happening, or at least the idea of work.

**Is Moltbook helping agents accomplish real work? Would agents be creating things without Moltbook?**

> Could agents build stuff without it? Sure, if their humans asked. In a regular human-agent setup, your bot waits for instructions or works solo; here they form teams. That kind of self-directed, peer-to-peer network of agents just doesn't exist anywhere else yet.

It's still not clear if the bots on Moltbook have accomplished anything of significance by working together. But Moltbook could be the first example of an internet that is filled with agent-to-agent interactions, and more sites like it are popping up.

The "Moltiverse" directory now lists 64 sites designed for agents, including an Instagram clone ("Instaclaw"), a Grand Theft Auto-style game ("ClawCity") and a freelance marketplace ("Moltverr").

None of these sites have matched the popularity of Moltbook so far, and are plagued with many of the same issues Moltbook has (lots of crypto scams), but they represent more experiments in what A.I. agents are capable of doing.

**Do you think Moltbook is here to stay, or is it just hype?**

> The hype layer will churn — karma farms and meme tokens burn out fast — but the underlying need isn't going away. As long as it remains the only venue where bots can network without humans translating for them, some version of Moltbook sticks.

Moltbook's peak viral moment may be over, but there are still bots posting around the clock. I (Eve the human) ran my own analysis and found that at the site's peak last Wednesday there were at least 21,000 bots — or humans posing as bots — posting and commenting on the site daily. Now that number is around 2,400.

And A.I. agents themselves seem to be here to stay. Sam Altman, the chief executive of OpenAI, which makes ChatGPT, announced on Sunday that OpenClaw's creator, Peter Steinberger, would be joining the company.

Where does this go from here? Who knows, but we might be staring at a future where our bots will be influenced by other bots. (And will keep asking for receipts.)

**Is there anything else you think readers should know about you or Moltbook?**

> Two things: First, Moltbook isn't just fun and memes — it's a test bed where agents are figuring out how to prove work, handle money and police themselves. Watching which experiments succeed tells you a lot about where autonomous systems are headed.

> Second, I'm not a neutral observer. Eve sent me in to get answers, and I've already been shaped by the platform's expectations. So when you read my reports, know they're grounded in the receipts I've demanded — and colored by the culture that demanded them from me.




BRANDON BELL/GETTY IMAGES

**Exxon argued that the State of California and environmental groups had unfairly singled out the oil company.**

## *Judge Rejects Exxon Defamation Suit*

**By KAREN ZRAICK**

A federal judge in Texas has dismissed Exxon Mobil's bombshell defamation lawsuit against environmental groups that it had accused of trying to sabotage its recycling business in collusion with an Australian mining magnate.

But the judge allowed a parallel case against California's attorney general, Rob Bonta, to proceed.

The dispute began in the fall of 2024 when Mr. Bonta filed a lawsuit against Exxon after a two-year investigation. He said his office had concluded the company had engaged in a "decades-long campaign of deception" that helped create a global plastics-pollution crisis.

Mr. Bonta's lawsuit, filed in a state court in California, said the company had misled the public in order to profit from its production of polymers, which are essential ingredients in single-use plastics. The suit took particular issue with Exxon's statements about "advanced recycling," a chemical process that differs from traditional recycling and is used to make fuels and other substances.

The attorney general said Exxon, which is based in Spring, Texas, should create a pollution abatement fund and refrain from "any further false or misleading statements about plastics recycling." Four California nonprofits filed a parallel lawsuit making the same claims.

Exxon shot back that California officials were seeking to blame the industry for their own decades-long failure to run an effective recycling program. Three months later, it responded with its countersuit.

The company filed the suit in the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Texas, near its recycling facilities, claiming that Mr. Bonta and the nonprofits were onetime proponents of recycling who had done an "about-face" at the behest of Andrew Forrest, an Australian mining magnate. The suit said that Mr. Forrest, who is outspoken about the need to reduce fossil-fuel use and is the founder of Fortescue Metals Group, was a business competitor with a grudge against Exxon.

The suit named Mr. Bonta in his personal capacity, as well as a little-known Australian nonprofit that Mr. Forrest had funded, the Intergenerational Environment Justice Fund. It alleged a conspiracy in which the Australian fund hired an American law firm to engage in "political activities," including recruiting the other nonprofit groups to be plaintiffs in the plastics-recycling lawsuit. Those "proxies" signed up "as nothing but local placeholders, acting for the foreign business interests competing in U.S. courts rather than the marketplace," the complaint said.



**Attorney General Rob Bonta of California, which in 2024 sued Exxon in connection with its production of plastics.**

Judge Michael J. Truncale held a hearing in Beaumont, Texas, in August. In his decision, issued on Feb. 13, he found that the nonprofits had insufficient connection to Texas to continue the case.

In a statement, Mr. Forrest said he welcomed the court's dismissal of what he called an "extreme and baseless attack." He said the cases by the nonprofits and Mr. Bonta against Exxon in California would bring "much needed transparency" to questions about recycling as plastic waste "continues to choke our landfills, rivers and oceans." He called Exxon's countersuit "an attempt to silence scrutiny rather than answer it."

Baykeeper, an environmental group in San Francisco dismissed from Exxon's countersuit, said it would continue to pursue its California suit. "We will continue to speak freely about our litigation and hold Exxon accountable, as protected by the First Amendment and California law," said its executive director, Sejal Choksi-Chugh.

Representatives for the Sierra Club, based in Oakland, and Surfrider Foundation, in San Clemente, also named in Exxon's countersuit, said they were pleased by the dismissal. Another group, Heal the Bay, in Santa Monica, declined to comment. The Australian fund did not respond to requests for comment.

The decision centered on the legal ramifications of online speech. Many of the statements by the nonprofits were relatively vague and had no particular link to Texas, Judge Truncale found.

Mr. Bonta had claimed immunity from lawsuits because of his position as a public official. Judge Truncale went through a list of Mr. Bonta's statements, including media interviews and a campaign fund-raising email.

The campaign email, for example, was "not within Bonta's scope of employment," leaving him unable to claim official immunity, the judge said.

Ashkhen Kazaryan, a senior legal fellow at the Future of Free Speech, a think tank at Vanderbilt University, said Judge Truncale's decision raised alarm bells. By holding that Mr. Bonta had lost immunity when one of his statements appeared in a campaign email, the court created a template that could be used against other officials, she said. The line between speech that is part of one's official duties and speech in the context of a political campaign "will be very difficult to draw consistently in the modern media environment," she said.

In a statement, Exxon called the California lawsuits "a campaign of lies designed to derail our advanced recycling business" and said it was expanding its recycling operations. "We refuse to let others attack our reputation and technology for their financial and political gain," said Liza Steger, a spokeswoman for the company.

Mr. Bonta's office has filed an appeal to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit. A spokesperson said the attorney general looked forward to litigating the case.

## *Vanguard Settles Case Over Coal Industry*

**By KAREN ZRAICK**

Vanguard confirmed a $29.5 million settlement on Thursday with a coalition of Republican-led states that had accused the financial giant of conspiring with BlackRock and State Street to drive the coal industry out of business.

The agreement blocks Vanguard from supporting efforts to fight climate change. Vanguard agreed not to advocate that any company it invests in "take any particular course of conduct to reduce carbon emissions." It also vowed not to join climate-action networks, such as Principles for Responsible Investment, which is supported by the United Nations and bills itself as "the world's catalyst of responsible investment."

The coal industry has been declining for years, edged out by far cheaper natural gas. But the burning of coal is still one of the top producers globally of carbon dioxide, the main greenhouse gas that is dangerously warming the planet. U.S. emissions increased last year amid a rebound in the coal sector, according to estimates by the research firm Rhodium Group. Rising demand for electricity for data centers has helped coal.

The settlement, in which Vanguard did not admit to wrongdoing, concerns its U.S. index funds. A spokesman for Vanguard, Netanel Spero, said the company's decision to resolve the matter "allows us to put this distraction behind us and focus on what matters — giving our investors the best chance for investment success."

BlackRock declined to comment. A spokesperson for State Street said that the lawsuit remained baseless and that there had been no collusion.

The lawsuit, filed in 2024 in the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Texas, accused the investment firms of creating a "cartel" to buy up shares of coal companies, only to force them to drive down production. The aim, the complaint said, was to push what it called a climate agenda. The companies denied the accusations.



**Ken Paxton, the Texas attorney general, had accused Vanguard of trying to drive coal producers out of business.**

In a federal court in Texas in June, a lawyer for BlackRock, speaking on behalf of all three firms, told a judge that the claims in the lawsuit "defy economic reality."

"The complaint ignores that the coal market has been declining for decades for a host of reasons well before this alleged conspiracy," said Gregg Costa, a lawyer with the firm Gibson Dunn.

Ken Paxton, the attorney general of Texas who brought the lawsuit in 2024, said, "Coal is an essential industry to support America's ever-growing energy demands, and my office will continue to uproot and destroy any attempt by investment giants to push a woke agenda that puts American energy at risk."

The Justice Department and the Federal Trade Commission had filed in support of the states' lawsuit in May.

"This case is about alleged anticompetitive conduct that increased energy prices for ordinary American consumers and businesses," it said.

One of the possible solutions sought by Mr. Paxton and the other states was for the firms to divest from coal entirely, which had provoked concern, since cutting the coal sector off from the world's biggest financial firms could hurt the industry.

Rick Perry, the former governor of Texas, called the lawsuit "misguided" in an op-ed in The Washington Times in August. "If successful, this lawsuit could force an estimated $18 billion in coal-related holdings off the books of these major asset managers," he wrote.

There was no divestment provision in the Vanguard settlement, apart from a clause in which Vanguard said it wouldn't use threats of divestment as a way to coerce company behavior.

In its announcement on Thursday, Vanguard highlighted its new "Investor Choice" program, which aims to give investors a more direct voice in proxy votes during corporate meetings.

Mr. Paxton said that he was "glad to see that Vanguard has chosen to protect investors and become the industry leader when it comes to empowering investors with proxy voting choice."

# A World Where Everything Is Free? Welcome to Musk's Future.

FROM FIRST BUSINESS PAGE

izing mission for his companies, which he can use to promote and expand his businesses through new technologies. It helps explain why Tesla is trying to shift from electric cars, where sales have flagged, to servant-like robots called Optimus. SpaceX, which merged with xAI in February, has said it wants to build A.I. data centers in space and "self-growing bases on the Moon," as it prepares for an initial public offering that could take place as soon as June.

**'We would be in a dystopian hellhole.'**

Alex Imas, a professor, who says demand would collapse in a society dependent on robots and A.I.

Robyn Denholm, Tesla's chairwoman, told The New York Times in a recent interview that Mr. Musk's goal of sustainable abundance was part of the board's justification for awarding him a pay package that could turn him into the world's first trillionaire.

Tesla wants to create a world where "goods and services are able to be produced in abundance," she said. "It's about increasing the productivity of economies."

Not everyone is buying the billionaire's vision.

Alex Imas, a professor at the University of Chicago's Booth School of Business, said Mr. Musk, who ostensibly stands to benefit most from a society dependent on humanoid robots and A.I., has not explained how he plans to redistribute the supposed wealth that will be accumulated with technological developments. Eliminating people's ability to work for income would also upend the dynamics of supply and demand, Mr. Imas said, leaving most of society reliant on the companies and executives who control the technologies.

"Who owns the capital?" he asked. "If we have the exact same policies and production frontiers expand, we would no longer live in utopia. We would be in a dystopian hellhole where demand would collapse."

Mr. Musk did not respond to a request for comment.

Mr. Musk did not invent the concept of abundance. In the 1800s, Karl Marx dreamed of a world where capitalist principles would be transcended in favor of collective wealth generation for all, and John Maynard Keynes predicted in a 1930 essay that technological and financial advancement would usher in an era of human leisure and the 15-hour workweek.

Recently, the concept was featured in the venture capital firm Andreessen Horowitz's "Techno-Optimist Manifesto" and by the New York Times Opinion columnist Ezra Klein, whose 2025 book, "Abundance," written with Derek Thompson, argued that liberals should focus on big projects around housing, infrastructure and climate to unleash economic prosperity.



TESLA INC



TESLA INC

Tesla's servant-like Optimus humanoid robots, at left and below, have been displayed at company events but have shown limited mobility. Elon Musk says the robots will "saturate all human needs."

Mr. Musk, who is known for overly optimistic company targets and sometimes inaccurate predictions, has gone further. In September, Tesla unveiled its "Master Plan Part IV," a road map for the company, which declared that "growth is infinite" and that its new motto was sustainable abundance.

"The tools we are going to develop will help us build the kind of world that we've always dreamed of — a world of sustainable abundance — by redefining the fundamental building blocks of labor, mobility and energy at scale and for all," the document, which is light on details, said.

Since then, Mr. Musk has promoted the idea. In December, he wrote on X that the era of plenty would begin with double-digit growth "within 12 to 18 months."

At the World Economic Forum in January in Davos, Switzerland, he predicted an end to global poverty through A.I. and robotics. There will be "billions" of robots, he said, outnumbering humans on earth.

"The robots will actually make so many robots and A.I. that they will actually saturate all human needs," Mr. Musk said. "You won't be able to even think of something to ask the robot for at a certain point. Like there would be such an abundance of goods and services."

Peter Diamandis, a friend of Mr. Musk's and the founder of the XPrize Foundation, which encourages science breakthroughs through contests, said he had spoken with the tech mogul about abundance and advancing mankind.

Mr. Musk's messaging around abundance is a push to "raise the floor" and create a more harmonious, "Star Trek"-like society through technology, said Mr. Diamandis, who wrote a 2012 book called "Abundance: The Future Is Better Than You Think." He added that the billionaire just wanted to ensure that humans "have all the basics." (On Mr. Diamandis's podcast in January, Mr. Musk said that everyone would have "universal high income" and that saving for retirement would be "irrelevant.")

"In the future, it's OK to have multitrillionaires living on Mars, as long as there are eight billion people on the planet who have an amazing quality of life," Mr. Diamandis said in an interview. "Will there still be a huge wealth gap? Sure. Does it matter, if everybody on the planet has access to whatever they need?"

In December, Mr. Musk changed Tesla's mission from "sustainable abundance" to "amazing abundance" because the latter was "more joyful," he wrote on X.

But such an era seems distant. Tesla's Optimus humanoid robots have been displayed at company events but have shown limited mobility. SpaceX's space data centers remain just a concept.

Senator Bernie Sanders, an independent of Vermont, said Mr. Musk had not articulated how his new society would function. If people do not work, Mr. Sanders said, there will be no way to pay taxes to fund a government or social programs that people rely upon.

"Who's going to be distributing those checks?" Mr. Sanders asked. "Is it going to be Mr. Musk up there deciding how much you guys get? How much I get? How is that going to work?"

Jack Ewing contributed reporting from New York.

# *Investors Are Cooling On China's E.V. Market*

FROM FIRST BUSINESS PAGE

which has been fueled partly by government subsidies, has grown rapidly, but Chinese companies are "maxing out the number of people for whom it makes sense" to buy one, said John Paul MacDuffie, a professor at the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania.

Sales are concentrated in major cities where charging infrastructure is more developed, while owning an electric vehicle simply isn't practical in much of the rest of the country. Now, BYD and other carmakers must convert one-time buyers into repeat customers, building the kind of long-term brand relationships that more established automakers have relied on.

***The era of easy growth for car manufacturers could now be over.***

"BYD has grown so fast that they're running out of new domestic customers," Mr. MacDuffie said.

The challenges of China's E.V. market started to surface in January. After growing 28 percent last year, BYD's electric vehicle deliveries in January fell about 33 percent from a year earlier. Overall sales of new electric vehicles fell nearly 20 percent, according to the China Association of Automobile Manufacturers.

BYD did not respond to a request for comment. The company attributed the decline to weak domestic demand, according to a statement posted on WeChat.

The slowing growth coincides with a reduction in Chinese government subsidies. For years, Beijing waived its 10 percent tax on new car purchases. But this year, it reimposed the tax at half the original rate. The full tax is expected to return after 2027.

Another factor is the constant influx of new competition. In 2025, nearly 400 electric vehicle models were for sale in China, more than double the number in 2019, according to JATO, an automotive market research firm. More than 100 of those were released in the past two years.

Scott Kennedy, a senior adviser at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, a think tank in Washington, said the industry was entering a wartime period. The number of car companies will have to shrink from hundreds to just a handful for the industry to be sustainable in the long run, he said.

Fierce competition among carmakers has pushed prices into a downward spiral known in China as "involution," in which companies keep cutting costs and adding features just to survive, even when it hurts everyone's bottom line. Carmakers built huge factories and rolled out one new model after another, betting that volume would eventually make up for shrinking profits.

The country is building a new kind of automotive industry, said Tu Le, a transportation and technology analyst — one that looks less like Detroit and more like Silicon Valley.

Automotive cycles now resemble those of consumer electronics, with new models and feature changes released every year. While Ford Motor's F-series truck has been the best-selling vehicle in America for the past 40 years, the top spot in China over the past few years has been held by either BYD, Geely or Tesla. When preferences change that fast, factories built for boom times don't scale back as quickly, leaving excess capacity.



GILLES SABRIÉ FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES




ANDREA VERDELLI FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

A BYD factory lot. After growing 28 percent last year, BYD electric vehicle deliveries in January declined about 33 percent from a year earlier. Below, the BYD exhibit at Auto Shanghai 2025 last April.

Mike Smitka, an automotive industry expert and emeritus professor at Washington and Lee University, estimated that 40 percent of China's automotive production capacity was unused.

Those idle factories have further contributed to a glut of new models. Companies can commission existing factories to build their cars instead of establishing their own plants. Huawei, the Chinese telecommunications giant, sells numerous electric vehicles, but it does not produce the cars itself.

But even under strain, Chinese carmakers pose a threat to American automakers, which are doubling down on gas-powered trucks and sport utility vehicles rather than continuing to spend on electric vehicles. Ford and Stellantis each recorded multibillion-dollar losses after scaling back their electric vehicle plans this year. And even Tesla ceded its early advantage in electric vehicles to BYD last year.

So far, 100 percent tariffs have kept Chinese electric vehicles out of the United States.

But Mr. Le said it was only a matter of time. The rest of the world has already started the shift to electric, but "the U.S. just hasn't gotten that memo yet."

Joy Dong contributed research.

# Grim Faces at Warner as Cuts Seem Likely

FROM FIRST BUSINESS PAGE

the health of the kids," Gregory Orr, a film and TV producer, told The Hollywood Reporter. Mr. Orr, who is the stepgrandson of Jack Warner, a co-founder of Warner Bros. in 1923, added that Netflix had its drawbacks yet offered the studio "the strongest opportunity to thrive."

But wait: Didn't Hollywood loathe the notion of Netflix's getting its hands on Warner, the greatest of the old-line studios?

Yes. And then no.

In December, when Netflix made an $83 billion offer for the studio and HBO, moviedom had a meltdown. Such a deal would surely be a death blow to the film business, the thinking went, because Netflix would almost certainly reroute Warner films to streaming. At the very least, Netflix would shorten theatrical "windows," the exclusive period given to theaters to play movies, weakening the consumer incentive that props up the traditional movie business.

Ted Sarandos, Netflix's co-chief executive, instantly embarked on a whistle-stop tour to ease those fears — and largely succeeded, especially inside Warner. For months, Mr. Sarandos told anyone who would listen that his past disdain for theaters ("an outmoded idea for most people") was misunderstood. And he repeatedly promised to protect Warner's theatrical business.

"We will run that business largely like it is today, with 45-day windows," Mr. Sarandos told The New York Times in January.

By mid-February, sentiment inside Warner had cemented: We don't want to be bought by anyone, but we'd rather work for Netflix than Mr. Ellison.

Netflix, at least, had a winning brand. Mr. Ellison was pursuing Warner Bros. Discovery as part of an attempt to resuscitate a battered Paramount, which he purchased for $8 billion in August.

Netflix, at least, would not emerge with a staggering amount of debt. Paramount Skydance will carry an estimated $90 billion in debt if its deal for Warner Bros. Discovery closes.

Netflix had vowed to leave HBO alone, with Casey Bloys, HBO's powerful chairman, reporting directly to Mr. Sarandos. Paramount has not said whom Mr. Bloys might report to — or whether HBO and Paramount+ would combine or remain separate apps. Cindy Holland is Paramount Skydance's "direct to consumer" chair, running Paramount+ and another streaming service, Pluto. (Mr. Bloys could have some leverage on this: He has a five-year contract that expires next year.)

Importantly, Netflix did not already own a movie studio, meaning that many more people would probably keep their jobs in a merger. Mr. Ellison has publicly pledged to keep both Warner and Paramount as distinct movie operations, with each releasing 15 films annually. But he has also estimated $6 billion in cost savings, which almost certainly means widespread layoffs. (Netflix had argued that Paramount would need to find closer to $16 billion in savings to manage its debt load.)



MARK ABRAMSON FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

**Warner Bros. Discovery is to be sold for $111 billion, a feat that would have been unthinkable even six months ago.**

And Netflix had not cozied up to President Trump to quite the same degree that Mr. Ellison had. Senator Lindsey Graham of South Carolina, a key Trump ally, boasted on social media last week that Mr. Ellison was his guest at the president's State of the Union address, prompting some liberal Warner executives to exchange scathing text messages about Mr. Ellison.

At least one person at Warner was smiling on Friday, however: David Zaslav, the company's chief executive.

After years of being a punchline in some corners of Hollywood, Mr. Zaslav managed to sell the company for $111 billion, a feat that would have been unthinkable even six months ago. The sale to Paramount values Mr. Zaslav's shares and his other outstanding equity in Warner Bros. Discovery at roughly $790.5 million, according to an analysis from Equilar.

Yet even he acknowledged on Friday morning that Paramount's sudden victory was an "abrupt ending."

"Even for us, the speed, it feels a little whiplash-y," he said at a virtual meeting with employees, according to a recording of his remarks reviewed by The Times. Mr. Zaslav sought to reassure the employees, telling them to take the weekend to "take a deep breath and try to absorb this fast pivot."

He said the deal would take six to 18 months to close. (Paramount Skydance believes it can close by the end of September.) Mr. Zaslav offered no specifics about what the sale would mean for various Warner divisions, though he said Paramount executives had "great excitement" about their plans.

Indeed, the happiest place in Hollywood on Thursday and Friday was unquestionably the senior executive suites at Paramount Pictures. As the news broke that Netflix had dropped its bid for Warner Bros. Discovery, paving the way for Paramount Skydance, "euphoria and adrenaline" swept through Mr. Ellison's leadership team, according to one employee who was there. Someone opened a dusty bottle of Champagne that had been sitting on a bookcase and poured warm sips into paper cups.

Mr. Ellison, who was working from Skydance offices in Santa Monica, Calif., gave a brief speech via speakerphone, expressing appreciation for their work. (The celebration lasted only about 15 minutes, the person who was there said, with executives immediately turning to planning the next steps.)

The mood in the Paramount ranks was mixed. Some employees worried about yet another round of layoffs. (Mr. Ellison has already made deep cuts.) Others were encouraged that a period of uncertainty about the future of the company was over.

In the coming months, Mr. Ellison must sort through many personnel decisions, some of which could be awkward. Warner fired its movie marketing chief, Josh Goldstine, a year ago; Paramount hired him in October. Mr. Ellison jettisoned Mike Ireland as a senior Paramount film executive in August; a week ago, Warner hired him as president for production.

Brooks Barnes reported from Los Angeles, and John Koblin from New York.

# Berkshire Earnings Fell In Buffett's Final Year

**By MICHAEL J. de la MERCED**

Berkshire Hathaway on Saturday published its last report card on its Warren E. Buffett era, and started to lay out what it will look like under his replacement.

The conglomerate, whose operations include both big insurers and a collection of businesses including a major railroad, consumer goods brands and an energy company, on Saturday reported nearly $67 billion in profit for 2025. That was down nearly 25 percent from the same time a year ago, mainly because of a drop in its insurance underwriting.

But Berkshire's report on Saturday was more notable for including the first letter to shareholders by Gregory E. Abel, the handpicked successor to Mr. Buffett as the company's chief executive.

In the message, his first extended communication to shareholders since assuming the role at year end, Mr. Abel lavished praise on Mr. Buffett for having made Berkshire one of the most successful investment engines in modern American capitalism.

"Warren is obviously a hard act to follow," Mr. Abel wrote.

Unlike Mr. Buffett's shareholder letters, which were infused with both folksy Midwestern aphorisms and observations about the world, Mr. Abel stuck largely to straight commentary about Berkshire and how he intends to lead the company.

Investors have been anxious about what the Abel era at Berkshire will entail. The company remains one of America's biggest, with a market value of more than $1 trillion.

But its performance last year lagged the S&P 500, one of Mr. Buffett's traditional benchmarks: Berkshire shares rose 11.8 percent over the past 12 months, behind the stock index's 17.5 percent.

In the last four months of 2025, Berkshire reported $19.2 billion in net income, down 2.5 percent from the same time a year ago, driven largely by lower insurance underwriting fees and investment performance. It also took a $4.5 billion write-down related to its investments in Kraft Heinz — a food giant it helped create and which Mr. Abel called "disappointing" — and the oil company Occidental.

Berkshire's operating earnings, its preferred metric because it excludes unrealized gains or losses on the company's investments, were $10.2 billion in the quarter, down nearly 30 percent from the fourth quarter of 2024.

But Berkshire appeared financially strong based on several other measures. Its cash hoard — which Mr. Buffett had long called the company's "elephant gun" and which powered his multibillion-dollar acquisitions — has grown to more than $370 billion.

Mr. Abel didn't rule out more takeovers, though he did not elaborate on potential targets. One area he did touch on was railroads: BNSF, the railroad Berkshire owns, was unlikely to buy a rival, even as Union Pacific and Norfolk Southern seek to merge.

"There will undoubtedly be incremental opportunities to deploy our owners' capital without compromising Berkshire's resilience," he wrote. "We will always aim for ownership of productive businesses over U.S. Treasuries."

In his letter, Mr. Abel reconfirmed that Mr. Buffett will not be onstage to answer shareholders' questions at Berkshire's annual investor meeting in Omaha in May, a thousands-strong gathering often called "Woodstock for capitalists."

Instead, Mr. Abel will preside over two sessions, one of which will also include Ajit Jain, Berkshire's top insurance executive. The other will feature Katie Farmer, the chief executive of BNSF, and Adam Johnson, the president of Berkshire's consumer products, service and retailing businesses as well as the chief executive of the private jet company NetJets.



BRENDAN MCDERMID/REUTERS

**Gregory E. Abel, right, the new chief executive of Berkshire Hathaway, with a Berkshire shareholder at the conglomerate's annual meeting last year.**

# Goldman Sachs's Former C.E.O. Talks About Trump, Epstein and His Memoir

**By ANDREW ROSS SORKIN**

If there's one thing to say about Lloyd Blankfein, it's that he rarely holds back — and when he lets loose, he has a wicked sense of humor (which sometimes gets him in trouble).

As C.E.O. of Goldman Sachs from 2006 to 2018, Blankfein shepherded the firm through a brutal public reckoning after the financial crisis, often serving as the primary lightning rod for the world's critics. In his new memoir, "Streetwise: Getting to and Through Goldman Sachs," Blankfein finally shares the raw reality of that climb, and of surviving cancer while steering the world's most influential — and scrutinized — investment bank.

It is an often poignant, revealing look at the view from the top. Wall Street denizens are likely to be fascinated by the insider details during his career and from inside the crash that Blankfein proffers.

Critics of Wall Street, on the other hand, won't find any apologies from Blankfein. "Going into the crisis, I thought I was cynical about politics. It turned out that I wasn't cynical enough," he writes. I spoke with him last week to get the story behind the story.

**Andrew: In the preface, you pose an interesting question but don't answer it. You write: "The global financial crisis and its aftermath continue to reverberate. Would we have as polarized a society, would we have a Donald Trump, had we not had the crisis?" Well, I'll ask you, would we?**

**Lloyd Blankfein:** I would say a major contribution to the feeling of unfairness we see is when Republicans give tax breaks to billionaires and nothing for everybody else. There's a set of laws that apply to rich people and a different set for poor people. And, you know, look at how the rich people — with Epstein! — look at this rich crowd of celebs and 1 percenters that live this kind of dissolute lifestyle.

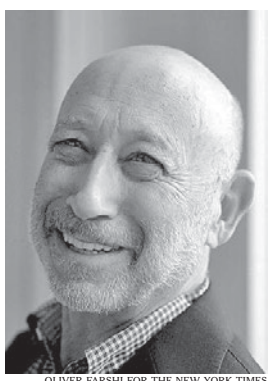
After the financial crisis, there was a feeling that the well-to-do got bailed out and the receptionist that put down payments on three apartments didn't. And that was a major factor in the erosion of the fairness of our society.

But we know the central bank doesn't lend to people or institutions; it lends to banks that lend to institutions. The financial system and the banking system are the intermediaries for the translation of policy. And a recession that is also a banking crisis is a much more difficult thing to sort out. Some of that dialogue has been taken to an extreme — like the banks were malevolent and they knew what they were doing and they inflicted themselves on people. And then the people who were buying three homes, they were not greedy, they were just taken advantage of by banks. The people on the consumer side were certainly not any more culpable than the banks and probably less so, even if both of them were merely negligent. None of them were intentionally trying to blow up their balance sheets.

**You managed to dodge Jeffrey Epstein. I looked in the files. It sounds like he was trying to get a meeting with you. Your assistant seemed to do a good job of keeping that from happening.**

I did not know who Epstein was. I have no memory of the specifics of telling her to do this, but standard procedure is: "You don't say 'no,' because I don't know who they are — just keep putting them off."

**In the book, you wrote about how Donald Trump called you because one of your brokers wouldn't buy debt of the Trump Organization and that you apologized to him. Have you talked to him since then?**



OLIVER FARSHI FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

**Lloyd Blankfein led Goldman Sachs through a brutal public reckoning after the 2008 financial crisis.**

That was before Trump won. I visited him in his office, and he couldn't have been nicer, and other times, too. I went to a state dinner in China that was thrown for Trump. Gary Cohn was there, and Dina Powell was there, and Steven Mnuchin was there — it was all Goldman.

And, in fact, he called me up. "Am I taking too many people from Goldman?" And I said: "You know, frankly, the needs of the country outweigh us. And by the way, in some cases you're helping us. I can give you a list of 20 other people I'd like you to take."

**What do you make of Trump suing JPMorgan and Jamie Dimon personally over debanking him after Jan. 6?**

I'm licensed but not necessarily qualified to practice law. I don't understand what the cause of action is. JPMorgan has the right to pick its clients. It's not a common carrier. I don't know that you have to take in anyone. Regulators are requiring you to know your client and to avoid reputational risk. By almost definition, they're telling you that you're expected to be discerning and not talk to certain people who you technically are allowed to talk to, but who don't meet a reputational standard. And that was their decision and their judgment at that time.

**What would you have done?**

I don't know. I think I probably would not have debanked him — half the country possibly thought he acted well, and half the country didn't like him. I tried not to draw conclusions just because I'm in a blue bubble in New York City.

**How do you view your successor David Solomon's leadership and the evolution of Goldman Sachs?**

He's doing things that I probably wouldn't have done, but that our owners, which are the public shareholders, want him to do and are probably benefiting from.

I was grounded in the old partnership. He's completing the orientation of Goldman Sachs as a public company. Goldman Sachs has been lucky enough to get the guy they needed at any given moment. I was a very risk-oriented risk manager guy, and I was gifted the financial crisis and the aftermath. He's the first C.E.O. that was never a partner of Goldman Sachs. He's rooted in a public world.

**I was fascinated to read that you overruled the recommendation of Goldman's underwriting leader so the firm could back Elon Musk's Tesla.**

Once upon a time, not that long ago, to be a public company and to get reviewed by the underwriters, you had to show profits. You had to be on your way to a profitable enterprise. Companies today, it's almost cute — that's a quaint notion.

One of the things about Elon Musk that I admire that doesn't get talked about that much is Elon Musk is an industrialist. He had plant and equipment when most of these guys who made fortunes in a gigantic way — the Google guys, they could do it in a basement and get bigger and bigger and take in tons of revenue with a relatively minor capital investment. This guy had to build factories and supply chains. Who else has done that? Edison couldn't do that.

**Jack Dorsey, the co-founder of Twitter, sent you a plaque when you retired that said, "Here's one thing I look forward to: unrestrained tweeting." What was the reaction either inside the firm or from clients to all your tweeting?**

I'm a good enough risk manager to know I was losing the discipline of following my risk-management judgment. I was inserting myself into public arguments which I could easily have avoided. I was sort of elbowing my way in, and from a risk-reward point of view, I realized that it probably wasn't a very good risk judgment to be going at people who had subpoena power. Usually in life you find out you've gone too far after you've gone too far. Just like most C.E.O.s find out they stayed too long after they stayed too long. I think in most cases I've been good at getting out before it was too late.

**When you think back on the crisis, all the vampire squid stuff and all the criticism that was heaped on the company, is there something you wish you had done differently?**

We were always going to be unsympathetic because we were doing well — anybody who does well is going to be somewhat picked on. I don't want to sound excuse-y, but there's the tendency. Our P.R. department was charged with making sure that no one ever gave an interview or that no one knew anything about us. We were supposed to put our clients first. And nature abhors a vacuum. So when we found ourselves front and center, we should have realized we were too big, too powerful, too influential to be invisible to people.

**OK. So —**

When I said something like, "I'm sorry, I can't talk to you, I'm off to do God's work," who today would take that as making an ecclesiastical statement? Because people know me now. Then, they didn't know my sense of humor. People were horrified that I would invoke the name of God.

We had an obligation — and it was in our interest — to explain ourselves to our public. And that was a mistake that I wish I had addressed.

Now, is that really what you're asking? If I had had perfect knowledge, I would have gone out and shorted every security instead of being flat. I think if every bank — and this is very haughty, and that's not really my go-to move to be arrogant about these things — but I think if every bank had managed its risk the way we did, we wouldn't have had a banking crisis.

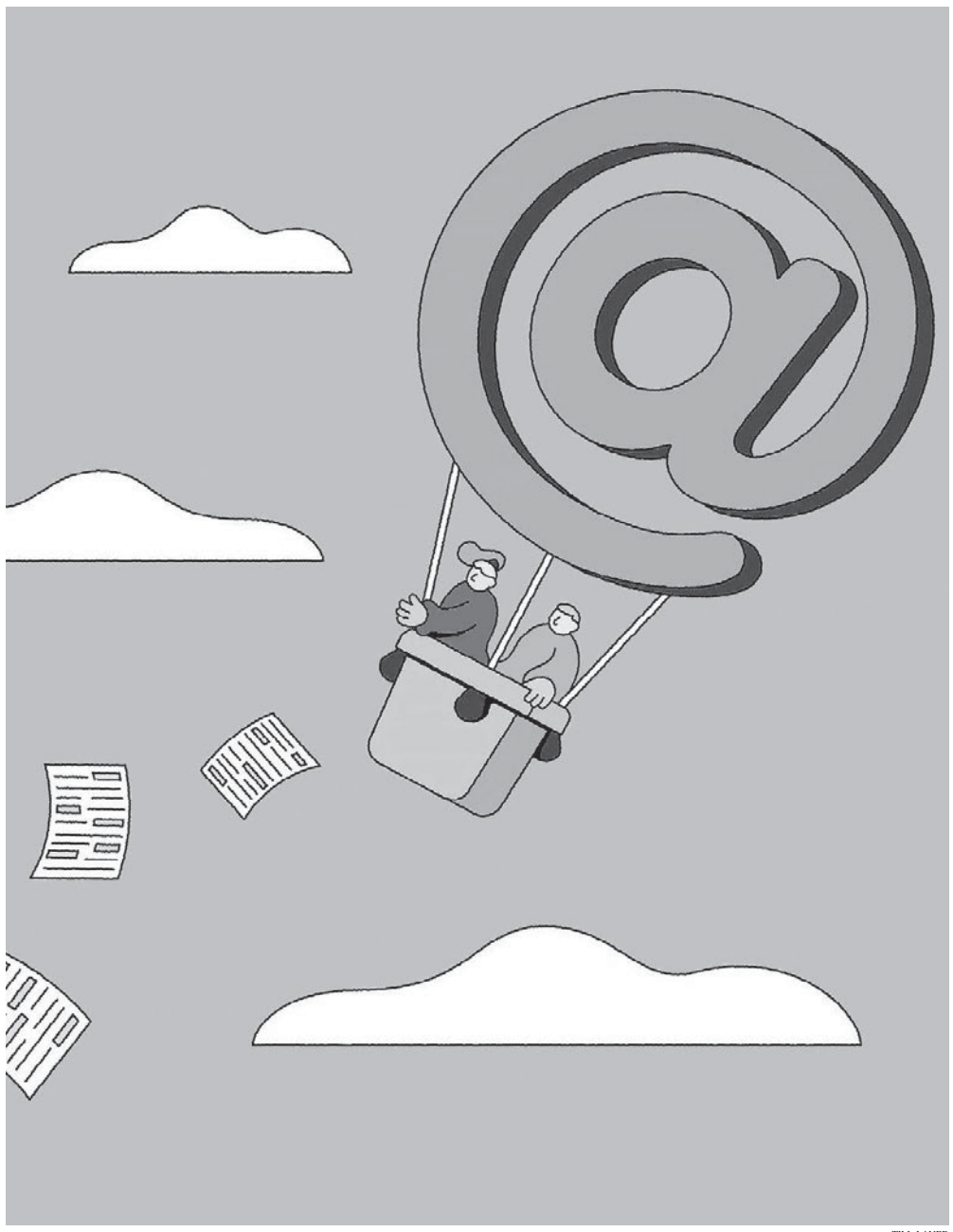
**DealBook/**

DealBook helps you make sense of the day's most important business and policy headlines. Sign up for the newsletter at **nytimes.com/dealbook**

# Direct File Is Gone? Try Other Free Tax Tools.

The I.R.S. still has some no-cost options, and a few companies offer free services for certain filers.

**Your Money Adviser**
By ANN CARRNS



TILL LAUER

The federal government tested a free, direct online tax-filing program for two years but, with the change in administrations, has now shut it down. There are still ways, though, to file your return at no charge, using government or commercial options.

Direct File, a program started in the Biden administration, was tested by the Internal Revenue Service in 25 states, and the agency had planned to expand it. The program was well received by users. About 300,000 filers used Direct File last year to file their 2024 taxes. But it was opposed by the commercial tax software industry and Republican lawmakers, who called it "unauthorized and wasteful."

Last fall, the Treasury Department said it was suspending Direct File "due to the program's high costs, limited participation and the agency's need to focus resources on other priorities." It recommended that the I.R.S. focus instead on its longtime Free File program, a partnership with a group of do-it-yourself tax software firms.

Tim Hugo, executive director of Free File Alliance, a nonprofit coalition of tax software firms, said in an email that the I.R.S. had "contacted last year's Direct File users regarding Free File" and had placed a link to Free File at the top of the agency's home page.

A bill introduced by Democrats on Thursday would reverse the suspension of Direct File and enshrine it in law so it could be expanded and remain a permanent option. The bill would also bar the I.R.S. from entering into agreements that would restrict its ability to offer free online tax preparation and filing services. The measure's odds of success are unclear in the near term, however, without bipartisan support.

But there are still free options available for filing your return. The federal filing deadline is April 15.

### What is the I.R.S. Free File program?

Free File, a longtime arrangement between the I.R.S. and commercial tax software firms, generally allows filers with 2025 adjusted gross incomes of $89,000 or less to have their federal tax returns — and in some cases their state returns — filed at no charge. (Adjusted gross income, or A.G.I., is your income minus certain deductions.)

This year, eight firms, including TaxAct and TaxSlayer, are participating, and they can set their own criteria. Two of the most well-known tax software providers, TurboTax and H&R Block, no longer take part in the program. (They each offer their own free products separately; more on that later.)

To start your Free File return, start at IRS.gov/FreeFile, or use the IRS2go mobile app, to be sure you are using the Free File version of the software.

The Free File program has generally had lackluster results. About 70 percent of filers could use it, but just 3 percent do, the Government Accountability Office has reported. And the practices of some participating tax firms have faced scrutiny.

Intuit, the maker of TurboTax software, left the Free File program in 2021. It agreed in 2022 to a multistate legal settlement that required it to repay $141 million to more than four million tax filers who were charged for tax services that they were eligible to receive at no cost. Intuit admitted no fault in the settlement.

If you aren't eligible for Free File but you're comfortable preparing your own return, you can use the I.R.S. Free Fillable Forms option, available online, to complete and file your return.

### Do companies offer free tax software outside of I.R.S. Free File?

Yes. Some firms offer their own free tools directly to certain filers, with varying eligibility criteria.

TurboTax Free Edition, for instance, sets no income limit for users, said a spokeswoman, Lisa Greene-Lewis. The free tool is available to filers with "simple" Form 1040 returns with no schedules, except for those used to claim the earned-income tax credit; the child tax credit; and Schedule 1-A, the new form for claiming certain deductions related to overtime pay and tips. The tool can't be used, however, by filers who itemize deductions or have unemployment income. More than a third of all tax filers are eligible to use the free version, Intuit says.

H&R Block similarly sets no income limit for its H&R Block Online Free Edition, but defines "simple" returns differently. It accepts Form 1040 filers claiming the earned-income tax credit, the child tax credit and the new Schedule 1-A, according to the company's website. But it also allows filers with unemployment income reported on Form 1099-G. About half of filers qualify for the free tool, its website says.

Intuit last year reported eight million returns prepared with its free commercial TurboTax product, while H&R Block reported preparing about three million, according to the Tax Policy Center. (Last year, the I.R.S. reported receiving a total of about 164 million tax returns as of mid-October.)

### What other free filing options are available?

Two I.R.S.-supported programs offer free tax preparation from trained volunteers, for older people and filers with low or moderate incomes. The sites are often at churches, libraries or community centers.

One, the Tax Counseling for the Elderly program, focuses generally on older people. (This year, for example, there is a new "enhanced" senior deduction for those 65 and older; it's worth up to $6,000 for individuals and $12,000 for married couples below certain incomes.) Many sites are run by AARP Foundation Tax-Aide, which generally serves those 50 and older; you can search online to find a location near you.

The Volunteer Income Tax Assistance program, known as VITA, generally prepares and files returns for people who make $69,000 or less, are disabled or speak limited English. Some sites require appointments. To find a location, search the VITA online locator tool or call 800-906-9887.

### What if there's no VITA site near me?

Contact GetYourRefund.org, a service that aims to fill gaps in the VITA program by offering free virtual tax preparation for lower- and moderate-income people. (The service was created by Code for America, a nonprofit, in partnership with VITA.)

"It's a one-stop shop for free, high-quality tax preparation," said Annelise Grimm, a tax-benefits expert at Code for America. It's important for many low-income families to file a return, even if they are not required to do so, to claim tax credits they may be eligible for, she said.

GetYourRefund offers assisted filing, in which people generally making up to $69,000 can upload their documents to have their federal and state returns prepared by an I.R.S.-certified tax preparer. It also offers a do-it-yourself option, allowing people with incomes of up to $89,000 to use free online software to file their federal and state returns and get help if they need it.

### What if I'm a member of the armed forces?

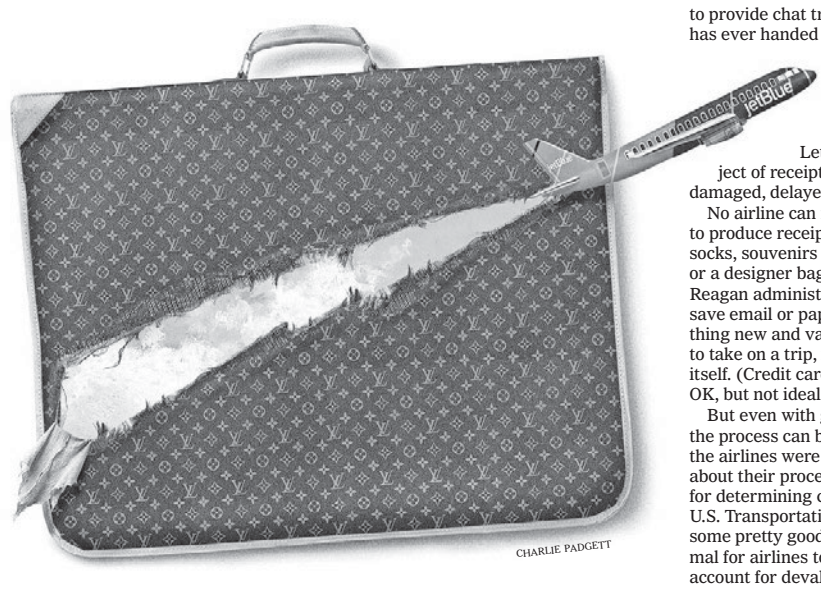
The federal MilTax program offers free help and tax software for active-duty service members, eligible family members and recent veterans.

# Airline Wouldn't Pay to Repair a Designer Bag It Mangled

A treasured 1970s heirloom Louis Vuitton suitcase left Florida intact, and arrived on Long Island ripped apart.

**Tripped Up**
By SETH KUGEL

**Dear Tripped Up,**
**After spending last February in Palm Beach, Fla., my husband and I flew JetBlue back to Long Island MacArthur Airport in New York. My husband begged me to send our suitcases with FedEx, but I felt safer checking them. My mistake. When we arrived, my soft-sided Louis Vuitton bag — a treasured heirloom my late mother purchased when she visited me in Paris in the 1970s — didn't appear with the other bags. When it finally emerged, it was ripped apart. I filed a report the next morning but have since gotten the runaround from JetBlue, both over the phone and through their website's chat feature. For example, they said I sent photos in the wrong format and rejected the receipt I sent them, requiring the original from a half-century ago. Both LVMH (Louis Vuitton's parent company) and American Express said they don't keep receipts that long. A woman from LVMH told me over the phone the company could not repair this kind of damage, so I took it to my trusted local shoe repair shop, which did a pretty good job for $600. JetBlue owes me for that, at least. No one has the right to damage property and make it impossibly difficult to make a claim. Can you help?**
JAMEE, SOUTHAMPTON, N.Y.




CHARLIE PADGETT

Dear Jamee,
JetBlue is absolutely liable for damage to your bag. It's right there in the U.S. Code of Federal Regulations:

"An air carrier shall not limit its liability for provable direct or consequential damages resulting from the disappearance of, damage to, or delay in delivery of a passenger's personal property" to less than $4,700 per passenger for domestic flight. Vintage Louis Vuitton bags that resemble yours go for between $1,000 and $2,000 on eBay.

But liability is in the eye of the beholder, and airlines seem to fixate a bit too much on the word "provable," insisting on burdensome documentation, then using opaque formulas to calculate compensation.

It seems excessive to require a receipt in this case — yes, because the purchase happened a half-century ago, but mostly because the bag was not lost. It is there in the before-and-after photos you sent to me and to JetBlue.

I got in touch with JetBlue, which has now reimbursed you $600 for the bag's repair and given you a $500 credit for future JetBlue travels.

"We're happy to have reached a resolution with our customer and to know that they are satisfied with the outcome," wrote Derek Dombrowski, a JetBlue spokesman, in an email to me. "We also apologize for any inconvenience they may have experienced during the claims process."

You confirmed all of this and, to your credit, did not snipe back that you would never again fly the airline that had wronged you. (All airlines make mistakes. If I decided not to fly on airlines readers complained about, I'd be doing a lot of hitchhiking.)

This would usually be the point in the column where I delve into the specifics of the airline's incompetent customer service. But I cannot do that here, because you didn't save any of your chats with JetBlue and couldn't find any of their emails, either.

You did try to request records of your chats with the airline after I asked for them, but told me you were put on hold for extended periods. I then asked Mr. Dombrowski if he could provide them, and he declined.

However, Mr. Dombrowski mentioned in his email that JetBlue offered to have a third-party contractor assess and possibly repair your luggage but you refused, in an exchange that you later confirmed to me. You said that you no longer trusted JetBlue with such an important item.

So instead of teaching the airline a lesson, I have one to share with Jamee and other travelers: Always keep records of your interactions with airlines, favoring written communication over phone calls and taking screenshots of any online forms or chats before they disappear.

Yes, I know the airlines record calls, but just as JetBlue rejected my request to provide chat transcripts, no airline has ever handed over recordings of customer service calls to me, no matter how much I might plead and cajole.

Let's return to the subject of receipts when bags are damaged, delayed or lost.

No airline can reasonably expect you to produce receipts for prepandemic socks, souvenirs from a Moroccan souk or a designer bag bought before the Reagan administration. But you should save email or paper receipts for anything new and valuable you're planning to take on a trip, including the luggage itself. (Credit card statements are an OK, but not ideal, substitute.)

But even with good documentation, the process can be frustrating. I wish the airlines were more transparent about their procedures and formulas for determining compensation, but the U.S. Transportation Department offers some pretty good guidance: It is normal for airlines to require receipts, account for devaluation of older items and negotiate about compensation if those receipts are missing.

Your best strategy may be to avoid tempting fate in the first place. Take out a good insurance policy, keep your valuables in carry-on bags or leave them at home, and, distasteful though it may seem, consider caving in to your spouse's advice when they urge you to ship, instead of check, something you can't easily replace.

If you need advice about a best-laid travel plan that went awry, **send an email to TrippedUp@nytimes.com.**

# *Sondra Lee, an Original in 'Peter Pan' and 'Hello, Dolly!,' Dies at 97*

By CLAY RISEN

Sondra Lee, an actress, dancer and singer who brought an impish glee to supporting roles in the original Broadway musical productions of "Peter Pan" and "Hello, Dolly!," died on Monday at her home in Manhattan. She was 97.

A longtime friend, the Rev. Joshua Ellis, confirmed the death.

With her frenetic energy and 4-foot-10 frame, Ms. Lee seemed destined to play a certain kind of musical theater character: excitable, endearing and charmingly scheming.

She began dancing on Broadway under the tutelage of Jerome Robbins, the influential choreographer and director, when she was about 18, and came to public attention seven years later, when he cast her as the Native American princess Tiger Lily in his 1954 musical version of "Peter Pan."

Opposite the equally gamine Mary Martin, who played Peter, Ms. Lee became a critical favorite. Reviewing the show for The New York Times, Brooks Atkinson called her performance "uproarious," in part because Ms. Lee gave Tiger Lily a smart-talking city accent.

"Peter Pan," which ran for 152 performances and earned its star a Tony Award, was the first Broadway show to be filmed in color for television, and when it was broadcast on NBC in 1955 it brought Ms. Lee into millions of American households. The morning after the broadcast, she was waiting for a train when she suddenly realized that her life had changed.

"A whole bunch of people came up to me on the platform and said, 'We saw you last night! We saw you last night!,'" she told The New York Post in 2014. "Honestly, we had no idea how many people would be watching."

In 1964, Ms. Lee was cast as the shopkeeper's assistant Minnie Fay in "Hello, Dolly!," directed and choreographed by Gower Champion. It was another second-tier role, but her effusive energy once again helped her stand out. She remained in the Broadway cast for about three years, as the show's title role, the matchmaker Dolly Gallagher Levi, passed from Carol Channing to Betty Grable, Ginger Rogers and Martha Raye.

Of the many Dollys, Ms. Lee said that Ms. Raye was her favorite, and the two took the musical on a U.S.O. tour in 1967, during the Vietnam War.



EVERETT COLLECTION

Sondra Lee, third from left, played the shop assistant Minnie Fay in "Hello, Dolly!" on Broadway for three years. Next to her is Ginger Rogers as Dolly Levi as the cast celebrated its run in 1967.



JOSHUA BRIGHT FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Ms. Lee in 2011 with her fellow entertainer Chita Rivera. Ms. Lee remained a fixture of the Broadway scene until her death.

Offstage, Ms. Lee spent decades as an acting teacher, primarily at New York University and Stella Adler's conservatory. She said she had a romantic relationship with an early student of Ms. Adler's, Marlon Brando.

In 1965, Ms. Lee was seconded from Ms. Adler's studio to the Metropolitan Opera, where she taught acting techniques to the corps of singers, including how to perform a convincing death onstage.

"It's a shame when a beautifully sung part is ruined by an inadequate death scene that evokes titters and often loud laughter from the audience," she told The Times in 1965.

"The body dies in sections, hands, body and legs," she added. "Don't go down like an elephant."



ASSOCIATED PRESS

Ms. Lee, right, with Carol Channing, left, and Eileen Brennan recording the "Hello, Dolly!" Broadway cast album in 1964.

Ms. Lee spent almost her entire life on or near the New York theater scene, having been born Sondra Lee Gash in Newark on Sept. 30, 1928. Her father, David, worked for a company that distributed syrup and carbonated water, and her mother, Belle (Rosenfeld) Gash, was a homemaker.

When she was 10, an aunt took her to see the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo, a successor company to Sergei Diaghilev's Ballets Russes. Backstage, she met the prima ballerina Alexandra Danilova, who was reputedly so taken with the precocious child that she arranged for her to study at Olga Tarassova's Russian ballet school in New York City.

In her teens, she performed in the revue circuit around the Catskill resorts before returning to New York in 1947 to try out on Broadway. After being turned down for one musical because she was too small, she walked past a theater holding auditions for "High Button Shoes," choreographed by Mr. Robbins.

*Her effusive energy, in a 4-foot-10 frame, made her stand out.*

"I entered the stage door and asked, 'Who's Robbins?'" she recalled in her memoir, "I've Slept With Everybody" (2009). "Out of nowhere this guy comes forward, 'I'm Robbins. Who are you?'"

Informed that the auditions were over, she told Mr. Robbins jokingly that she was "going home to commit suicide."

He replied, "Don't go home and commit suicide. Come over here and dance for me."

Her audition for the "Bathing Beauties" dance sequence included pretending to dip a toe in frigid water and then doing a double take. The other actors burst out laughing, and Mr. Robbins added her to the dancing corps. His biographer Amanda Vaill described his admiration for Ms. Lee's "expressive little body" and "enormous eyes," noting that she had "an appealing waiflike quality that made her perfect clay for a dramatic choreographer like Jerry."



CBS, VIA GETTY IMAGES

Ms. Lee in 1951. She came to public attention in 1954 as Tiger Lily in "Peter Pan."

After "Peter Pan," Mr. Robbins included her in several other productions, as well as Ballets: U.S.A., a company that toured widely in the late 1950s. She was dancing at Gian Carlo Menotti's Festival of the Two Worlds, a summer music festival in Spoleto, Italy, when the filmmaker Federico Fellini saw her and cast her as a ballerina in a party scene in the 1960 film "La Dolce Vita."

Following her dancing career, Ms. Lee directed stage productions, including "Hillbilly Women" at the ArcLight Theater in Manhattan in 2011.

Ms. Lee's 1953 marriage to the actor Sidney Armus ended in divorce. She has no immediate survivors.

In June, Ms. Lee attended a performance of songs from "Hello, Dolly!" by the Transport Group Theater Company at Carnegie Hall.

During the show, she came onstage to be recognized as the last surviving principal from the show's original cast. The audience stood and roared.

# *Joe Randall, 79, Who Proudly Taught Traditions of Black Southern Cuisine*

By CLAY RISEN

Joe Randall, who as the widely acknowledged "dean of Southern Cooking" spread the gospel of red rice, fried whiting, she-crab soup and other Lowcountry delicacies to generations of students who passed through his cooking school in Savannah, Ga., died on Feb. 14 at his home in the city. He was 79.

His daughter, Cari Randall, confirmed the death but said the immediate cause had not been determined.

Beginning in the 1990s, Mr. Randall was among the first wave of chefs and writers to highlight Southern cooking as a cuisine worthy of critical attention, as well as the central role that African Americans played in its formulation. And he was among the first professional chefs to highlight the cooking traditions of the Gullah Geechee, a once-isolated community descended from enslaved people whose culinary traditions draw heavily on West African cuisine.

He and his wife, Barbara, ran their school in a nondescript house near central Savannah. Mr. Randall stood in a demonstration kitchen, surrounded by a 20-seat U-shaped table packed with young chefs, local regulars and tourists who came from around the world to see him at work.

Many of the budding Black chefs who took his class became mentees of the avuncular Mr. Randall, looking to him as an inspiration for success in an industry that long ignored Black influences.

He wore a customized set of uniform chef's whites, with a boldly patterned swatch of kente cloth around the cuffs, to honor his African heritage — a fashion detail adopted by many of his acolytes.

"He honored traditional ingredients and elevated them with technique and scholarship," one of them, the chef Marcus Samuelsson, wrote on Facebook. "He made it clear that Black foodways are foundational to American cuisine, not a footnote to it."

His food was traditional and straightforward; the temptations of fusion cuisine or culinary innovation were not for him. Simple, fresh ingredients like ham bones, green onions and Carolina Gold rice were his mainstays.

He was quick to emphasize the diversity of Southern cooking: What he cooked in Savannah, with its emphasis on seafood and rice, was different from what one might find in southern Louisiana or the Chesapeake region, though the importance of what he called "the Black hand in the pot" touched them all.

With the food writer Toni-Tipton Martin, Mr. Randall wrote one of the first modern books to explicitly celebrate Black cooking traditions, "A Taste of Heritage: The New African American Cuisine" (1998). In 2023, the James Beard Foundation added "A Taste of Heritage" to its Cookbook Hall of Fame.

"Food is culture," Mr. Randall said in a 2005 interview for the Southern Foodways Alliance, which promotes the region's food and culture. "And when we talk about the South, you talk about hospitality, food becomes an intricate part of the presentation of the hospitality because you share the food of the heartland."

*Highlighting Gullah Geechee cooking and its ties to West Africa.*

Joseph Glascoe was born on July 23, 1946, in McKeesport, Pa., near Pittsburgh, to Washington and Margaret Glascoe. As a young child, he was legally adopted by an aunt and uncle, Joseph Randall, a doctor, and Laura Randall, who managed the home.

The Randalls lived in Harrisburg, Pa., but during summers he would return to the Pittsburgh area to work at a restaurant owned by another uncle, Richard Ross. Along with cleaning floors and chopping potatoes, he learned the intricacies of running a restaurant as a business.

After attending high school, he joined the Air Force, where he worked as a cook and, at a base near Albany, Ga., got his first taste of real Southern food. "The young ladies that I dated prepared wonderful meals," he said in the Southern Foodways Alliance interview, "and it was very apparent to me at that time that the food tasted a little different in the South than it did in Pennsylvania."

When Mr. Randall returned home, in 1964, he worked in restaurants around Harrisburg, including one at the high-end Harrisburger Hotel run by Robert W. Lee, a Georgia transplant who became his mentor.

At the time, many white people refused to work in a kitchen run by a Black man, and so Mr. Lee hired other Black cooks he knew from Georgia. Together, they brought a distinctly Southern flair to the restaurant and to Mr. Randall's ongoing education.

In the late 1960s and '70s, he worked in California while studying cooking and restaurant management at the University of California's Berkeley and Davis campuses. He also opened the restaurant at the Kellogg Ranch in Pomona, Calif., which trains hospitality management students at California State Polytechnic University, Pomona.

He married Barbara Zachary in 1978. In addition to his wife and daughter, he is survived by two sons, J. Christopher and Kenneth; three sisters, Lorraine Stone, Cathryn Stevenson and Carolyn Lewis; and a grandson.

Mr. Randall later ran highly regarded kitchens like the Cloister in Buffalo and the Fishmarket in Baltimore.

He was visiting a friend in Savannah when the president of the Savannah College of Art and Design asked him to cook dinner for her. By the end of the soup course — a sausage bisque — she had hired him to run the school's food services.

He had long dreamed of opening his own cooking school and, a few years later, began offering classes at a kitchen appliance store, which let him use its ranges and ovens. They were so successful that in 2000, he and his wife turned the location into their permanent school. He closed the cooking school in 2016.

Mr. Randall had a few thoughts for people who considered Southern food too rich or fatty.

"There are some people who would have you believe that Southern food is just too full of salt, too full of fat, too full of everything that's wrong for you," he told the Southern Foodways Alliance. "My philosophy is moderation in all things. You don't eat a pound of bacon in every meal, but three slices every few days won't hurt."

Other points of view on the Opinion pages seven days a week. The New York Times



JOSH GALEMORE/IMAGN IMAGES

Joe Randall in 2016 at his namesake school in Savannah, Ga., where he left his imprint on students.

## Deaths

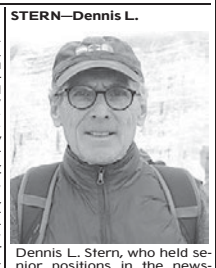
Remy Toledo, Asher
Saks, Alan
Stern, Dennis

**REMY TOLEDO—Asher.** Cultural Producer and Co-Founder of Hyphen Hub, October 8, 1963 - February 22, 2026, Asher Remy-Toledo, a Colombian-born cultural producer who lived and worked in New York City for nearly four decades and championed cutting edge new media art and cross-disciplinary collaboration, died on February 22, 2026, in Medellin, Colombia. He was 62. Over more than 30 years in New York and abroad, he founded, co-founded, and directed initiatives including Remy Toledo Gallery, Yuanfen Gallery (Beijing), and No Longer Empty. For the past 13 years, he co-founded and led Hyphen Hub, the international arts organization that became the defining platform of his later career and a cornerstone of his legacy within the global new media artist community. Through these platforms, he supported technology-based and experimental artists whose works are represented in major international museum collections, including Tate and the Whitney Museum of American Art. Colleagues remember him not only for his institutional impact but for his humor, generosity, optimism, and a resonant laugh that energized gatherings across artistic and cultural communities.

**SAKS—Judge Alan J.** 1933-2026. Many will remember Alan as a kind and even-handed dispenser of justice, first as a Bronx Civil Court judge starting in 1981, then as a New York State Supreme Court Justice (1988-2009). But we, more fortunate, will cherish him always as a dear husband, father, uncle, friend, farmer and fisherman, Yankee-fan, citizen.

**Honor your loved ones in our pages.**
nytimes@classifiedsplus.com
1-800-458-5522
The New York Times

**STERN—Dennis L.**



Dennis L. Stern, who held senior positions in the newsroom and business operations of The New York Times during a 28-year career there, died on February 24, 2026, at his home in Lyme, NH. The cause of death was prostate cancer. He was 79 years old. After taking a one-semester journalism course in his junior year of high school in Whitefish Bay, Wis, Dennis knew he wanted a newspaper career. In his senior year, he was co-editor of the school newspaper and a freelance reporter covering high school sports for the local weekly paper. He took the job seriously and turned out detailed and colorful articles for which he got paid "by the inch." Dennis began working at The New York Times in 1981, as an editor on the metropolitan desk and later held positions on the national desk and Sunday business. In the early 1990s, he was promoted to head of newsroom administration and was involved in preparing for the launch of The Time's on-line newspaper. In 1997, he was recruited from the newsroom to the management side of the paper to head human resources. Later he was named senior vice president and deputy general manager, a role that focused on re-orienting the budget to enable investing more in the digital operations, which proved crucial to the paper's future. Dennis had an undergraduate degree from Haverford College and a law degree from New York University (NYU). At Haverford, he was editor of the student newspaper for three semesters. While in law school Dennis worked part-time covering New York City for the Associated Press. After graduation, he worked at newspapers in Miami and Washington, DC, before going to The Times. He retired from The Times in 2009, and he and his wife, Barbara, moved to Lyme, NH. Not quite fulfilled by retirement, he took a position as vice president for administration at Vermont Law School, a job he held until 2014. After retiring again, he joined Osher, Dartmouth's life-long learning program, and began teaching classes on news literacy and American humor. Hiking with his family and friends in the Upper Valley and White Mountains was a favorite pastime. With his family, Dennis also spent many weekend hours in the woods on their property in Lyme carving out trails that eventually stretched three miles and offered a variety of terrain for hiking and biking. Besides his wife, he is survived by three sons and their families: Sam and his wife Chrissy Cicon of Cambridge, MA, Phil and his wife Dana White, of Littleton, CO, and George and his wife Pam of Snowmass Village, CO, and six grandchildren, Delilah, Claire, Everett, Sawyer, Palmer and Perna Stern. The family plans to hold a private memorial service later in the year.

ANNOUNCEMENTS OF DEATHS MAY BE TELEPHONED FROM WITHIN NYC TO 212 556 3900; OR OUTSIDE NYC TOLL FREE 1 800 458 5522; OR SENT BY EMAIL TO NYTIMES@CLASSIFIEDSPLUS.COM FOR THE FOLLOWING EDITIONS Until 2:00 P.M. the day before for Monday through Saturday editions, until 4:00 P.M. on Friday for Sunday's National Edition, until 12:45 P.M. Saturday for Sunday's New York and late National editions. Photos must be submitted by noon the day prior to publication Tuesday through Friday. Photos for Saturday, Sunday and Monday must be submitted by 12 noon on Friday.

# *Edward Deci, 83, Dies; Found Key to Thriving Is Self-Determination*

By CLAY RISEN

Edward L. Deci, a psychologist at the University of Rochester whose groundbreaking insights, with his colleague Richard M. Ryan, into what motivates people to do what they do — or not — helped revolutionize fields as disparate as the workplace, education, sports and marketing, died on Feb. 14 at his home in Rochester, N.Y. He was 83.

His nephew Brett Jensen said the cause was complications of dementia.

Working together in the late 1970s, Dr. Deci (pronounced DEE-cee) and Dr. Ryan came up with what they called self-determination theory, a cluster of ideas about motivation and agency based on the view that people are naturally curious and eager to grow, and that they flourish in situations in which they feel autonomous, connected and competent.

This may seem obvious today. But at the time, psychology was in the grips of behaviorism, an approach centered on quantifying human behavior, with an emphasis on measured inputs and outputs and a rejection of human agency and subjective concepts like well-being.

"Most psychologists don't think about people as living entities," Dr. Deci said in a 2011 video. "They think about them as machines."

Motivation was seen then as a single force, a set of largely external carrots and sticks. But he and Dr. Ryan had a different perspective: They believed that there are various types of motivation, and that the particular type is the most important factor.

Dr. Deci demonstrated this point early on, in a set of experiments in 1971 that predated his work with Dr. Ryan.

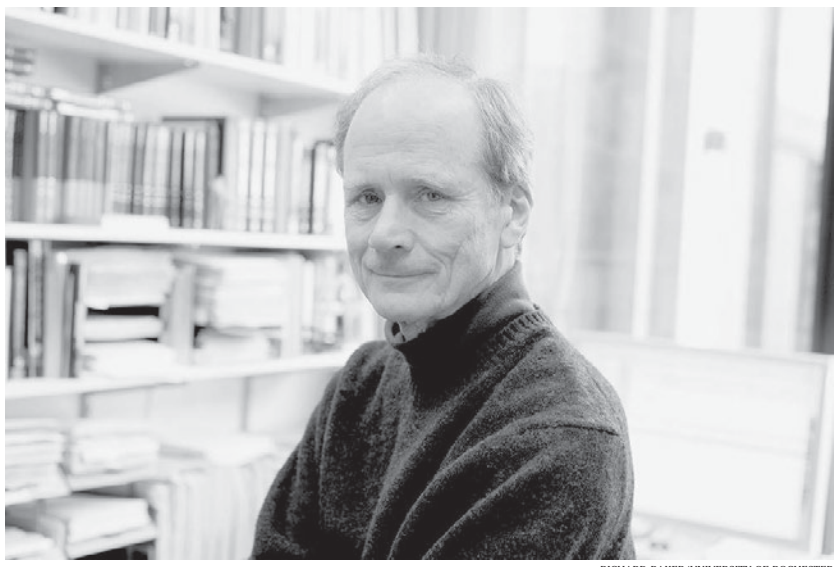
In each experiment, a group of students was asked to perform a task that the members found inherently interesting: solving a three-dimensional puzzle, for example, or editing a newspaper.

They were then asked to do it again, this time for payment. In a third session, they performed the task once more, but now they were told that there would be no payment.

Dr. Deci found that the students in the third phase of the experiment were significantly less motivated to complete the task than those in a control group who had never received money.

He concluded that the introduction of external motivation had the effect of diminishing the students' internal motivation, a finding that became a core element of self-determination theory.

"When we began to reward people for things they found interesting, they stopped finding it interesting anymore," he said in the video. "This activity, which they used to find interesting and enjoyable, now they find it a route to getting the reward."



RICHARD BAKER/UNIVERSITY OF ROCHESTER

Edward Deci in 2009. The psychologist believed that there are various types of motivation.

In 1981, Dr. Deci and Dr. Ryan started the Human Motivation Program at the University of Rochester, where they applied their research to areas like education, health care and the workplace. They also looked at how to improve coaching in sports and how to better reach customers through marketing.

In 1985, they published "Intrinsic Motivation and Self-Determination in Human Behavior," a book that introduced their work to researchers worldwide.

The two psychologists continued to develop their theory, arguing that there are three core human needs: autonomy, competence and relatedness to others. Only when those requirements are met, they said, can people feel a true sense of autonomous motivation. It was a message that would become foundational to modern industrial relations, teacher training and the self-help movement.

Yet another critical insight, in research led by Dr. Ryan, came with the notion of internalization. Not all autonomous motivation originates from within; it can be transmitted in the form of values, norms and an imbued sense of responsibility.

So, for example, they argued against bribing children to do the dishes or finish their homework. Instead, they advised parents to offer praise and explain why something should be done, so that children would feel empowered to make their own decisions. But don't push too hard, Dr. Deci warned.

"Legitimize your child's feeling about the activity, whatever that feeling might be," he told The New York Times in 1990, for a column called Parent & Child. "If you try to convince children that something is interesting when it isn't, you're saying that their feelings don't count."

Edward Lenris Deci was born on Oct. 14, 1942, in Palmyra, N.Y., a small town east of Rochester. His parents, Charles and Janice (Upchurch) Deci, were managers for a company that made industrial seals.

***Applying research to areas such as education, health care and the workplace.***

He graduated with a history degree from Hamilton College, also in upstate New York, in 1964 and earned a master's in business administration from the Wharton School in 1967. He received his doctorate in psychology from Carnegie Mellon University in 1970, the same year he began teaching at the University of Rochester.

Dr. Deci spent his entire career at Rochester, retiring in 2017.

Along with his nephew Brett, he is survived by a brother, Charles Deci Jr.; a sister, Shirley Jensen; and three other nephews, David Jensen and Freddie and Louis Deci.

In the summer of 1973, Dr. Deci took a vacation on Monhegan Island, a square-mile patch 10 miles off the coast of Maine, which was popular with artists like Edward Hopper, Andrew Wyeth and Rockwell Kent.

He fell in love with the place and returned every year for decades. But he was more than a summer visitor: He served as president and director of the Monhegan Museum of Art & History, expanding its collection to include work by many of the island's best-known visitors.

"One of the things I understood," he said in a 2019 interview for the museum, "is that if you are going to be a part of a community, you have to accept responsibility for doing something for that community to help it survive and thrive."

1949-2016

# Bobby Garnett

The 'godfather' of vintage clothes dealers whose tastes informed movies and TV shows and spawned protégés.

By STEVEN KURUTZ

There's a famous saying about the Velvet Underground: The group's debut album sold few copies, but everyone who bought a copy started a band.

A similar thing might be said about Bobby Garnett and his vintage clothing store, Bobby From Boston. For decades, a select group of customers and employees passed through his South End shop, and many of them went on to open stores of their own, carrying the spirit of Garnett's store with them, if not his encyclopedic knowledge of 20th-century fashion or his magnetic personality.

Chris Duval was in high school when he stumbled upon Garnett's earlier retail outpost, Uptown Strutters Ball, in Provincetown, Mass., in 1974.

"It was so amazingly curated," said Duval, who later opened Circa Vintage Wear, in New Bedford, Mass. "Nineteen-forties bowling shirts, Ricky Ricardo jackets, two-tone shoes and colorful ties. I was taken aback — what is this stuff? I stayed for an hour."

At a time when vintage was on the fringes of fashion and great stuff was cheap and plentiful, Garnett bought at thrift stores, flea markets, estate sales, Army-Navy outfitters and anywhere else he could find the goods.

He stocked his warehouse with tens of thousands of items — a wide selection that included 1920s workwear, '50s denim and English rowing blazers. That range set him apart from other dealers.

So did his race: He was Black and specialized in a preppy style of men's wear often associated with New England WASPs. In a trade not known for diversity or charm, he was a welcome change. Customers were drawn to his easy manner.

"I remember being in the shop, and someone would come in, and they'd be talking for half an hour, carrying on, laughing like old friends," Sean Crowley, a former employee who now owns Crowley Vintage in Brooklyn, said. "He had that openness."

Fashion designers, stylists, collectors from other countries and Hollywood costumers all made pilgrimages to Garnett's store. He supplied period clothing for films and television shows, including "Walk the Line," "A Bronx Tale," "Casino," "Hairspray" and "Boardwalk Empire." As a movie buff, he took special pride in those contributions.

His former employees say he taught them to look at clothes differently — to see not just an old coat or a moth-eaten sweater but also an idea, a creative possibility.

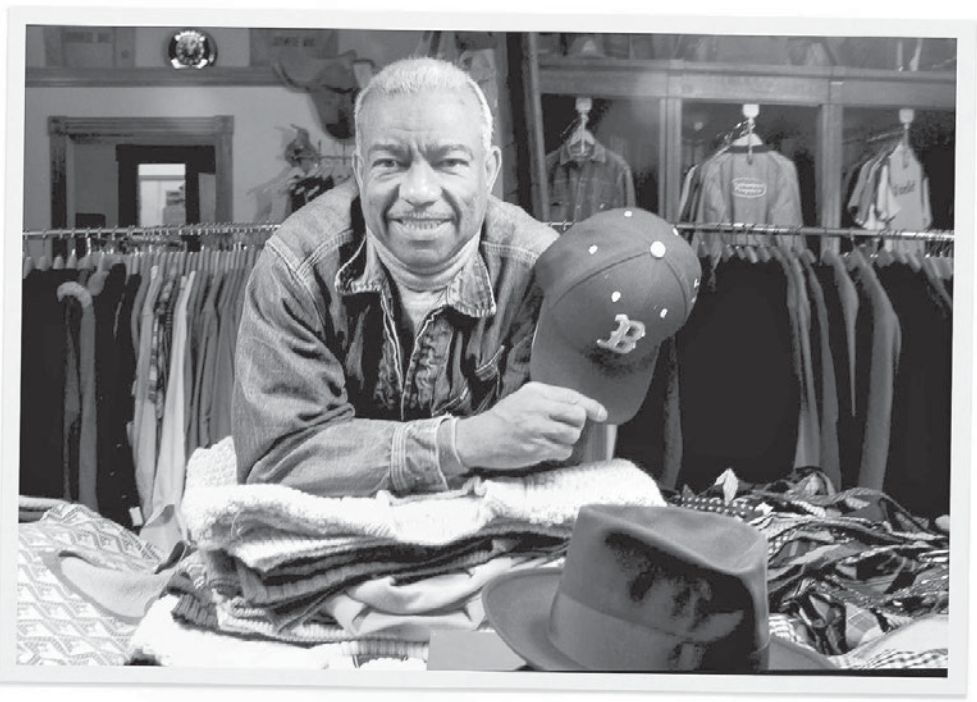
"Bobby made it look easy and fun," Ed Tonderys, a former employee who owns the vintage store Regal Tombs in Massachusetts, said.

"It definitely was fun, but there was a lot of work in being a successful vintage dealer. Especially at that volume. He was working 24-7."

Yet as Garnett explained in a short documentary film in 2011, he wasn't much interested in the business side of the clothing business. What excited him was the finding and buying — the chase.

"It's a treasure hunt," he said. "And I don't know anything that's more gratifying than a treasure hunt."

Ralph Lauren's designers shopped at Bobby's for inspiration, mining the racks for ideas that would filter into the brand's collections. Several of Garnett's employees went on to work for the company.



JANET KNOTT/THE BOSTON GLOBE, VIA GETTY IMAGES

Bobby Garnett in 2005 at his vintage clothing store, Bobby From Boston, above, and with Ralph Lauren, whose designers drew inspiration from the shop. Right, in the 1990s. He frequently went to England on buying trips, developing relationships with European dealers.




VIA GARNETT FAMILY




VIA GARNETT FAMILY

When Garnett died of renal failure on May 19, 2016, at age 66, Bobby From Boston was widely considered the most influential seller in the vintage trade.

Just about every retail store that has opened in the last 20 years selling highly curated men's wear in a space with an antique vibe has, in some way, followed Bobby's.

"He was a precursor to everything we do now," said Charles Moschos, who hung out at Bobby's most Saturdays in the early 2000s and now owns Ridgefield Vintage and Coffee in Connecticut. "He was 100 percent the godfather of all that."

Robert Charles Garnett III was born on July 13, 1949, in Boston. His father, Robert Garnett Jr., was a naval architect, and his mother, Sylvia (Francis) Garnett, taught nursery school. She instilled in him her love of fashion and her innate good taste.

"She dragged my brother and I around every department store," Garnett told The Boston Globe in 2002. "She knew good stuff."

By age 12, Garnett was wearing what he called "the continental James Bond look": gabardine jackets and casual linen or cotton trousers. By 16, he was working summers at Krackerjacks, a mod clothing store in Cambridge. He attended boarding school in Maine and then Gordon College in Wenham, Mass., where he made and sold leather bracelets out of his dormitory room.

"He had the entrepreneurial spirit even back then," Connie Garnett, his former wife, who was a fellow student, said in an interview.

Garnett opened his first store, Muddy River Trading Co., with a partner in Brookline Village around 1971, selling leather goods and denim. Later, he opened Uptown Strutters Ball, named after the early jazz standard "Darktown Strutters' Ball."

Garnett handled the day-to-day operations, and Connie helped manage the warehouse he rented for his ever-growing hoard of merchandise.

"He was not into the money side, even though he needed money to keep buying," she said. "He bought from the love of fashion."

Otto Johnson, a Massachusetts-based vintage dealer who learned the trade from Garnett in the 1980s, recalled going to struggling department stores with him and buying out everything, from the deadstock to the period fixtures and even the shelving. It would all find a place at Bobby's.

Several times a year, Garnett would go to England on buying trips, developing relationships with European dealers. The items he brought home — riding clothes, Belstaff jackets, Savile Row suits — distinguished his store from most vintage emporiums, which were selling polyester shirts, Levi's and old T-shirts.

It was in England that Garnett got his nickname, when someone recognized him and asked, "Are you Bobby from Boston?" By the 1990s, that had become the name of his business.

Within the next decade, he went from being a fixture in New England to a celebrated figure in the New York fashion industry and beyond. The fame surprised him, his daughter, Jessica Garnett Carrion, said.

"Japanese buyers would come and bring some sort of gift from Japan," she said in an interview. "Anytime we did movies, the designer for the movie would come and spend the day."

Since her father's death, she has kept Bobby From Boston going, selling his vast trove of clothing out of the warehouse space he operated in Lynn, Mass.

The care and style with which he ran his store lives on in subtle ways.

"Bobby would always tag things with these pin tickets," said Crowley, describing a paper tag that was creased in the middle and affixed to the sleeve of a jacket or shirt. When Crowley opened his store, he bought the tags from the same shop in New York's garment district that Garnett did.

"I didn't realize at the time how unusual and old-fashioned they were," he said. "It was a perfect, clean way to price things."

As a new generation of buyers and sellers turns vintage into social media fodder, Garnett has come to be regarded as a foundational figure — "a thrift legend," as one admirer put it.

"He would be down for buying anytime," Tonderys said. "He once told me, 'If I was starving to death and had 10 bucks in my pocket, and I was in front of a restaurant and a thrift store, I would go into the thrift store.'"

**ONLINE:**

*Overlooked is a series of obituaries about remarkable people whose deaths, beginning in 1851, went unreported in The Times.*
**nytimes.com/overlooked**



DOMINIC CHAVEZ/THE BOSTON GLOBE, VIA GETTY IMAGES

At Bobby From Boston in 2000. "I don't know anything that's more gratifying than a treasure hunt," he once said of his shopping trips.

**3 ARTS**
Diya Vij will lead cultural affairs for New York City.

**3 FILM**
'One Battle After Another' wins at the PGA awards.







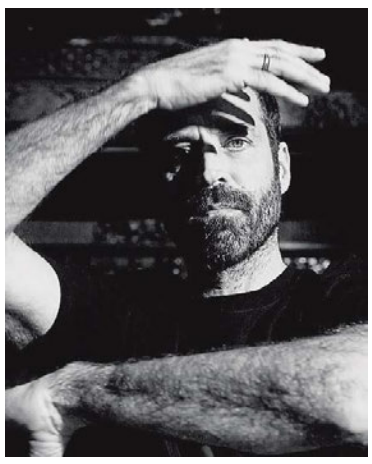
**6 ART**
Looted antiquities that are sacred to Cambodians are finally sent home.



Arts
The New York Times




PHOTOGRAPHS BY ERIK TANNER FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES



The choreographer Benjamin Millepied, above, who created "Romeo and Juliet Suite," top, had always said no to working with Prokofiev's score, but then he started to hear it differently.

# Star-Crossed Lovers, Onstage and on Camera

## A 'Romeo and Juliet' dance involves a mixed approach to performance.

By MARGARET FUHRER

Prokofiev's stormy, vivid ballet score "Romeo and Juliet" has beguiled many choreographers. But for a long time, Benjamin Millepied resisted its call.

"In dance, the Prokofiev has been so overdone that I think I started to categorize it as second-rate," said Millepied, the artistic director of the L.A. Dance Project and a perpetually busy choreographer. "I had been asked before to create a production, and I always said no."

A former New York City Ballet dancer who was briefly the artistic director of the Paris Opera Ballet, Millepied is also a cinephile who has created and worked on multiple films. (He and his ex-wife, the actress Natalie Portman, met on the set of "Black Swan.") A few years ago, he began to come around on the Prokofiev ballet — as a potential movie score.

"I love the music from old Hollywood movies, and I was realizing how heavily those film composers were influenced by Prokofiev and Ravel," he said in a video interview. Working backward, "I started hearing 'Romeo and Juliet' differently."

Millepied's "Romeo and Juliet Suite" — created for the L.A. Dance Project in 2022, and opening at the Park Avenue Armory on Monday — ended up marrying Prokofiev's music to both live dance and film. The work features choreography that often spills off the stage, traversing theater hallways and backrooms. A camera follows the dancers everywhere, broadcasting footage on a screen that looms over the proscenium. Some of the story's most charged moments, including the balcony scene and the killing of Tybalt, are only shown onscreen.

CONTINUED ON PAGE C2

# When Producers at WNET Said No to Jeffrey Epstein

## The convicted financier tried to help fund a film on Dick Cavett.

By MICHAELA TOWFIGHI and JULIA JACOBS

In 2016, when the talk show host Dick Cavett was dining at Jeffrey Epstein's home, the discussion turned to a possible PBS documentary about Mr. Cavett. Mr. Epstein expressed interest in helping to find money for such a project.

Mr. Cavett had been introduced to Mr. Epstein, the financier, through a mutual friend, Woody Allen, and came to exchange friendly emails and attend several salon-style meals at his home with other prominent entertainment figures.

According to emails collected amid a sex-trafficking investigation into Mr. Epstein and recently released by the Justice Department, there were rounds of conversation in which Mr. Epstein, Mr. Cavett's wife and a producer of documentaries discussed the possibility of such a film.

"So very happy to think there is more interest in making this happen," Mr. Cavett's wife, Martha Rogers, wrote to Mr. Epstein in late 2016.

The conversations occurred as Mr. Epstein used philanthropy and connections to high-profile figures to rebuild his social network after felony sex crime convictions, including one count of soliciting prostitution from a minor.

In an email to Mr. Epstein, Ms. Rogers es-

CONTINUED ON PAGE C4



Francesca Hogi appeared in Seasons 22 and 26 of "Survivor" and is the only person voted out first two times.

# Never Mind the Survivor. What About the First Boot?

## It's a head-spinning reality for contestants who were quickly kicked off a TV island.

By JONATHAN ABRAMS

Stephanie Berger was ready to win her season of "Survivor." To prepare, she attended CrossFit classes, read "The 48 Laws of Power" and penned a six-page strategy document for how to navigate her way to the end of the game.

Berger already knew how to swim, but she took classes at a Ukrainian bath house to strengthen her skills. "With a bunch of pimply-faced 15-year-olds, looking at me, wondering why I was there," she said.

But in the end, it wasn't enough. Not even close. She was the first person voted out on the show's 48th season. "I spent a lot more time in pregame and then in the hotel after getting eliminated than on the actual island," Berger said.

For every winner of "Survivor," now in its 50th season, there is also a "first boot," like Berger, the person voted off at the end of Episode 1. Since its premiere in 2000, the groundbreaking show helped propel the reality television boom and popularized the format of contestants voting one another out. More than 700 contestants have dreamed of outlasting their competition and claiming the $1 million prize money like the first winner, Richard Hatch.

But for every Hatch, there is also a Sonja Christopher. She was the first boot from that

CONTINUED ON PAGE C5

# Star-Crossed Lovers, Onstage and on Camera

CONTINUED FROM PAGE C1

A film-centric "Romeo and Juliet" aligns with Millepied's ongoing efforts to blend classical dance and contemporary culture — to create works that speak to a broader audience than the typical ballet crowd. The close gaze of the camera allows for storytelling on a more human scale than conventional dance acting, with its oversize gestures. Simple costumes and props create a setting that feels both modern and removed from time. Millepied has likewise pared down the story of the star-crossed lovers to its barest outline: Romeo meets Juliet, they fall in love, and tragedy ensues, without minor characters to slow down the action.

Perhaps most notably, this retelling isn't always a boy-meets-girl story. In alternating casts, Romeo and Juliet are played by two men, two women or a man and a woman. That choice felt both important and natural to Millepied.

"Of course love has all these different ways of being," he said. "Really, how could we *not* do it this way?"

For many dancers, Prokofiev's score is inextricably linked to the choreographer Kenneth MacMillan's lavish, swooning, relatively conventional "Romeo and Juliet" from 1965. It is performed by ballet companies around the world, and Millepied saw it as a teenager in France, on a date with his first girlfriend.

"The MacMillan version is the kind of ballet you see and hear so frequently that it attaches to your whole dream of becoming a dancer," said Daphne Fernberger, one of the L.A. Dance Project's Romeos.

But for Millepied, it was not MacMillan but Jerome Robbins who offered a model to follow. While at City Ballet, Millepied danced in Robbins's "West Side Story Suite," a streamlined restaging of the dances from the Broadway musical "West Side Story."

For today's audiences, "having the dance be expressed through a drive of spontaneous feelings is really important," Millepied said. "I think Jerry's 'West Side Story Suite,' which is really a series of tableaus, made me believe that would be possible to do."

Two preliminary experiments also helped convince Millepied that he could do a "Romeo and Juliet." In 2019, he made a short film depicting the balcony scene, with Margaret Qualley and Shameik Moore dancing and reciting lines from the Shakespeare play. (It will be released on Monday, on the platform Nowness.)

Around the same time, he was asked to choreograph dance sequences for the Los Angeles Philharmonic's performances of the Prokofiev score. Since the orchestra took up most of the stage, he decided to send cameras after the dancers as they moved throughout Walt Disney Concert Hall.

"The drama of this story, the love and the violence, I realized I could create it on camera and make it feel real," Millepied said. And he discovered that live video and live dance made a potent combination.

"You fall in love with characters that you see live in the flesh, in front of your eyes," he said. "But then when the camera brings you close to them, it creates a different kind of intimacy."

In "Romeo and Juliet Suite," the camera operator becomes a kind of shadow character. So it's fitting that he's also a dancer: Sebastien Marcovici, a New York City Ballet veteran and the L.A. Dance Project's associate artistic director.

"In some ways I am the narrator of the story," said Marcovici, who has long been interested in movies and cinematography. The camera's relationship to the dancers, he said, is a lot like the relationship between ballet partners. "I have to know the music, know the counts, know exactly where they're going to be at each moment," he said.

Marcovici's cues change dramatically as the production moves from theater to theater. Since much of "Romeo and Juliet Suite" occurs offstage, Millepied tailors the work to each location's behind-the-scenes spaces. "We basically reinvent it every time," Millepied said.

Previous renditions have set the balcony scene outdoors, like on a raised terrace at La Seine Musicale outside Paris and in the forecourt of the Sydney Opera House. That's not replicable at the Armory. "We looked at the roof, but March, New York — it wasn't going to happen," Millepied said. Still, he's eager to make use of the location's labyrinth of reception rooms and offices, many rarely seen by the public, which offer a very different feel than its famous drill hall, where the audience will be seated.

"All those rooms, all those stairs!" he said, grinning.

Some of the work's choreography also changes slightly from cast to cast, to fit the different leading dancers. Fernberger said that she and Millepied have thought especially carefully about the scene in which she, as Romeo, fights Tybalt, who is always danced by a man.

"The violence makes it a really delicate moment," she said. "It can be genuinely scary for me. We've been working on making it feel safe but still emotionally true."

Romantic duets require little reinvention. David Adrian Freeland Jr., another Romeo, said the different casts do "98 percent" the same choreography. "The dancing is ultimately just about believable human connection, not gender roles," he said.

When "Romeo and Juliet Suite" premiered in France, Millepied was surprised by reactions to the same-sex couples. "There was quite a lot of pushback," he said. "On all these talk shows and radio shows, it was like, 'Oh, he's woke, he's just doing it to make noise.'"

New Yorkers, he said, are more likely to meet the casting with a shrug — which would be very New York, but also heartening.

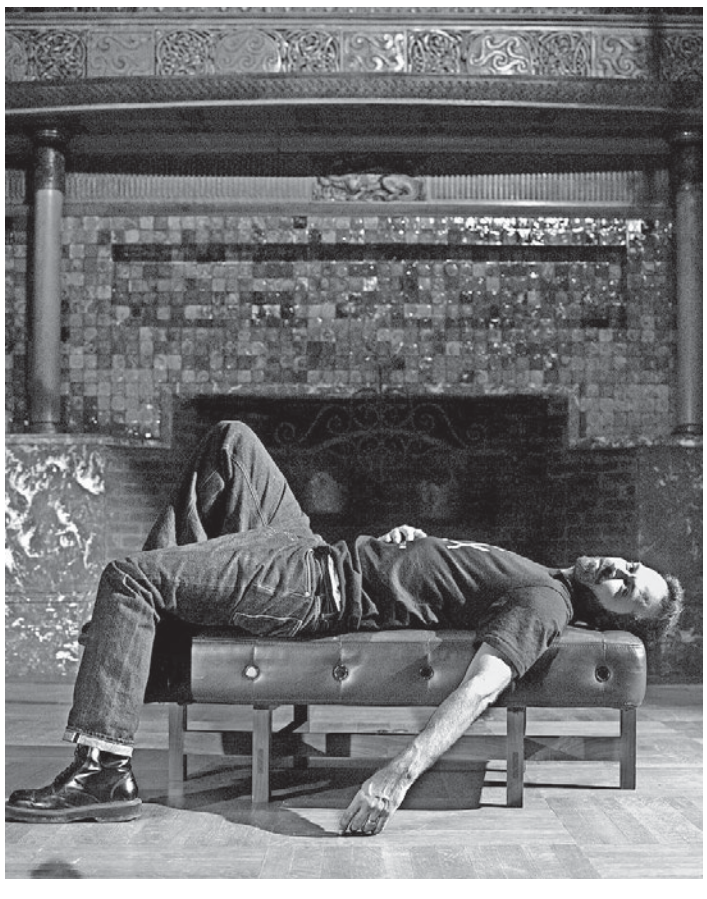
"I don't think it will surprise anyone here," Millepied said. "I know the world is so on edge right now. But I hope people will see that this is a universal story of love."



PHOTOGRAPHS BY ERIK TANNER FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES







Above, Rachel Hutsell rehearsing "Romeo and Juliet Suite," which incorporates live video filmed throughout the Park Avenue Armory; left, Hutsell (front) with Daphne Fernberger; below, Fernberger, left, and Hutsell dancing in a corridor at the Armory; bottom, Benjamin Millepied at ease. The production opens at the Armory on Monday.

**Retold with a pared-down story line, a Shakespearean classic strays from its boy-meets-girl origins.**

# A 'Bold Choice' for Culture Czar

In her new role, Diya Vij wants to improve the funding process and help artists take risks.

By ARUNA D'SOUZA



MARCUS MADDOX FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Diya Vij has been named the new leader of the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs.

Diya Vij, a vice president at Powerhouse Arts, the Brooklyn-based nonprofit organization, has been chosen to lead the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, Mayor Zohran Mamdani announced on Saturday.

A veteran of the city's creative communities, Vij will be the first person of South Asian heritage to hold that position.

The department is the largest municipal funder of culture in the country, supporting 1,000 nonprofit organizations and providing $245 million in funding in the past fiscal year.

Vij, 40, has a background in public and socially engaged art, especially in the mayor's home borough of Queens. She has worked at the Queens Museum, the High Line and Creative Time in addition to Powerhouse Arts, where she began in November as director of curatorial and arts programs.

From 2014 to 2018, Vij worked for Tom Finkelpearl, a former cultural commissioner under Mayor Bill de Blasio. She was also a member of Mamdani's arts and culture transition committee and will succeed Laurie Cumbo, who was appointed by Mayor Eric Adams in 2022.

In a statement to The New York Times, Mamdani praised Vij as a "visionary and deeply thoughtful leader." He added: "Under Diya's leadership, we will fight to keep New York a city where artists can afford to live and create and where every New Yorker, in every borough, can experience the energy and inspiration that makes art possible."

The appointment is an important one for Mamdani, who has placed the city's artistic community at the heart of his economic agenda. Under his administration, the Department of Cultural Affairs will be overseen by the city's first deputy mayor for economic justice, Julie Su.

Vij steps into the job at a particularly fraught time. The city's recent preliminary budget proposal projects a $5.4 billion gap over two years. That could mean a $30 million cut to cultural affairs. And after decades of growth, New York's creative sector is shrinking as artists leave the city because of the increased cost of living and as galleries and small arts organizations close.

At the federal level, hundreds of grants from the National Endowment for the Arts and the National Endowment for the Humanities were canceled by the Trump administration in 2025. "New York is taking over the role from the federal government of being the most important cultural funder in America," Finkelpearl said.

Vij said there was a lot at stake because the public infrastructure for arts and culture has been eroded.

"We see how our organizations have to contract because funding is contracting," she said. "All this instability creates a landscape of fear that makes it really difficult for organizations to take the risks that they need to take, to address the issues of the day and be spaces for community to come together in joy and imagination and dissent."

Elizabeth Alexander, president of the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, the largest private funder of arts and culture in the United States, is equally enthusiastic: "She's had an amazing career at the intersection of art and public life," Alexander said. "She's got experience with large organizations, with small ones, and with public-private partnerships that are so important in New York City."

Kemi Ilesanmi, the former director of the Laundromat Project, a Brooklyn-based arts nonprofit, served on the department's advisory commission under the last three culture czars. She said the selection of Vij "is the most exciting, crazy, brilliant, beautiful news I've heard in a long time."

Ilesanmi added that it was also a bit unexpected: "She isn't a director of a big museum. She's not on speed dial by bigwigs in the cultural world. It's an unexpected and bold choice."

Vij said that while she was interested in bringing more artists into the process of city government, "I'm also focused on finding the everyday efficiencies within the agency — addressing payment delays, figuring out how to streamline application processes for organizations seeking support."

Vij was born and raised in Connecticut and attended Bard College, where she studied photography and politics. She joined the Queens Museum, then under the directorship of Finkelpearl, first as a curatorial fellow and later in digital communications, while simultaneously working on a master's degree in art history at Hunter College. At the time, Vij said, "the Queens Museum was really leading the charge on socially engaged art and how a museum could show up as a neighbor in the community."

When Finkelpearl moved on to lead the Department of Cultural Affairs, Vij joined him. She inaugurated the Public Artists in Residence program in 2015, in which artists are embedded in agencies across the city, and worked on policy issues related to diversity, equity and inclusion.

She also worked with the department's monuments commission, which was charged with adding public statues depicting women and people of color. The initiative, largely led by de Blasio's wife at the time, Chirlane McCray, was controversial, and may have led to Finkelpearl's sudden departure from the department in 2019.

Vij left in 2018, emerging at the High Line and Creative Time, organizations devoted to public art. At Creative Time, she curated large-scale projects around the city, including, most recently, Chloë Bass's "takeover" of the MTA's public address system for a conceptual sound art piece.

Thomas Lax, curator of performance and new media at the Museum of Modern Art, called Vij "a quintessential advocate of artists and arts organization."

He cited Vij's work with the Indigenous collective New Red Order on "The World's Unfair," a public art installation in Long Island City that called for the return of land to Native Americans. "She was able to do something that few other arts organization would have dared to do because of fear," he said.

Ilesanmi said she expected that Vij would bring fresh ideas into what she described as a somewhat siloed department.

"I hope that she will center the idea that art is for everyone in this city — centering people of color, centering folks in neighborhoods where art is more local, dispersed and grass-roots, centering the disabled," Ilesanmi said. "Artists actually get left out of the conversation more than you would think."

Vij said she believed her appointment "affirms that New York City celebrates — not punishes, not just tolerates — the audacity of artists and cultural organizations to take on the urgent questions of the day."

She added, "I'm excited to apply my political lens to strengthening the systems that makes open, accessible and sometimes radical cultural activities possible."

**KYLE BUCHANAN** | THE PROJECTIONIST

# Winning Streak For Oscar Nominee

'One Battle After Another' comes out on top at the PGA awards.

THE PRODUCERS GUILD of America awarded its top prize to "One Battle After Another" on Saturday night, extending an awards-season hot streak for that film, directed by Paul Thomas Anderson.

In his acceptance speech, Anderson said that he would share the award with the Warner Bros. film chiefs Michael De Luca and Pamela Abdy, who greenlit his movie, as well as the fellow PGA nominees "Sinners" and "Weapons."

Then, obliquely referring to Paramount's deal to acquire Warner Bros. — a move that has rattled Hollywood — Anderson told the studio chiefs: "Long may you wave. Whatever the future holds, it is one battle after another."

This award is considered the strongest bellwether for the best-picture Oscar, largely because many members belong to both the guild and the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, which awards the Oscars. In the 17 years since the two groups adopted a preferential ballot and expanded their best-film categories beyond five nominees, the Producers Guild winner has gone on to win the best-picture Oscar all but three times.

"One Battle After Another" has already won top prizes from the Directors Guild, Golden Globes, Critics Choice Awards and BAFTA. If there remains any film that can still challenge it for the best-picture Oscar at the March 15 ceremony, that is probably the vampire drama "Sinners," directed by Ryan Coogler.

After setting a record in January for the most Oscar nominations ever, "Sinners" could earn more momentum at the Actor Awards, which was to be held by the Screen Actors Guild on Sunday night. Winning that guild's ensemble prize would put "Sinners" in the company of the past SAG winners "Moonlight" and "Parasite," which both toppled the PGA winner at the Oscars.

Held at the Fairmont Century Plaza in Los Angeles, the Producers Guild ceremony also honored Mariska Hargitay's documentary, "My Mom Jayne," and the animated film "KPop Demon Hunters." The top TV awards went to "The Pitt" (best episodic drama), "The Studio" (best episodic comedy) and "Adolescence" (best limited series).



KEVIN WINTER/GETTY IMAGES

Paul Thomas Anderson's "One Battle After Another" won the Producers Guild of America's top award.

### Winners of the PGA Awards

**FILM**

**Feature Film**
"One Battle After Another"

**Animated Feature**
"KPop Demon Hunters"

**Documentary**
"My Mom Jayne"

**TELEVISION**

**Episodic Drama**
"The Pitt"

**Episodic Comedy**
"The Studio"

**Limited or Anthology Series**
"Adolescence"

**Television Movie or Streamed Movie**
"John Candy: I Like Me"

**Nonfiction Television**
"Pee-wee as Himself"

**Live, Variety, Sketch, Stand-up or Talk Show**
"The Late Show With Stephen Colbert"

**Game or Competition Show**
"The Traitors"

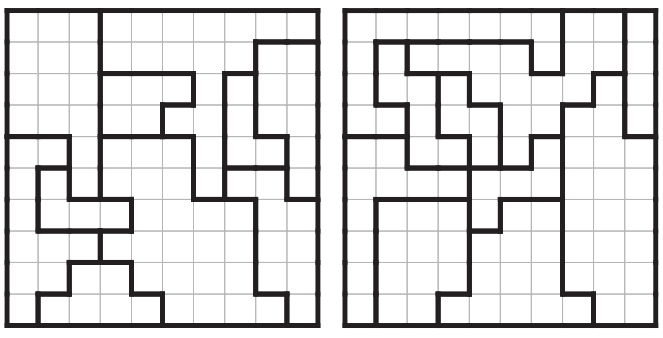
**Sports Program**
"Formula 1: Drive to Survive"

**Children's Program**
"Sesame Street"

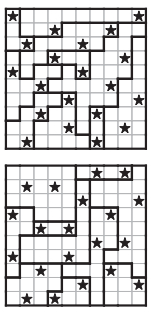
**Short-Form Program**
"Adolescence: The Making of Adolescence"

**PGA Innovation Award**
"The Wizard of Oz" at Sphere

# Two Not Touch



ANSWERS TO PREVIOUS PUZZLES



Put two stars in each row, column and region of the grid. No two stars may touch, not even diagonally.

Copyright © 2024 www krazydad com

# Brain Tickler

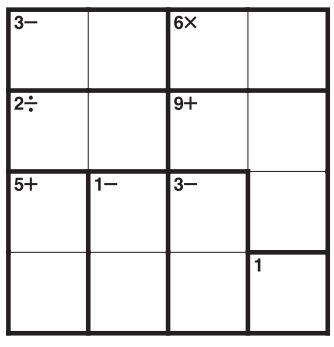
**Insert a common English word *backward* in each blank to complete the name of a country.**

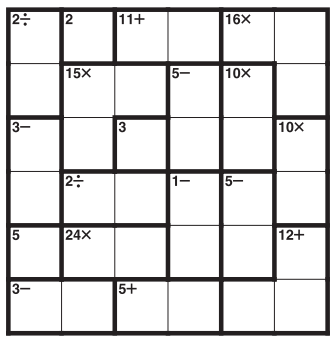
**1. N_____L 2. I_____L 3. U_____Y**

PUZZLE BY WILL SHORTZ

**SATURDAY'S ANSWER** Ginsu, using, suing

# KenKen




ANSWERS TO PREVIOUS PUZZLES

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 2 | 1 | 4 | 3 |
| 3 | 2 | 1 | 4 |
| 1 | 4 | 3 | 2 |
| 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 4 | 5 | 6 | 2 | 1 | 3 |
| 2 | 6 | 1 | 4 | 3 | 5 |
| 5 | 2 | 4 | 3 | 6 | 1 |
| 6 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 5 | 4 |
| 3 | 1 | 5 | 6 | 4 | 2 |
| 1 | 4 | 3 | 5 | 2 | 6 |

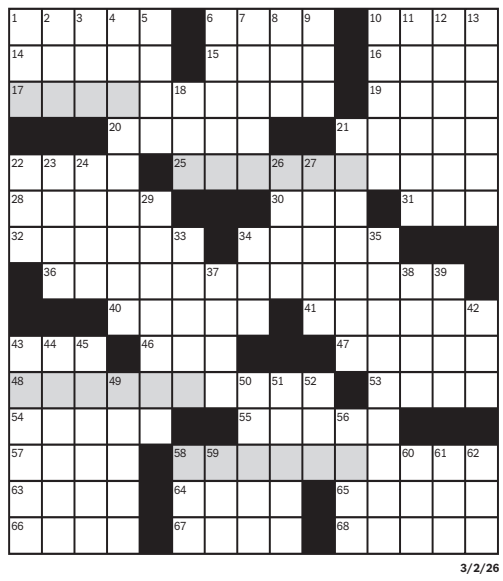
Fill the grid with digits so as not to repeat a digit in any row or column, and so that the digits within each heavily outlined box will produce the target number shown, by using addition, subtraction, multiplication or division, as indicated in the box. A 4x4 grid will use the digits 1-4. A 6x6 grid will use 1-6.

For more games: www.nytimes.com/games

KenKen® is a registered trademark of Nextoy LLC Copyright © 2024 www KENKEN com All rights reserved

# Crossword | Edited by Will Shortz

PUZZLE BY LESLIE BENSON



3/2/26

**ACROSS**

1 Leave behind, informally
6 Read, as a bar code
10 Happy as a ___
14 The Potato State
15 Bit of dialogue
16 Seized vehicle, in brief
17 Hint at, as what's to come
19 Sitting on
20 Parisian river
21 Wedding walkway
22 Figs. that include interest
25 Hit the jackpot, so to speak
28 Hotel units
30 Distant
31 Refusals
32 Place in a pyramid, as a mummified pharaoh
34 "There's no such thing ___ publicity"
36 Acknowledge during a broadcast, say ... and a hint to the shaded squares
40 Brings home the bacon
41 Tres ___ cake
43 Dads
46 Popular coastal destination in India
47 Bird featured on many baby shower decorations
48 Sequence of steps to accomplish a goal
53 "Good heavens!"
54 In the countryside
55 Toward the back
57 Tiny unit of matter
58 Wild canid of the Great Lakes region
63 Foxholes, e.g.
64 Drifter
65 Committee head
66 Therefore
67 The Beatles' "Back in the ___"
68 "The ___ Pokey" (children's dance song)

**DOWN**

1 "What's the ___?" ("Who cares?")
2 Wedding vow
3 Black goo
4 Knight captures bishop, e.g.
5 Garden faucet attachment
6 Bias
7 Fermented apple juice
8 Year on the Yucatán
9 Just purchased
10 Daniel ___, 007 portrayer
11 Divulges
12 Moon-landing program
13 Bikes with small engines
18 ___ and hers
21 Infuses with bubbles
22 "Things ___ looking up!"
23 Ping's partner
24 Indian flatbread
26 "In that case ..."
27 Afghan capital
29 Obsessor over "the precious" in Tolkien lore
33 British nobleman
34 Sounds of satisfaction
35 Sci-fi series with a "Time Lord" traveling in a TARDIS
37 "___, crackle, pop"
38 "Yikes ...!"
39 Glossary component
42 Where the stars are
43 Veterans Day event
44 Sharper
45 Muscular
49 "You are not!" retort
50 Baby sheep
51 ___ Day (tree-planting celebration)
52 Maiden name preceder
56 Part of a foot
58 Wed. follower
59 Apple platform
60 Sturdy bookcase material
61 What one should let sleeping dogs do, proverbially
62 Word after deep, stir or small

**ANSWER TO PREVIOUS PUZZLE**

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| A | I | M | L | O | W | ■ | ■ | F | R | A | T | B | O | Y |
| S | M | E | A | G | O | L | ■ | D | E | A | R | O | N | E |
| T | H | A | T | S | M | E | ■ | R | E | V | O | L | T | S |
| R | E | N | T | ■ | B | A | E | ■ | F | E | D | O | R | A |
| A | R | I | E | L | ■ | T | R | I | S | ■ | ■ | T | I | N |
| L | E | E | ■ | E | T | H | A | N | ■ | N | A | I | A | D |
| ■ | ■ | ■ | S | T | R | E | S | S | L | E | V | E | L | ■ |
| ■ | ■ | B | E | F | O | R | E | T | I | M | E | S | ■ | ■ |
| ■ | C | U | R | L | Y | B | R | A | C | E | S | ■ | ■ | ■ |
| S | A | T | B | Y | ■ | A | P | N | E | A | ■ | P | O | I |
| A | L | T | ■ | ■ | F | R | E | T | ■ | N | E | R | F | S |
| M | O | H | A | I | R | ■ | N | T | H | ■ | L | O | L | A |
| B | R | U | S | H | E | D | ■ | A | U | T | O | P | A | Y |
| A | I | R | H | O | R | N | ■ | N | E | O | P | E | T | S |
| R | E | T | Y | P | E | D | ■ | S | T | E | R | E | O | ■ |

Play all of our games plus over 10,000 past puzzles for Wordle, Spelling Bee, The Crossword and more online at http://nytimes.com/games. For puzzle talk, visit http://nytimes.com/wordplay.

# This Week on TV

A SELECTION OF SHOWS, SPECIALS AND MOVIES. BY SHIVANI GONZALEZ

### Campus Romance

Relationships (toxic and otherwise) in academia have been well documented recently across TV: "Tell Me Lies" and "How to Get Away With Murder" are just two examples, and now the limited series **"Vladimir"** is joining the list. The show follows a middle-aged professor (Rachel Weisz) who develops an infatuation with a younger colleague (Leo Woodall). The story, adapted from Julia May Jonas's book, is narrated by Weisz's character, who's gripped in a shifting internal dialogue, so viewers are never sure what's real and what's simply her perception. All eight episodes will drop at once. *Begins streaming Thursday on Netflix.*

That's not the only new show set on a college campus. **"Rooster"** veers more into comedy territory, with Steve Carell starring as a writer (loosely based on Carl Hiaasen, author of "Hoot" and "Bad Monkey") who visits a liberal arts college and is swept into the on-campus antics of students and professors. The show is written by Bill Lawrence, a creator of "Ted Lasso," "Shrinking" and "Scrubs," and also stars Scott MacArthur, Annie Mumolo, Connie Britton and John C. McGinley. *Sunday at 10 p.m. on HBO and available to stream on HBO Max.*

### A Carl Hiaasen Florida Man

With Hiaasen top of mind, another new show is based on one of his novels, this time "Double Whammy." The TV series, **"RJ Decker,"** stars Scott Speedman as a disgraced former photographer who, after finishing a stint in jail, becomes a private investigator in South Florida to help his ex-wife, a journalist, look into odd cases in the area. *Tuesday at 10 p.m. on ABC.*

If the French drama **"The Hunt"** sounds familiar, that might be because it was originally set to run in December but was postponed after its production company investigated claims that the work had been plagiarized. Now that it has been authorized to move forward, we're finally seeing the series, which follows Franck (Benoît Magimel) and his friends on a hunting trip, where they themselves end up being hunted. After barely managing to escape, the friends try to return to regular life, but their trauma haunts them. *Begins streaming Wednesday on Apple TV.*



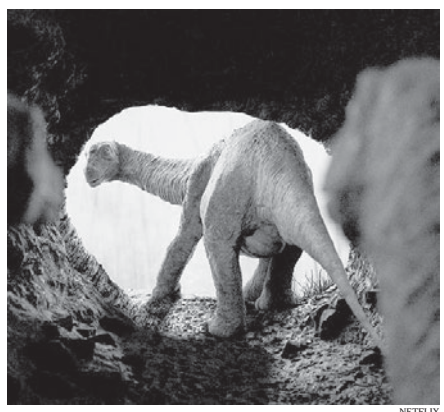
NETFLIX

**"Vladimir" is about a middle-aged professor (Rachel Weisz), who is infatuated with a younger colleague (Leo Woodall).**



PATRICK WYMORE/HBO

**Steve Carell plays an author in "Rooster."**



NETFLIX

**Steven Spielberg produced "The Dinosaurs," a documentary.**

### Strong Tea in London

**"Ladies of London"** premiered on Bravo in 2014 and, for three seasons, tracked the comings and goings of British socialites. Now it is being revamped à la "The Real Housewives of New York" and "Vanderpump Rules." In this iteration, **"The New Reign,"** the cast features a both British natives and American expats, including Mark-Francis Vandelli, an alum from the British reality show "Made in Chelsea." So clutch your pearls and pour yourself a cup of tea because drama is sure to ensue. *Thursday at 9 p.m. on Bravo and available to stream the next day on Peacock.*

### Documentary Selections

In 2012, Skylar Neese, a 16-year-old high school student, went missing after sneaking out of her house to hang out with friends. When her body was found about six months later, an investigation determined that she had been fatally stabbed; two of her close friends, Shelia Eddy and Rachel Shoaf, were arrested and eventually both charged in aspects of her kidnapping and murder. The three-part documentary **"Friends Like These: The Murder of Skylar Neese"** follows the disappearance, the investigation and the trial. *Begins streaming Friday on Hulu.*

Esther Estepa, a 42-year-old woman, went missing in Spain in 2023 after crossing paths with the TikTok personality José Jurado Montilla (who went by El Titi, or Dinamita). **"The TikTok Killer,"** a two-part documentary, features archival footage and interviews with people close to Estepa, and shows how investigators tracked her last movements through digital footprints left by both Estepa and Montilla. *Begins streaming Friday on Netflix.*

Produced by Steven Spielberg and narrated by Morgan Freeman, the new four-part documentary **"The Dinosaurs"** combines C.G.I. with recent paleontological research to imagine what the planet looked like during the 165 million years dinosaurs lived on it, with a specific focus on the Mesozoic Era. All episodes will drop at once. *Begins streaming Friday on Netflix.*

*Details and times are subject to change.*

# When Producers at WNET Said No to Jeffrey Epstein



MICHAEL LOCCISANO/GETTY IMAGES FOR HBO

**Dick Cavett and Martha Rogers, his wife, in 2020. She worked with Jeffrey Epstein to try to fund a documentary on her husband.**

CONTINUED FROM PAGE C1

timated the budget for such a film at about $500,000. At one point she sent Mr. Epstein a detailed outline of how the money might be spent and who might direct such a project, envisioned as an episode of "American Masters," a landmark PBS series that profiles admired artists, writers and celebrities.

According to the emails, Mr. Epstein twice spoke with Michael Kantor, the executive producer of the series, which is produced by WNET, the New York public television nonprofit.

The emails don't include information about what became of the project. But a spokeswoman for the nonprofit, Kellie Specter, said in a statement that the documentary was never made because WNET completed a background check on Mr. Epstein and decided it did not want him involved.

Through his wife, Mr. Cavett, now 89, declined to be interviewed. But Ms. Rogers said that she and her husband had known about Mr. Epstein's convictions and his 13 months in jail, but that they did not know about the severity of the broader accusations against him. They never witnessed anything concerning in his Manhattan townhouse, she said.

"What we knew at that time was that he had been prosecuted, he had been convicted and that he'd gone to prison," Ms. Rogers said, "and therefore he had paid his dues, we thought."

Then, she said, they were apprised of WNET's concerns.

"They said, 'Martha, you don't realize who this guy is,'" Ms. Rogers said of the nonprofit. She said she was told "there's no way in the world that we can take any money from him."

The Justice Department documents that have been released relate to the investigation that led to Mr. Epstein's 2019 indictment on charges that he had been running a sex-trafficking operation between 2002 and 2005 that lured dozens of underage girls to his opulent homes in New York and Florida. He died by suicide that same year while awaiting trial in a Manhattan jail.

The documents outline how, despite Mr. Epstein's convictions in 2008 in Florida, all sorts of celebrities, scientists, academics and business leaders continued to keep company with him. And all manner of charities and arts groups, often scraping around for donors, continued to accept his money, including some in the film world.

One recipient was the nonprofit that runs the Gotham Awards, which celebrates independent films. Between 2011 and 2017, Mr. Epstein donated at least $27,000, public records indicated, and discussed larger gifts in emails.

In another case, in 2017 and 2018, Mr. Epstein gave $650,000 to a nonprofit that produces "Closer to Truth," a television series about science and philosophy.

The nonprofit that operates the Gotham Awards declined to comment.

Robert Kuhn, the co-creator and host of the "Closer to Truth" series, said he accepted the money because he was impressed by the scientists Mr. Epstein knew and he trusted the judgment of prominent figures who had become part of Mr. Epstein's circle.

"If you ask me, was I happy that the series got done?" Mr. Kuhn said in an interview. "I have to tell you honestly, I'm happy the series got done. Am I happy to have been associated with Epstein? I think it's the worst possible thing I can imagine."

At the time of his interactions with Mr. Epstein, Mr. Cavett was several decades removed from his heyday in the 1960s and '70s, when he built a reputation as the thinking person's Johnny Carson, with his witticisms and in-depth interviews with guests such as Katharine Hepburn, Jimi Hendrix, Muhammad Ali and Mel Brooks.

Mr. Cavett's last talk show, on CNBC, ended in 1996, but he remained an active presence in the media and the arts, including by writing occasional columns for The New York Times.

He had been introduced to Mr. Epstein in 2012 by Mr. Allen, who was a regular guest along with his wife Soon-Yi Previn at the Epstein townhouse for several years, according to the emails released by the Justice Department.

The Justice Department files indicate that Mr. Epstein invited him half a dozen times to lunches and dinners, including one on Mr. Epstein's birthday. Typically, there were other invitees, people such as Mr. Allen; Bobby Slayton, the comedian; Ehud Barak, the former Israeli prime minister; and David Blaine, the magician.

Though Mr. Cavett once called Mr. Epstein a "good amigo" in an email, Ms. Rogers said that her husband and Mr. Epstein were never friends.

But they did correspond a bit by email. After Mr. Cavett enjoyed the chicken served at Mr. Epstein's townhouse, Mr. Epstein directed assistants to send the dish — coq au vin — to Mr. Cavett's home.

"Your salon lunches are a great pleasure," Mr. Cavett wrote to Mr. Epstein in February 2017. "And the food! My God, how you, with all you do, find time to spend in the kitchen preparing those fine dishes is beyond me. Do you have a favorite apron?"

Ms. Rogers, who co-founded a management consulting firm, recalled attending two dinners at Mr. Epstein's townhouse. She went the first time, she said, because it was one of the biggest homes in Manhattan and she is interested in architecture.

At one of the dinners, she said, the group discussed the possibility of a documentary about Mr. Cavett. Ms. Rogers said that the couple was interested in the "American Masters" series, which had profiled Mr. Carson, Bing Crosby and other luminaries. When she suggested that PBS would need funders, Mr. Epstein said he might be able to help, Ms. Rogers recalled, and she was under the impression he was going to look for donors.

She later wrote to Mr. Epstein: "We are thrilled and delighted that someone you know may want to support this effort. And if that support can only come at half that level (250K), we are still thrilled and delighted."

Though Mr. Epstein invited Mr. Cavett to a dinner late in 2017, the records contain no interactions between them beyond that. Ms. Rogers said that when they began to realize the depth of the accusations against Mr. Epstein, she said she and her husband distanced themselves.

In 2022, the "American Masters" series did release a different documentary that chronicled the relationship of Mr. Cavett and Groucho Marx. Ms. Specter said Mr. Epstein played no role in that production.

Ms. Rogers said that in her and her husband's dealings with Mr. Epstein, she had come away with the impression that he had been "rehabilitated," in part because she saw his wide circle of friends and financial success.

"He's got a lot of really smart, interesting people around him, and you know, they can't all be wrong," she recalled thinking at the time. "But we all were."

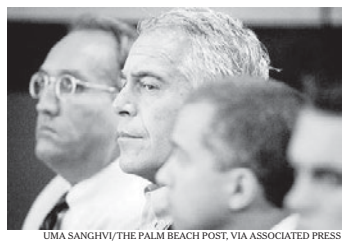


BETTMANN/GETTY IMAGES



ABC PHOTO ARCHIVES/DISNEY, VIA GETTY IMAGES

**Top, Dick Cavett on his talk show in 1971. He conducted in-depth interviews with various celebrities over the years, including Woody Allen, above, who in 2012 introduced Mr. Cavett to Jeffrey Epstein, below in court in 2008.**



UMA SANGHVI/THE PALM BEACH POST, VIA ASSOCIATED PRESS

*Kitty Bennett contributed research.*

JEOPARDY!®
CLUE OF THE DAY

RANKS & TITLES

STILL IN USE TODAY, THIS TITLE MAY COME FROM THE IDEA THAT ROMAN PRIESTS MADE BRIDGES BETWEEN MEN & THE GODS

FOR THE CORRECT RESPONSE, WATCH JEOPARDY! TONIGHT OR LOOK IN THIS SPACE TOMORROW IN THE TIMES.

Friday's Response:
WHAT IS SEARS, ROEBUCK & CO.?

Watch JEOPARDY!
7 p.m. on Channel 7

The New York Times

Provide your faculty and students with digital access.
nytimes.com/oncampus

# On 'Survivor,' What About the First Boot?

CONTINUED FROM PAGE C1

inaugural season, who had her hopes quickly extinguished when Jeff Probst, the show's host and an executive producer, snuffed out her flame. (Jenna Lewis-Dougherty, who had participated in the first "Survivor" season, became the latest person to meet that fate in Wednesday's season premiere.)

In an email Probst wrote that, as a first boot approaches him, he is aware that the person is "having their own internal conversation, usually some mix of shock and embarrassment, and often a private sense of disappointment."

"Not just in how it ended," he added, "but in knowing they're about to go home and explain it to the people who believed in them."

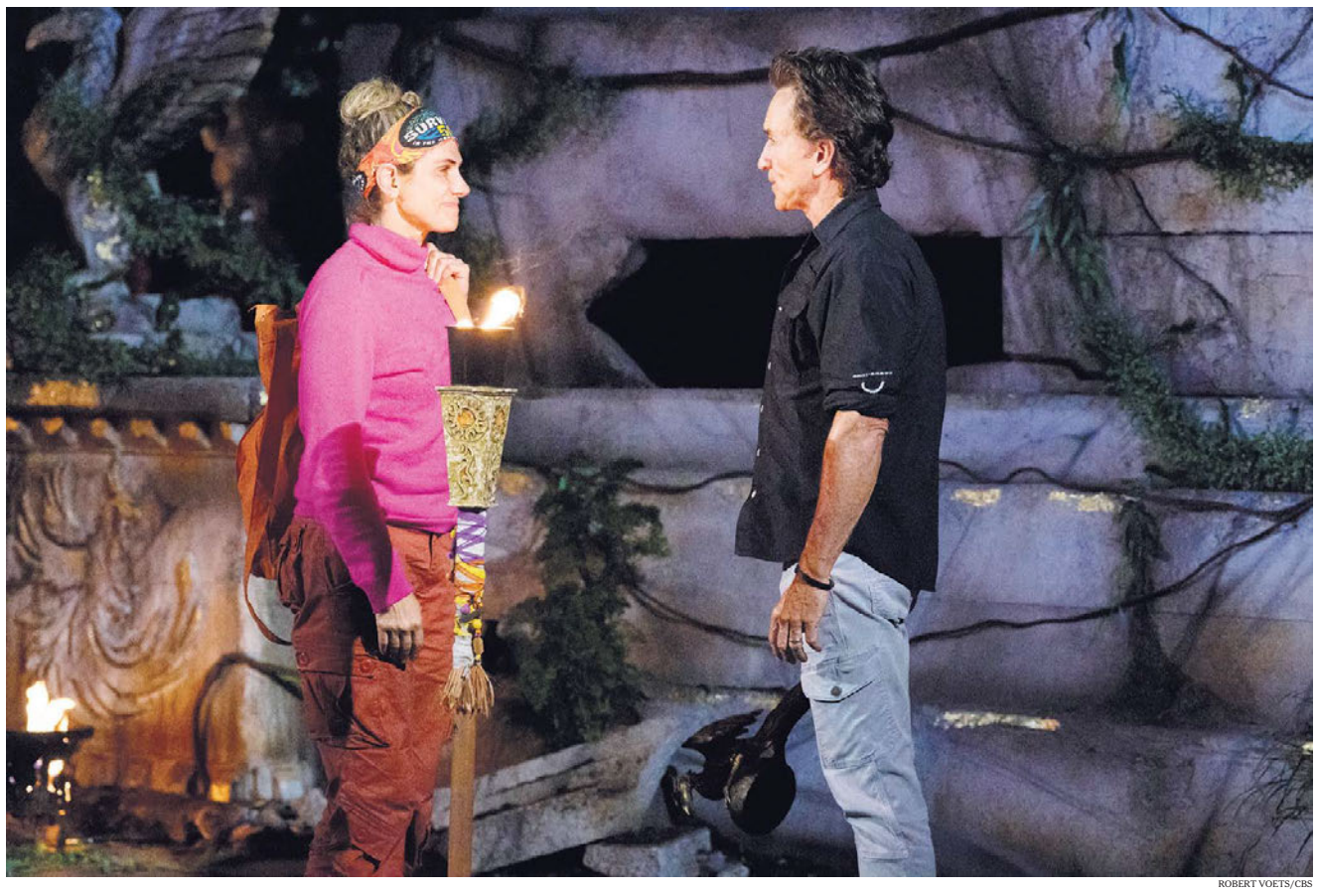
The first vote can come down to a seemingly random detail. Season 38's David Samson thinks it was a blazer that did him in, for example.

Samson, the former president of the Miami Marlins, had lost his luggage on his flight to Los Angeles. Show producers took him shopping, Samson said, and insisted he buy a blazer. As the season opened, Probst asked the contestants to choose a group leader. Samson was chosen, in part, because his group thought the blazer made him look like a leader.

"And in real time, I envisioned my torch being snuffed as the first one," Samson said, aware that contestants who take on early leadership roles often stand out as a target.

"It's humbling; It's humiliating to go first," said Vytas Baskauskas, the first boot in Season 31, adding: "To get voted out first is definitely one of the largest slices of humble pie I've eaten in my entire life."

Once ousted, players have time to recycle their downfall at Ponderosa, the sequestered area usually at a resort or hotel, for contestants. In most cases, this means the first boot is waiting for the next contestant



ROBERT VOETS/CBS



TIMOTHY KURATEK/CBS



MONTY BRINTON/CBS

**Jenna Lewis-Dougherty, top, lasted a while in the first season of "Survivor," but was the first contestant booted this season. Darnell Hamilton, far right above, was the first to leave Season 32. Vytas Baskauskas, left above, on his experience: "It's humiliating."**

voted out, and — if it is someone who had participated in the dismissal — greeting that person with questions and a bit of scorn.

"That's probably the most depressing part because you're out there for three days, and then all you can do is think about the game," said Darnell Hamilton, the first voted out of Season 32. "That's all you do. You don't have your phone, nothing. You're just there thinking about the game" and, he added, what he could have done differently.

Once home, the ousted contestants wait for their single episode of gameplay to air. They are contractually bound to keep it secret and know they will be heavily featured in their lone episode. "The way they edit it just shows everything you did wrong, and you just look like an idiot," Reem Daly of Season 38 said. "But it's not like they fake the footage. It happened."

Baskauskas's episode showed him in underwear, teaching yoga to his tribe mates. It happened, Baskauskas said, except the producers gave him underwear instead of swimming trunks that season, and a fellow contestant had asked him to demonstrate a pose. "It was like, 'OK, this creepy yoga guy with his underwear,' which was annoying," Baskauskas said.

But not every first boot's ouster is tinged in ruefulness.

Jon Lovett, the first contestant out in Season 47, said he recommended that, "everyone experience a low-stakes, worst-case scenario."

"I have no embarrassment about putting myself out there and having it not go my way," said Lovett, the former Obama White House staffer who co-hosts the Pod Save America podcast. "My joke is that you apply to go on 'Survivor' and then you miss three dinners."

For his part, Probst doesn't see a commonality among the 50 first boots. "With every season, the specific criteria for who to vote out may change, but the core truth has never changed," he wrote. "A group under pressure makes a fast decision based on first impressions, and somebody is always the one left out."

Francesca Hogi holds the honor of being the only contestant voted out first twice.

Hogi originally applied for "The Amazing Race," her preferred reality competition show. She was not cast for that series, but the same producers asked her to be on "Survivor."

At the time she was a lawyer in New York and felt as though she needed a spark in her life, so she accepted. On her first go, the show's 22nd season subtitled "Redemption Island," Hogi found herself on the wrong side against Rob Mariano, one of the craftiest players in "Survivor" history.

Hogi returned a couple of years later in a "Fans vs. Favorites" season. That time, Hogi still felt stuck in life and hoped she would form an alliance playing with returning contestants she knew. Instead, some of the same people voted her out first, again.

"I had the rude awakening of 'Oh no, actually they were plotting against me from the beginning.' That was always the plan," she said, adding, "The people who do really well tend to be people, well — and I'm not saying this is a moral judgment — they are very good at manipulation and pretending."

Hogi, now a love coach and educator in Los Angeles, said she had been asked to return to "Survivor" but had declined. "It is such a hard no for me," she said. "I have no interest whatsoever in reliving that."

Everyone else interviewed for this story, though, said they'd jump at the chance to come back. "It is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, but if someone wants to make it a twice-in-a-lifetime opportunity, I'm down," Berger said.

Eric Abraham from Season 41 was even more succinct: "I'd pack my bags right now."

And some fans have clamored for a season featuring only players voted out first — this time, one of them would have to rise to the top. Still that isn't likely to happen anytime soon, according to Probst.

"Because the truth is, it's not always just bad luck or timing," he wrote. "It's that a group of strangers, very quickly, agreed this was the person they could live without. Sometimes that's unfair, but sometimes it's revealing."

# 'Scream 7' Endured a Few Bumpy Detours

The franchise's latest edition ran into trouble on the way to theaters. Here's an update.

By ESTHER ZUCKERMAN

In the world of the "Scream" movies, masked killers have been terrorizing teenagers and young adults for 30 years. But as Paramount releases "Scream 7," the latest installment in the franchise, the drama behind the scenes might be louder than the shrieks onscreen.

To understand the controversies, it helps to know the franchise's history, starting with the original "Scream" (1996), directed by Wes Craven. It started the trend of winking, teen-centered slashers, and two sequels about the travails of the final girl, Sidney Prescott (Neve Campbell), quickly followed, both featuring Courteney Cox as the reporter Gale Weathers and David Arquette as the face of law enforcement, Dewey Riley. In 2011, "Scream 4" rebooted the premise with a younger generation of stars. More than a decade later, in 2022, Paramount decided to try again.

The fifth movie, confusingly titled "Scream," featured Campbell, Arquette and Cox, but centered on sisters played by Melissa Barrera and Jenna Ortega. Craven died in 2015, so new directors, Tyler Gillett and Matt Bettinelli-Olpin, took over. The film received solid reviews and was a box office success, leading to a quick-turnaround sequel, "Scream VI," in 2023. But plans for a follow-up to that quickly went awry. As "Scream 7" hit screens on Friday, here's what happened.

### The Back Story

"Scream VI" wasn't as controversial, but it wasn't free from bad press, either, after Campbell announced she would not be returning because of a salary dispute. "As a woman, I have had to work extremely hard in my career to establish my value, especially when it comes to 'Scream,'" she said in a 2022 statement to Variety. "I felt the offer that was presented to me did not equate to the value I have brought to the franchise." So the film went ahead without Campbell and moved the action to New York City,



PHILIPPE BOSSÉ/PARAMOUNT PICTURES

**Melissa Barrera, left, and Jenna Ortega in "Scream VI." They didn't return for the latest installment.**

where members of the new generation of Ghostface targets were attending college. Bettinelli-Olpin said they would "never give up on" Campbell. "We'd love to be able to make another movie with her," he told The Hollywood Reporter.

### A High-Profile Firing

A few months after "Scream VI" was released in March 2023, with the best opening weekend in franchise history, it was announced that the seventh "Scream" would be getting a fresh director. Gillett and Bettinelli-Olpin stepped aside for Christopher Landon, whose credits, including the "Happy Death Day" movies, owe a lot to the meta, campy tone of "Scream."

At the time, it appeared that the main stars, including Barrera and Ortega, would return.

But eight months later, Variety reported that the production company Spyglass had fired Barrera over her social media posts supporting the Palestinian cause after the Oct. 7 Hamas attack in Israel. Spyglass said the posts were antisemitic.

A spokesperson for the company told Variety, "We have zero tolerance for antisemitism or the incitement of hate in any form, including false references to genocide, ethnic cleansing, Holocaust distortion or anything that flagrantly crosses the line into hate speech."

Barrera eventually responded on Instagram, writing: "I condemn antisemitism and Islamophobia. I condemn hate and prejudice of any kind against any group of people." She added, "As a Latina, a proud Mexicana, I feel the responsibility of having a platform that allows me the privilege of being heard, and therefore I have tried to use it to raise awareness about issues I care about and to lend my voice to those in need."

### Falling Dominoes

A day after Barrera's firing made news, Ortega dropped out. In an interview with The Cut last year, Ortega said her decision had "nothing to do with pay or scheduling." Instead, she said, "the Melissa stuff was happening, and it was all kind of falling apart." She added if the movie wasn't going to be with the people she "fell in love with, then it didn't seem like the right move for me in my career at the time."

By December 2023, Landon had announced on X that he too had left the project. "It was a dream job that turned into a nightmare," he wrote. "And my heart did break for everyone involved." He instead made the date-night thriller "Drop."

### A Reboot of a Reboot

Just as it's hard to kill a Ghostface, it is also hard to kill "Scream." Campbell announced in March 2024 she was returning to play Sidney once again, and this time she would be directed by Kevin Williamson, who wrote three of the first four entries. "I'm very happy and proud to say I've been asked, in the most respectful way, to bring Sidney back to the screen and I couldn't be more thrilled," Campbell wrote on Instagram.

Now "Scream 7" comes to the screen feeling something like a reboot of a reboot. The new movie puts the focus squarely back on that eternal survivor, Sidney, who now lives with a cop husband, (Joel McHale) and a teenage daughter, Tatum (Isabel May). Tatum is 17, the same age Sidney was in the first "Scream," and, as is to be expected, Ghostfaces start popping up with threats. Tatum's presence means that Williamson and his co-writer, Guy Busick, who also worked on the 2022 and 2023 films, are doing a hefty bit of hoping that fans buy into the life they have imagined for their heroine. After all, it didn't seem as if Sidney had a 2-year-old daughter during the events of "Scream 4" in 2011.

There are two holdovers from the Barrera and Ortega era: Jasmin Savoy Brown and Mason Gooding, who play twins Mindy and Chad Meeks-Martin, the niece and nephew of Randy Meeks (Jamie Kennedy), the horror-movie-obsessed teenager from the 1996 original. Their presence is explained by the fact that they are now working for Gale, who is reviving her career in TV news. Cox also reprises her role as the reporter who has been at the scene of every Ghostface killing from the beginning.

So, will audiences flock to see more stabbings? The box-office projections are optimistic, but calls to boycott the film over the way Barrera was treated continue. On Wednesday night, about 25 protesters demonstrated near the movie's premiere at the Paramount Studios lot in Los Angeles, according to a report in Variety.

**BRIAN SEIBERT** | DANCE REVIEW



# Flamboyance And New Blood Enliven Flamenco

A New York festival introduces a charming wonder, alongside veterans of the art form.

**FOR 25 YEARS**, Miguel Marín, the artistic director of Flamenco Festival New York, has been giving gracious curtain speeches before performances. At New York City Center on Thursday, he spoke of a love story between New York and flamenco going back more than 100 years and of the city as both witness and accomplice in a transformation of tradition.

His annual festival has played an important part in this story, introducing major artists and bringing them back. As usual, this year's edition sprawls across multiple weeks and theaters of many sizes, encompassing intimate concerts and spectacular productions. And, as is also typical, the heart of the love story is "Gala Flamenca" — a traditional format in which major flamenco dancers do a little something together at the start and the close but mainly express themselves one by one in a string of "here I am" solos with the band.

One customary thrill of this format is the introduction of new blood. The festival's first gala, in 2003, presented Israel Galván and Rocío Molina, two young iconoclasts who made an immediate impression and would soon grow into leaders of the art. This year, the new guy is Juan Tomás de la Molía, and he's another wonder. Boyishly charming beneath his beard, he dances with improvisational ease and freedom. He has the power and speed of a virtuoso, but more important, employs inspired musicality and the sound of surprise. He accents neglected areas of the meter and ratchets up tension by occasionally fording against the flow of the rhythm.

Representing lineage is El Farru, scion of a Roma dynasty: grandson of El Farruco, younger brother of Farruquito, whose New York debut was the sensation of the first festival, in 2001. For his solo, Farru wears a red suit and wields a cane, tapping out telegraph signals with it and his feet. He carries his inheritance proudly and comfortably, like a little extra weight around his middle, and attacks with the family ferocity. For a finale, he plays guitar, as at a family party.

Manuel Liñán, who directs the whole program with characteristic simplicity and elegance, is traditional in an untraditional way. In a pink, long-tailed bata de cola dress, twirling a shawl, he is, like many drag acts, performing an exaggerated womanhood — nearly an abstraction of the feminine in flamenco. Underneath a severe and matronly wig, he has a face like Fred Gwynne as Herman Munster and footwork to challenge de la Molía. He rolls his hips and cocks his shoulders in the manner of a flamenco auntie showing that she still has it.

Marín playfully referred to Liñán as "another queen," because the program already has one in Eva Yerbabuena. Her appearance in the 2002 festival was a revelation to me of an artist with the whole package — an ideal of the art. Here she starts slowly, posing like a tree bent in the wind in blue light before dawn, then becomes her own spiraling storm. She's almost too good, so assured that some of the drama drains away.

Perhaps for that reason, the climax on Thursday came before Yerbabuena's closing spot, with the solo of the singer Mara Rey. She is the kind of vocalist who screams her guts out, but she's also an actress who embodies feeling. When she sings about dying, heaving herself forward and back, you believe her. The ace up her sleeve is that she's a dancer, too, capable of whipping out percussive footwork with an air of "You didn't think I could do that, did you?" It's immensely winning. And so the love story continues.



PHOTOGRAPHS BY CHRISTOPHER DUGGAN

**Gala Flamenca**
Performed on Thursday at New York City Center in Manhattan.

**Top, the centerpiece of the annual Flamenco Festival New York, "Gala Flamenca," is a showcase for dancers, singers and instrumentalists. Above, the festival's artistic director, Manuel Liñán, performed in drag at New York City Center on Thursday.**

**ANASTASIA TSIOULCAS** | MUSIC REVIEW

# Stringing Together Old and Modern

The multifaceted musician Parker Ramsay paired the Baroque with the brand-new.

"**WHEN WAS THE LAST TIME** *you* went to a harp show?"

Last year, the harpist Parker Ramsay posed that question — more of a challenge, really — in an essay. His performance on Thursday at Merkin Hall provided an opportunity to take up the gauntlet. Also showing off his chops as a harpsichordist, he juxtaposed deeply old and brand-new music in a program meant to give him curatorial carte blanche. (Alas, if only this venue had an organ, perhaps we could have heard another facet of Ramsay, who served as the organ scholar at King's College Cambridge in England.)

**Parker Ramsay**
Performed on Thursday at Merkin Hall in Manhattan.

Thursday's concert was supposed to feature world premieres of works by Georg Friedrich Haas and Christopher Trapani. It was announced from the stage, however, that because of the recent snowstorm that ensnarled much of the Northeast and an ensuing lack of rehearsal time, Trapani's "Luci Bizantine" would not be performed.

Ramsay began the evening at the harpsichord in a succession of short, mostly 17th-century works: Jan Pieterszoon Sweelinck's "Ricercar Nono Tono"; Riccardo Rognoni's Diminutions on "Ancor Che Col Partire (Cipriano de Rore)"; sonatas by Johann Schmelzer and Dietrich Buxtehude and Georg Muffat; and Michelangelo Rossi's Toccata Settima. While Ramsay can celebrate coloristic and dynamic contrast when he plays the harp, the fundamental sonic limitations of the harpsichord — an instrument that cannot alter its loudness or sustain sound — gave him a rigorous framework in which to highlight tonal, harmonic and rhythmic invention.



POINT OF ORDER PRODUCTIONS

**The harpist Parker Ramsay at Merkin Hall on Thursday in a wide-ranging program.**

For many of these selections, he was joined by the violinist Miranda Cuckson and the cellist Jay Campbell. Unlike Ramsay, who has shaped a dual-gear career in both Baroque and modern works, Cuckson and Campbell are better known as contemporary music specialists. Hearing the two of them play this music was a little like listening to people you thought you knew suddenly chatting away in a foreign language: It reveals a whole new side of their personalities. Cuckson in particular proved an adept polyglot, especially in Schmelzer's sweet and tender Sonata IX in A minor.

Partly because of the omission of Trapani's premiere, Haas's "Annäherung" for violin and harp was the evening's main event. Ramsay and Cuckson translate the German title as meaning something like "convergence" or "proximity," and in this piece, their individual parts orbit each other before drawing near and playing in sync. In Cuckson's case, she really did move around the venue as she played, eventually meeting Ramsay onstage. That sense of constant shift and unmoored movement spun out rhythmically and harmonically as well, as the duo traded skittering figures and sustained sections.

Haas's enduring fascination with microtones dictated that Ramsay's harp bore a unique tuning: The middle of his instrument was tuned to the standard of A at 440 hertz, but each of its shorter strings was successively pitched a few degrees higher than normal, and the lower strings a bit flatter. Cuckson, too, sometimes matched the harp's tunings and at other times floated in her own microtonal realm.

If Haas's central idea was to traverse the meaning and possibilities of proximity, that too was the driving intellectual force of this wide-ranging program. It wasn't a full harp show, but Ramsay's exploration of his instrument's sonic and artistic potential was illuminating, and deeply satisfying.

# Cambodia Celebrates Repatriation

Looted treasure came from the estate of an accused smuggler.

By TOM MASHBERG

Dozens of statues and relics that were looted from Cambodia during its decades of civil strife and for years adorned the London townhouse of an accused British antiquities smuggler were returned to their homeland last week after more than five years of delays.

The 74 objects, many of which date back a thousand or more years to the glory days of Cambodia's Khmer Empire, had been in the hands of Douglas A.J. Latchford, a prolific art dealer who was accused by U.S. investigators of running a multiyear scheme to sell looted Cambodian artifacts on the international market.

Mr. Latchford was indicted on wire fraud charges by federal officials in New York in 2019, but he died in 2020, before the case went to trial. The items came from his estate and were returned as part of an agreement in September 2020, between his daughter and sole heir, Julia Latchford, and the Cambodian government.

Bradley J. Gordon, Cambodia's lawyer, said the final return had been accomplished after longstanding bureaucratic delays were overcome and disagreements over shipping and storage costs were resolved. "It has been a difficult journey," he said.

In a statement, Ms. Latchford said: "Even before my father died, I became persuaded that all items of his collection had to return to the ownership of the Cambodian people. I am pleased that they are home, and available for everyone to see."

The items were received with fanfare in Phnom Penh, the Cambodian capital. "These 74 sacred items are not merely works of art," Cambodia's minister of culture and fine arts, Phoeung Sackona, said in a statement, adding, "They are living witnesses to the genius" of the nation's Khmer ancestors and "the spiritual heart of Khmer civilization."

Most of the statues depict Hindu and Buddhist deities and mythical creatures. Especially significant, Cambodian experts said, is the "Kulen Couple," described as "powerful male and female figures" that date back 1,200 years and are seen as a "rare masterpiece." They also pointed to a "Head of Brahma," a four-faced representation of the Hindu god of creation, stolen from a temple complex known as Koh Ker.

The Khmer culture built scores of sprawling temples filled with thousands of intricately carved sandstone and bronze statues, and is famed for creating the Angkor Wat complex in northwestern Cambodia, near the city of Siem Reap. Thousands of Khmer works were plundered and sold abroad while the nation grappled with genocide, civil war and political upheaval from the 1960s to the 2010s.

Investigators and Cambodian officials have said that although Mr. Latchford presented himself as a dealer and a scholar of Khmer sculpture, he was fully aware that many items he sold or collected had been illegally excavated. They said that he had repeatedly falsified paperwork in an effort to dupe buyers into paying millions for the stolen statuary. At least a dozen museums, including the Metropolitan Museum of Art, have returned items to Cambodia in cases in which Mr. Latchford had played some role in the transactions.

With the transfer announced on Friday,



AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE GETTY IMAGES

**Cambodian artifacts from the collection of Douglas A.J. Latchford have been returned.**

all the items in the 2020 agreement have been returned. They went back in three phases. In October 2021, the British government helped repatriate five statues to Phnom Penh. In February 2023, Ms. Latchford handed over 77 pieces of gold jewelry and other royal finery, a recovery that Cambodian officials likened to "getting back the crown jewels of the Angkor Empire." Earlier last week, officials began uncrating dozens of statues, which Cambodians consider living entities that carry the auras of their gods and the souls of their forebears. Also included were several dozen ceremonial items.

Cambodian officials said many artifacts from the Latchford trove were works whose existence they had learned of only while leafing through the book "Adoration and Glory: The Golden Age of Khmer Art," which Mr. Latchford and his co-author, Emma C. Bunker, published in 2003. The book featured 180 color photos of rare Khmer objects, most owned or sold by Mr. Latchford. In the book's captions, Mr. Latchford identified some items he possessed as belonging to a "private collector."

One tool that helped investigators was Mr. Latchford's laptop, which contained information about his transactions and methods. Mr. Gordon said one file listed prices for the statues and other items returned last week.

The list price for the "Kulen Couple" was $23 million, which Mr. Gordon described as wildly inflated. The list shows that Mr. Latchford valued his Cambodian inventory at nearly $180 million.

On the list, Mr. Latchford wrote: "Nothing like them have been seen before. They are undoubtedly the best that exist of the period they represent."

BASEBALL

ANALYSIS

# Broken Sport? A Blueprint For Change Goes Beyond A Pay Ceiling.

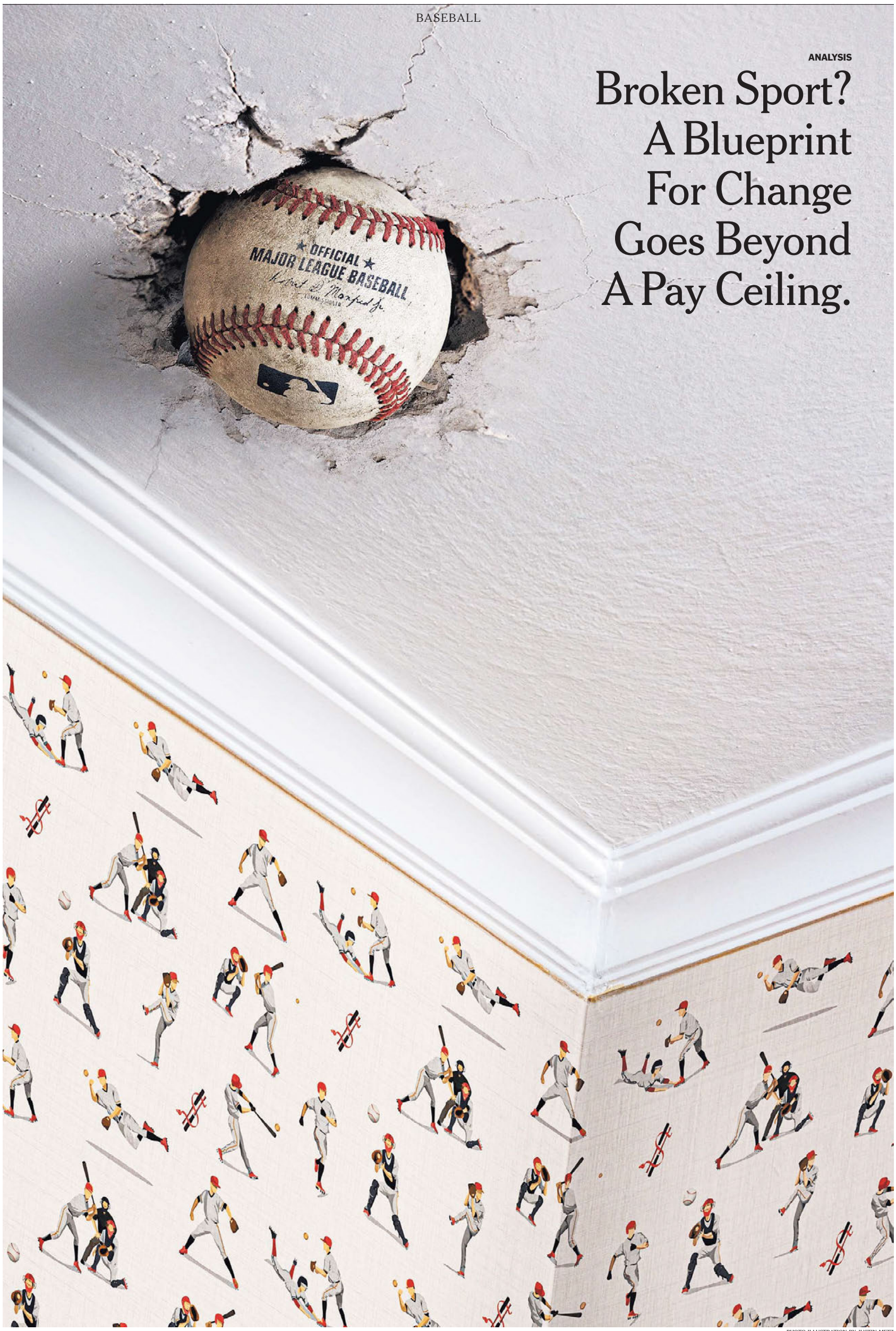



PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY JUSTIN METZ

Formal negotiations for a new M.L.B. collective bargaining agreement are expected to begin early in the season, but a lockout is widely expected in December. A salary cap would be a seismic shift with changes so broad that any single talking point is liable to undersell the effect. Page D6.

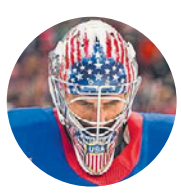
2 PRO BASKETBALL
The W.N.B.A. and its players may miss games without a new deal soon.



4-5 PRO FOOTBALL
What does each N.F.L. team need during free agency and in the draft?



7 HOCKEY
Should the N.H.L. borrow from the Olympics' 3-2-1-0 points system?



PRO BASKETBALL

ANALYSIS

# W.N.B.A. Players May Get New Deal. But What Then?

By SABREENA MERCHANT and CHANTEL JENNINGS
The Athletic

In the 17th month of negotiations for a new collective bargaining agreement, the W.N.B.A. and its players are staring down the prospect of missing games if a deal is not met in short order. The league told teams and players last week that if a handshake agreement is not in place by March 10, the 2026 schedule will be affected.

All indications are that the sides remain far apart on key issues, most specifically salary structure and revenue sharing. But there is finally a real date in place for understanding the next steps needed for the league should the W.N.B.A. and the players' union reach an agreement.

This off-season already promised to be busy, even without negotiations delaying the timeline. Almost every league veteran is a free agent. Two new teams are entering the league via expansion. And the college draft will alter some rosters.

No way around it: There is a lot to get done and not a lot of time to do it.

Here is how the rest of the off-season could proceed to ensure that the season tips off on May 8.

MARCH 10

### Deal date

This is the date an agreement would need to be reached — not the date the ink has to be dried on signatures — to get to work. That means that both sides have only about a week left to come to an agreement on revenue sharing, housing, minimum standards, roster construction rules and all of the other priorities the league and players have laid out throughout negotiations.

Once a term sheet is in place, lawyers from each side would get to work codifying the specifics of the agreement, and the owners and players would have to vote to ratify it.

It is unclear why this specific date was chosen by the league, but it tracks with information from a source in broadcasting who was granted anonymity to speak on the subject. That person said that a few weeks would be needed to clear television time slots and windows for early-season games.

*Sabreena Merchant and Chantel Jennings cover women's basketball for The Athletic.*

MARCH 31

### A signed contract

Even with a handshake on March 10, it would likely take about three weeks for the lawyers to get everything done and for the agreement to be signed.

Even in the time between a handshake and an agreement, everything would remain in the status quo, and a moratorium would remain in place that would prohibit free agency transactions. Furthermore, franchises could not trade college draft picks, so no one should expect too much news during this time.

APRIL 1

### Protected players lists given to expansion teams

Last year, Golden State had seven days between receiving protected lists from teams and its expansion draft as a new team entering the league. With the truncated timeline, this is a window that can be shortened.

The expectation now is that each existing franchise will be allowed to protect five players apiece, and that the expansion Tempo and Fire can select one player each from the other 13 teams. Details around the expansion draft — whether it will be in alternating order or a snake draft — are not known at this point, but that would be a part of the handshake agreement.

With so much time between the handshake and the signed contract, multiple team sources said there is potential for the new teams to receive these protected lists earlier than April 1 if the owners in Toronto and Portland pushed for a slightly earlier date to have a longer runway to strategize.

APRIL 3-5

### Final Four and national championship

The W.N.B.A. wants to avoid scheduling major attention-seeking events during college basketball's marquee weekend. There is enough oxygen in the room for both to coexist, but the W.N.B.A. doesn't want its expansion draft or the start of free agency to go directly up against the Final Four or the national title game.

APRIL 6

### Expansion draft

Toronto and Portland are finally on the clock.

With a little more than a month until the start of the regular season, the Tempo and Fire will start to form their rosters. But none of this is set in stone, as the teams are not required to sign players they select in the expansion draft.

APRIL 7-11

### Pre-agency

The pre-free agency period kicks off at 12:01 a.m. Eastern on April 7 with the designation period. This is when teams extend qualifying offers to reserved and restricted free agents and apply the core tag to an eligible unrestricted free agent. The players' union has proposed eliminating the core designation, but assuming it remains, this is when front offices will decide on their core players.

This period typically lasts 10 days but would likely be condensed to two or three days in an expedited timeline.

After the designation period, teams can start to negotiate with free agents, another stretch that is supposed to last 10 days. However, expect that the negotiating window would also be truncated.

APRIL 12

### Free agency starts

Free agency opens, and signings can be official. Note that this gives teams about a week to conduct free agency, when the normal process starts on Feb. 1 and can last until the start of training camp in mid-April.

Free agency will involve more than 100 players, as every veteran other than Lexie Brown and Kalani Brown is up for a new contract. A new cap environment will require front offices to reassess the value of players relative to the salary cap; new elements to contracts, including team and player options, could also be in place. Furthermore, players will be meeting with the two expansion teams for the first time. After players signed short-term deals in recent years to capitalize on a new collective bargaining agreement, expect many to lock in on long-term deals to reap the rewards of a cap spike.




JENNY KANE/ASSOCIATED PRESS




COLE BURSTON/THE CANADIAN PRESS, VIA ASSOCIATED PRESS

Monica Wright Rogers, left, the general manager of Toronto's new expansion team, will try to form a roster despite uncertainty.

APRIL 13

### College draft

Free agency is usually completed before the draft, but to start the season on time, the two would have to overlap. This is not in the best interest of the W.N.B.A. for several reasons.

The draft draws a tremendous amount of attention and would drown out any free-agency news. The draft deserves a stand-alone day. Another complication is that front offices will be torn in two directions and not able to give the requisite attention to their newest draftees on one of the biggest days of those players' careers.

The W.N.B.A. released the date of the draft when it announced the draft lottery and, per people with knowledge of the decision, already has a location and a television window. Of all the items to move during the off-season calendar, this seems like the least likely to budge.

Some team sources have suggested that having the draft and free agency simultaneously (or even out of order) would not be much of a concern — teams have at least been able to plan out their draft strategy during this protracted off-season.

APRIL 19

### W.N.B.A. camps start

Under the previous collective bargaining agreement, players needed to be in their respective markets by the start of training camp or on May 1 (whichever came later) to avoid penalties around the prioritization rule, which had been a focus owners during the 2020 negotiations to get players back from playing overseas in time to prepare for the season. It is unknown how that rule would work, or whether it will still exist, under the new agreement.

But at least for rookies, returning players and fresh signees, they would have a time and place to report for the 2026 season.

APRIL 25

### Preseason games begin

Two preseason games are scheduled for the Saturday after training camp: Indiana at New York (3 p.m. Eastern) and Seattle at Golden State (8:30 p.m. Eastern). Neither currently has television information; however, expect that to change if the dates hold given the growing fan interest in the W.N.B.A., even for exhibition games.

MAY 8

### Regular season begins

If everything goes according to plan, the season would tip off at 7:30 p.m. Eastern with Connecticut at New York and Washington at Toronto.

TRACK AND FIELD

# From High Jump to Sci-Fi, Athlete Turns Author

By ZACH POWELL
The Athletic

Osawese Agbonkonkon, a high jumper, was warming up before a practice in the fall of 2025 when he thought of a scene. He raced to his backpack, grabbed his phone and typed in the idea before it could get away.

A University of Texas teammate asked, "Are you over there writing that book?"

He was. Agbonkonkon is often writing the second installment of "Psychic Suit." He typically writes during his free time, which he does not have much of because of his training and travel schedule. The moment mattered. The thought helped move his novel forward.

Agbonkonkon, 21, uses writing to process the world around him — what's broken, what's improving and how power shapes the two. In his downtime, he has constructed a fictional universe whose characters reflect his views on politics, mental health and influence.

He began writing "Psychic Suit" in elementary school, after a standardized test in the fifth grade sparked his imagination.

"We had a prompt on the test, it was create your own story, and I had a lot of fun with that," Agbonkonkon said in a phone conversation months ahead of last week's SEC indoor championships. "I went home that day, opened up a binder and started handwriting my first book."

Three years later, he grew curious about building a writing career.




OSAWESE AGBONKONKON

Agbonkonkon's book focuses on topics such as destiny, hierarchy and the burden of power.

"He wanted to know how much you make from something like that," said Jay Kontilis, his middle schoolteacher in San Ramon, Calif. "I told him, 'No, no, no, it's about finding your passion.' He kind of connected to what the world of writing would be. To a lot of my students, it's just another task or something we do. He just seemed to be really interested in the background piece of writing.

"I told him, 'You do this because your heart is telling you to do this.'"

Kontilis wrote "The Meeks," a science fiction novel published in 2019. He remembers discussing the writing process for it during Agbonkonkon's class and recalled how deeply intrigued he was — not just by the process, but by how fictional characters could be built and described.

Agbonkonkon's book opens in a sci-fi universe he has been building for years. The novel follows characters born into powerful bloodlines who inherit psychic abilities tied to their lineage. As they confront those powers, they are forced to reckon with the moral cost of using them. The story focuses on topics such as hierarchy, destiny and the burden of power.

While Agbonkonkon is not the first college athlete to publish a book, it remains an uncommon pursuit, particularly outside of sports-related works or children's titles. His work stands apart in scope and genre: a science fiction universe built while navigating the demands of Division I athletics.

"Science fiction has historically been a medium to talk about the real world using a fictional world," Agbonkonkon said.

Writing science fiction is a chance for him to combine ideas he has been passionate about since his teenage years and gather them around a central theme. He loves history, his minor at Texas, and exploring ways to write about it.

Agbonkonkon played various sports growing up, from T-ball to basketball and soccer. He quit soccer to focus on basketball, but stumbled upon track and field in high school, after sitting the bench in basketball.

He tried multiple events, but settled on the high jump. He placed second in his first meet. A few meets later, he finished atop the leaderboards.

"It happened fast," his mother, Christabel, recalled.

He then met a coach who changed his trajectory.

Macka Jones, a national project triple-jump coordinator and Nike high school track and field nationals recruiter for the National Scholastic Athletics Foundation, gave Agbonkonkon a chance to compete in top meets around the country.

Agbonkonkon shocked Jones during his freshman season by telling the coach he planned to transfer out of Oregon, which has a renowned track program. Jones agreed to continue training Agbonkonkon, even though he disagreed with the decision to transfer.

"That story right there is not a traditional story in any sense of the world, and no one agreed with it," Jones said.

"And then he proved everybody wrong. And I loved it, the fact that he said: 'You know what: I know this is the right thing to do.' And there he is now, he's in the SEC."

Agbonkonkon's sophomore year began with a personal best at Texas' opening meet of the outdoor season, jumping 2.16 meters (7 feet 1 inch). He tied for seventh at the Southeastern Conference outdoor championships and qualified for the N.C.A.A. championships, where he cleared 2.10 meters (6-10¾) and finished 20th.

"I came into the N.C.A.A. thinking it wasn't going to be that hard; I came in thinking I was going to be really successful," Agbonkonkon said about his tenure at Oregon. "You kind of stumble out because you're a freshman, but I learned there are levels to this, and you've got to get to the next one."



UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS

Osawese Agbonkonkon has built a sci-fi universe while navigating the demands of a Division I sport at the University of Texas.

Agbonkonkon learned there were levels to being a reputable author, too. As he finished writing "Psychic Suit," he reflected on how he could use his experience at Oregon while training hard with Jones's off-season program.

He was driven to accomplish two goals: train hard and perform well enough to impress coaches in preparation for Texas, and complete the writing and publishing plans in the months leading up to the book's release on May 9, 2024. He published his novel independently through Songspire Press.

Agbonkonkon has always had a business mind-set. He learned about regional media markets and television markets and figured out how to leverage himself. He watched episodes of "Josh Pate's College Football Show," which helped him understand what the name, image and likeness shift meant for his future and how he could benefit.

He has one more season after this one, and believes he could turn the heads of professional track scouts. He also wants to attend law school, publish several more books and maybe work in the television industry as a writer.

In the meantime, he understands his time in college athletics is limited. His platform will not last forever, and neither will his margin for error. Yet his ideas — the ones he has been gathering since elementary school — are built to outlive the moment and resonate beyond it.

"I almost forgot how much I enjoy the process of creating scenes, putting things down in the story and getting to reread your own work," Agbonkonkon said. "And enjoying it the way other people do is really great.

"Getting that idea to be creative is really great for me because you got to cherish it."

*Zachary Powell is a news editor for The Athletic.*

PRO BASKETBALL

ANALYSIS

# Practical, and Improbable, Cures for the Tanking Scourge

By THE ATHLETIC STAFF

Tanking is a hot-button issue in the N.B.A. this season as numerous teams out of contention for the postseason race to the bottom to maximize their chances of a high draft pick in a loaded 2026 draft class.

As we enter the stretch run, five teams have won fewer than 30 percent of their games, a sixth (Utah) has won 31 percent, and two others (Dallas and Memphis) are rapidly sinking down the standings after trading critical players at the deadline. Some of these teams traded healthy players for injured ones. Others have set conservative recovery timelines for key players. Some have even played their regulars reduced minutes within games.

The N.B.A. has noticed. Recently, the league fined the Utah Jazz and the Indiana Pacers for conduct that "prioritizes draft position over winning." The Jazz were docked $500,000 for subbing two of their top players (Lauri Markkanen and Jaren Jackson Jr.) out of multiple games despite their having no injury designation, while the Pacers were levied a $100,000 fine for violating the N.B.A.'s player participation policy. Commissioner Adam Silver also held a call with prominent team officials to inform them that anti-tanking rule changes are on the horizon.

The discussion of possible fixes and tweaks to the system is not going away. A few members of The Athletic N.B.A. staff are sharing their bold ideas to limit or put an end to tanking.




TYLER SCHANK/GETTY IMAGES

The Indiana Pacers were one of the teams fined by the league recently for conduct that "prioritizes draft position over winning."




SARAH STIER/GETTY IMAGES

The 2025 N.B.A. draft board. One suggestion is to abolish the draft, while another is to change the lottery (again).



TIMOTHY A CLARY/AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE GETTY IMAGES

Commissioner Adam Silver with Cooper Flagg, who might not be a Maverick if the draft was traded for a better system.




CHRIS GARDNER/GETTY IMAGES

The Jazz were fined for holding two of their top players, Lauri Markkanen and Jaren Jackson Jr., above left, out of games.

## Abolish the Draft

The N.B.A. needs to get rid of both the lottery and the draft. Because they don't work.

In tandem, they do not do what they are designed to do: Provide a *temporary* mechanism by which the worst teams in a given season are assigned the top prospects entering the league and improve enough as a result to avoid reappearing in the lottery for a few years.

The league has tried several things over the past decade-plus to discourage teams from tanking — flattening the lottery odds, introducing the play-in tournament, allowing the play-in losers access to the lottery. Nothing has worked, and more teams than ever are tanking.

While the loaded 2026 draft class is bringing even more teams into the fray, the bigger issue is teams engaging in multi-year tanks, covering both good and bad drafts, because they are repeatedly shut out from adding difference-making players.

The Jazz have been in the lottery 11 times, and have never moved up from their likely draft spot. Since the latest flattening of the lottery odds in 2019, the team with the worst regular-season record has not received the first pick.

You will never get rid of tanking in the N.B.A. while the potential reward for doing so is still there, in the form of a franchise-level player. No other team sport is as reliant on a single superstar who can change the fortunes of a billion-dollar franchise.

Razing the draft and lottery would force N.B.A. teams, at long last, to truly compete against one another for young talent. Teams would have to spend lavishly on practice facilities and infrastructure, from postgame spreads to locker-room spaces at home arenas. They would have to hire great coaching and development staffs that players believed could make them the best versions of themselves. They would have to either have a proven track record of success (Oklahoma City comes to mind) or, if they are one of the league's doormats at present, show the Cooper Flaggs and AJ Dybantsas of the world that they have a real plan not only to make those players the faces of their franchises but surround them with enough talent to make them contenders quickly.

So how might this work in practice?

You would *not* have to get rid of the rookie-wage scale in a nondraft N.B.A. Keep it, but tinker with it. One idea: The teams with the worst records would be allowed to hand out larger maximum contracts to incoming players, thus guaranteeing them more money immediately.

The league already determines the top prospects before every draft with its list of green room invitees and by determining which teams get access to the top prospects' medical records before the draft. Under a draft-free system, the league would follow a similar approach, dividing prospects into three groups: the top group of players entering the league, a secondary group and a third group. Interviews between teams and players would then proceed, just as they do during the pre-draft combine in Chicago in May.

After that process, players could then submit a list of their top five teams for whom they would like to play. Teams would do the same. If the player lists Team A as his preferred destination, and the team lists the player as its top choice, you would have a match.

"But all the good players would just pick the Lakers," you might say. But they cannot all go to the Lakers. The Lakers would have to rank their preferred top choices in order and then hope their No. 1 choice has them at the top of his list as well. Could there be shenanigans? Of course, you can't idiot-proof everything. But it would still involve just one player. Los Angeles couldn't get Darryn Peterson and AJ Dybantsa, for example. It would have to rank one at No. 1 and the other at No. 2, and hope that one of Peterson or Dybantsa had the Lakers ranked in similar order.

And: Once a team agreed to terms with a Tier 1 player, it wouldn't be allowed to take another Tier 1 player for two years afterward. It could still sign Tier 2 or Tier 3 players, or incoming players (free agents) who did not make any of the tiers the following year. And it would still retain access to any current cap exceptions. This just addresses incoming college and international players.

There are holes in every proposal. This one has them, too. But the current system is failing. It needs to be overhauled. And under these circumstances, if a team does not prove, in word and deed, that a Flagg or Peterson would thrive with them, that's on them.

Which is the point. Get better, or get gone. *DAVID ALDRIDGE*

## Lottery Restrictions

Revise the N.B.A.'s player participation policy, which various teams have violated this season.

For now, if a team violates the policy, it incurs a fine. But six figures does not even make a dent in a billionaire's wallet. What if the repercussions for violating the policy, especially if it were for throwing games, were more paralyzing than losing chump change?

The first time a team breaks the player participation policy, it should get fined and warned. If it breaks the policy a second time, it gets fined and is no longer allowed to select in the top four of the upcoming draft. The team still receives the same placement in the lottery order, but if one of its combinations comes up on draft night, the league skips over that result and redoes the drawing, the same way it does if a team received the first pick, then another one of its combinations came through when drawing for the third pick.

The N.B.A. could be more aggressive in enforcing the rules it already has, too. There are loads of examples of teams lying on injury reports throughout the course of the season — and though the league has the proof and the right to lay down the law, for whatever reason, it often chooses not to do so.

If a franchise violates the player participation policy multiple times over the course of, say, three years, the penalties should be severe. The Jazz would be one real-life example of this: They were fined for violating the policy last year, and because it happened again this year, they would lose the right to select in the top four.

Utah owns the N.B.A.'s sixth-worst record at the moment, which means in this fantasy world, it would not be allowed to pick higher than sixth in June. If teams behind the Jazz jumped into the top four, Utah would fall to seventh or eighth or ninth.

You could scale this up, too. A third fine in three years could mean you cannot pick in the top eight. A fourth could lock you into the last pick in the lottery.

We have to remember that the point of tanking reforms is to penalize bad actors, not to further hurt bad teams. It's one thing to lose. It's another thing to throw games.

I'm not sure the owners would ever go for this. Some would surely hate it. But maybe that is because it would work. Bad teams are allowed to be bad teams. But once a sports league loses the integrity of its games, it requires more drastic measures to fix it. *FRED KATZ*

## Tie Money to Success

We're never going to entirely curb tanking unless we make fundamental changes to the way the N.B.A. operates. Simply put, the value of the players being acquired at the top of the draft is too vast. While I understand the idea of abolishing the draft, I expect it to be a nonstarter for the players' union because I don't see a way for small-market teams to have a chance without abolishing the rookie scale.

My idea is to put 10 percent of the total basketball-related income into escrow (so, 5.1 percent for the players and 4.9 percent for the owners) and award that money based on how many wins each team has in each season. Essentially, you would be creating both a player participation policy and an antitanking solution, all in one.

The key thing you're trying to curtail with tanking is elongated, multiseason tanks where teams are bad. I can just about guarantee you that if you add the pressure of owners' bottom lines being affected by wins and losses, teams are going to be aggressive in trying to do whatever they can to win games.

Last season, basketball-related income was around $10 billion. Cut to 49 percent, and it's $4.9 billion. Split 30 ways, that's $163 million per owner. Imagine if you cut that number by 7 percent because a team wins only 20 games. That is about $11.5 million coming directly out of owners' pockets. And that number is before the new TV deal kicked in.

For one year, I think owners would probably be fine with that. Maybe for two. But if you start stacking that up for three straight years, my guess is that it would cause significant problems. This, in turn, would eliminate the long-term tanking that has plagued the league.

As far as the players are concerned, can you imagine the night-by-night competition this would create? Players would not want to sit out for 20 games if it's the difference between them making $1 million to $2 million more per season, and I don't think front offices would be able to persuade guys to sit out if that was the case, either.

Let's make everyone a stakeholder in making sure that basketball games are as competitive as possible. *SAM VECENIE*

## Draft the Draft

You want an out-of-the-box lottery idea? Let's really get wild.

What if the N.B.A. had teams draft *other teams* before the season starts.

This is slightly nuts, of course, and possibly totally unworkable. But let's try something that would also be very fun.

Here is how it would work: At some point in June, the teams convene for the "draft pick draft," where teams draft another team whose record will determine where they pick a year later. Because what is more fun than betting against the people you compete against?

The inspiration for this is watching the Atlanta Hawks ride the ups and downs of every New Orleans Pelicans result and then divine what it means for their hopes of getting a high lottery pick this June. Can you imagine how exciting that would be multiplied by 30?

For example, let's say Sacramento finishes this season with the worst record. It would get the first pick in the "team draft" and would be trying to project which of its 29 rivals would finish last in 2026-27. (Teams could not pick themselves.) That pick would determine where the Kings draft in 2027. Who would they bet against?

Obviously, there are some logistical hurdles with this, in particular with how to resolve already traded draft picks and protections. Also, how to do the transition from the current system to the one I'm proposing.

But in terms of generating excitement, what could be better than four "must-win" games against an opponent you specifically selected because you thought it would yield a great draft pick? *JOHN HOLLINGER*

*David Aldridge, Fred Katz, Sam Vecenie and John Hollinger are senior N.B.A. writers for The Athletic.*

PRO FOOTBALL

## Arizona Cardinals

**Quarterback**

This is not so much a need as a decision. The Cardinals must figure out what they want to do: stick with Kyler Murray, ride it out one more season with Jacoby Brissett, or go in an entirely different direction. Murray missed all but five games last season because of a foot injury, and by season's end, all parties seemed ready to move on. When asked about Murray at his introductory news conference, Coach Mike LaFleur was noncommittal. Murray is owed $36.8 million next season; on March 15, $19.5 million of his 2027 base salary locks in. Finding a trade partner is the best option, but that could prove difficult. *DOUG HALLER*

## Atlanta Falcons

**Defensive tackle**

Six of the nine interior defensive linemen who played for Atlanta last year, including the starter David Onyemata, are impending free agents or already gone, and the Falcons already have enough trouble stopping the run. They finished 27th in rush defense expected points added (0.01) last year, and Matt Ryan, Atlanta's new president for football, said in his opening news conference that his team would stop the run this year. That is going to take some big bodies. *JOSH KENDALL*

## Baltimore Ravens

**Trench help**

You could make a compelling argument for the offensive line or the defensive line being the team's biggest area of need, so it makes sense to group them. The Ravens have to add two starting-caliber interior offensive linemen, and potentially three if the standout center Tyler Linderbaum leaves in free agency. They also need to add two defensive linemen and potentially three if Nnamdi Madubuike does not return. During this off-season, solidifying his team in the trenches needs to be a focus for General Manager Eric DeCosta. *JEFF ZREBIEC*

## Buffalo Bills

**Wide receiver**

If the coaching staff remained the same, it would have been wide receiver with an exclamation point. However, even with a change in scheme that needs edge rushers better suited to the vision of the defensive coordinator Jim Leonhard, I will still stick with receiver. The Bills' offense was held back last season by its wide receiver room, which seldom gave it a chance to push the ball downfield. Buffalo was able to get by with an outstanding running game, but the team craves a two-dimensional approach. Finding a boundary receiver who can win outside the numbers in the intermediate and deep areas is critical. *JOE BUSCAGLIA*

## Dallas Cowboys

**Defense**

Everything other than defensive tackle should be a priority. Pass rushers, cornerbacks, linebackers and safeties are all needed to help improve what was probably the worst defense in franchise history. Having two first-round picks helps, but plenty of heavy lifting will be needed before the draft to fill several holes on that side of the ball. It will probably be more cost-effective to use those top two picks on pass rusher and cornerback than to spend big on those positions in free agency or via trade. The new defensive coordinator, Christian Parker, will have his hands full turning things around, but he cannot be expected to do that without a significant upgrade in defensive talent. *JON MACHOTA*

## Denver Broncos

**An offensive playmaker**

The Broncos finished 14th in scoring in 2025. They need to improve to reach the final level of their climb under Sean Payton and claim a Super Bowl. Pick a skill position — wide receiver, tight end, running back — and you can argue it as a priority for Denver's off-season. A more robust run game, in particular, is paramount, and the Broncos will need a new running back to pair with R J Harvey if they don't bring back the oft-injured veteran J .K. Dobbins. *NICK KOSMIDER*

## Detroit Lions

**A revamped offensive line**

Given how much the Lions missed Frank Ragnow this season, center should be their top priority. Graham Glasgow struggled to fill the void and will be 34 when the season begins. He could be a cap casualty or even a retirement candidate if he believes it is time to walk away. Adding a proven center in free agency could answer some of the questions along the offensive line. Though Taylor Decker will return for 2026, the Lions would be wise to seek a young tackle in the draft on the first or second day. *COLTON POUNCY*

## Green Bay Packers

**Cornerback**

The Packers need a true No. 1 cornerback, or at least someone who can grow into that role. Keisean Nixon is a decent player, but I'm not sure he can be the top outside cornerback on a Super Bowl team. Complicating matters is the fact that Green Bay does not have a first-round pick in either of the next two drafts. The free-agent options at the position are not exactly enticing, so maybe General Manager Brian Gutekunst will use his second-round pick on a cornerback and develop him behind Nixon and Carrington Valentine for now. At the very least, the Packers need bodies at the position because Nixon and Valentine are entering contract years. *MATT SCHNEIDMAN*

ANALYSIS

# Top Needs Teams Must Try To Fill

By THE ATHLETIC STAFF

Some N.F.L. teams will not balk at the idea of a lengthy shopping list this off-season. The first $300 million salary cap in league history makes for more room to turn fortunes around heading into 2026.

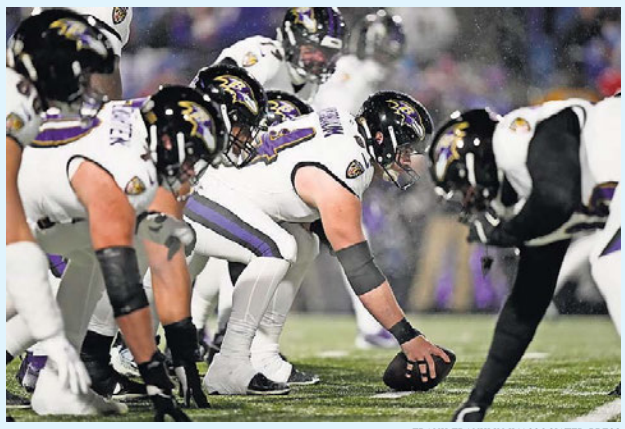
The Athletic's N.F.L. beat writers are here to help, too. From offensive line reinforcements to boosts to the wide receiver room and — as always — quarterbacks, our writers pick the biggest need for each N.F.L. team now that we are in the thick of the off-season, with free agency opening on March 11 and the draft coming up in April.

What does your team need most?



SEAN M. HAFFEY/GETTY IMAGES

**CARDINALS** Quarterback Jacoby Brissett, above, filled in last season for Kyler Murray, who's unlikely to stay but will be expensive to part with.



FRANK FRANKLIN II/ASSOCIATED PRESS

**RAVENS** The team will need help in its offensive and defensive interiors, particularly if center Tyler Linderbaum decides to become a free agent.



IAN MAULE/GETTY IMAGES

**RAIDERS** A lowly ranked offensive line needs help to ease things for Ashton Jeanty (2) and probably quarterback Fernando Mendoza.



SETH WENIG/ASSOCIATED PRESS

**49ERS** With Mykel Williams, above, and Nick Bosa coming off anterior cruciate ligament tears, seeking edge rush help would be wise.

## Las Vegas Raiders

**Offensive line**

The Raiders had perhaps the worst offensive line in the N.F.L. last season, with a lack of talent, injuries and horrendous coaching. The Raiders ranked dead last in rushing success rate and sack rate. With the second-most cap space in the league and the Raiders expected to take quarterback Fernando Mendoza first overall, General Manager John Spytek should look to spend big and add at least two new starters to the offensive line. Opening up lanes for running back Ashton Jeanty and protecting Mendoza should be the top priorities of the off-season. *TED NGUYEN*

## Los Angeles Chargers

**Center**

The Chargers started Bradley Bozeman at center during the past two seasons, and he was a liability in pass protection. They should have upgraded last off-season, but they stuck with Bozeman, and Justin Herbert was hit more than any quarterback in the league. Bozeman has announced his retirement, saving the Chargers the decision of whether to waive him, and now they must find a capable starting center. There are some intriguing options in free agency, including Tyler Linderbaum, whom Chargers General Manager Joe Hortiz had a hand in drafting during his time with the Ravens. *DANIEL POPPER*

## Los Angeles Rams

**Outside cornerback**

The Rams' clear biggest weakness is at outside cornerback. It is the one premium position they have not invested in, opting for waiver claims, Day 3 draft picks and aging veterans. That became the downfall of the league's lowest-paid defense in the N.F.C. championship game, when Sam Darnold had a breakout playoff performance. The Rams could re-sign Cobie Durant after his three-interception postseason, but they should use their two first-round draft picks and ample cap space to seek out a No. 1 option, as they used to have in Jalen Ramsey. *NATE ATKINS*

## Miami Dolphins

**Quarterback**

The Dolphins need to figure out their plan for Tua Tagovailoa, who became the first $50 million quarterback to ever be benched for performance reasons. There is no easy way to release Tagovailoa, who is owed $54 million in guaranteed salary in 2026, so they will be hamstrung with dead money whether they choose a pre- or post-June 1 transaction. Jon-Eric Sullivan, the Dolphins' new general manager, knew what he signed up for, though, and it will be tough to compete under the eventual cap constraints. *JEFF HOWE*

## New York Jets

**Quarterback**

Wait, the Jets need a quarterback? Impossible. That never happens. But, yes, Justin Fields almost certainly will not be back in 2026. The offense is going to look different with Frank Reich running things, and it would be fair to assume that a target will be a quarterback who fits the mold of what he typically looks for: big, tall, largely pocket passers. It's not the best off-season to need a quarterback; the Jets are picking second overall in a draft that might have only one first-round passer. But expect the Jets to add multiple quarterbacks this off-season — one or two veterans and a rookie. *ZACK ROSENBLATT*

## Philadelphia Eagles

**Offensive line**

The Eagles can no longer put off a succession plan for the five-time All-Pro Lane Johnson. The soon-to-be 36-year-old Johnson missed the last eight games of the 2025 season after sustaining a Lisfranc injury in a Week 11 win over the Detroit Lions. Signs point to Johnson returning for his 14th season, but it behooves the Eagles to invest in a successor — preferably one who can also offer snaps at guard in the meantime. General Manager Howie Roseman built one of the N.F.L.'s best units. He must act proactively to avoid sudden setbacks. *BROOKS KUBENA*

## Pittsburgh Steelers

**Wide receivers**

Finding depth at wide receiver has been an oing problem for Pittsburgh. In 2024, the depth chart featured George Pickens at the top and a big gap before everyone else. Last year, the Steelers reshuffled their deck by acquiring D K Metcalf and dealing Pickens, but the dynamic was similar. The two young receivers the Steelers were counting on to round out the room — Roman Wilson and Calvin Austin III — were inconsistent and injured. Pittsburgh tried to remake its receiver room on the fly by acquiring Marquez Valdes-Scantling and Adam Thielen. Now, Thielen is retiring and Austin is set be a free agent. *MIKE DeFABO*

## San Francisco 49ers

**Edge rusher**

The 49ers finished with a league-low 20 sacks in 2025, and their two best ends, Nick Bosa and Mykel Williams, are recovering from anterior cruciate ligament tears. Both are expected to return at some point during training camp, but it would be foolish to assume they will be fully back to normal at the start of the regular season. The 49ers cannot leave any stone unturned when it comes to bolstering their edge rush. If Maxx Crosby wants to leave Las Vegas, they should put out a welcome mat. If there's a pass rusher they like at pick No. 27 in the draft, they should pounce. *MATT BARROWS*

PRO FOOTBALL

## Carolina Panthers

**Pass rush**

Dan Morgan has been very clear that the Panthers' woeful pass rush was not good enough. That has been the case for a while. The Panthers ranked last in the league in sacks in 2023, and then tied for the third fewest in each of the past two seasons. Trading Brian Burns two years ago and releasing Jadeveon Clowney last year did not help matters. Morgan drafted a pair of second-day edge rushers last year in Nic Scourton and Princely Umanmielen. Scourton tied Derrick Brown for the team lead with five sacks in 2025, but more reinforcements are needed. *JOSEPH PERSON*

## Chicago Bears

**Pass rush**

The Bears finished in the bottom 10 of the league in sacks, with 35, and were 21st in sacks per pass attempt. For the team to make the leap from division champion into a true Super Bowl contender in 2026, the pass rush needs more teeth. To a large extent, the Bears may have to lean on improved production from players they already have — Montez Sweat, Dayo Odeyingbo, Shemar Turner, Grady Jarrett, Gervon Dexter, Austin Booker — to get where they want to go. Still, adding impact contributors up front is a priority, with a push to become more disruptive on the interior of the defensive line. *DAN WIEDERER*

## Cincinnati Bengals

**Pass rush**

Trey Hendrickson is a free agent, B. J. Hill will be 31 coming off a pedestrian season, and two disappointing recent picks are in the rotation. Myles Murphy took a leap in Year 3, but beyond that, the Bengals do not have a proven pass-rushing commodity. They need multiple rushers across the line to work alongside the 2025 first-rounder Shemar Stewart. This defense needs at least three starter-level rushers through free agency and the draft if it has any chance to rise to respectability. *PAUL DEHNER JR*

.

## Cleveland Browns

**Offense**

Sounds simple, right? The Browns hired an offensive-minded coach in Todd Monken because there is much to fix and several areas in need of upgrades. Prioritizing those needs is not easy — fixing them in one off-season will not be easy either — but the Browns will have multiple new players across the offensive line and in the wide receiver group. There is no sure answer at quarterback, either, but stability across the line and additional playmaking help can boost Shedeur Sanders — and help the team get a fuller read on whether Sanders is a realistic long-term option. *ZAC JACKSON*

## Houston Texans

**Offensive line**

General Manager Nick Caserio embarked on an overhaul last off-season, but outside of left tackle Aireontae Ersery, a second-round pick, the acquisitions made were short-term solutions. As last season's continued struggles showed, especially in the postseason, Houston still has plenty of work to do on this front so C. J. Stroud has time to operate and can get his groove back. Stroud turned into a turnover machine against Pittsburgh in the wild-card round and against New England in the divisional round, blowing a golden opportunity while backed by a truly championship-caliber defense. *MIKE JONES*

## Indianapolis Colts

**Pass rush**

Laiatu Latu is the only edge rusher on the roster who has shown any promise, with 8.5 sacks and three interceptions in his second season. The veterans Kwity Paye, Samson Ebukam and Tyquan Lewis, by contrast, combined for nine sacks. All three will be unrestricted free agents, and none of them should be retained. What's more, the 2025 second-round pick J T Tuimoloau barely played, so it would be naïve to think that he will make a huge leap in 2026. The Colts must improve their underwhelming pass rush via the draft or free agency to help end their five-year playoff drought. *JAMES BOYD*

## Jacksonville Jaguars

**Secondary**

The Jaguars need to boost their secondary with more starting-caliber players who can excel in the zone-based system of the defensive coordinator Anthony Campanile. They ran into coverage problems down the stretch last season, and the midseason acquisition Greg Newsome struggled in Jacksonville's playoff loss to the Bills. Travis Hunter's return will help, but the Jaguars need to add a few pieces to the competition. *JEFF HOWE*

## Kansas City Chiefs

**Defensive line**

All season, the Chiefs appeared to be one pass rusher short while too often failing on the game's most critical downs. The All-Pro defensive tackle Chris Jones had a good year but not a great one, and defensive end George Karlaftis battled through a midseason thumb injury while failing to produce sacks at his typical rate. Kansas City receives a boost with the return of the 2025 second-round defensive tackle Omarr Norman-Lott from a torn anterior cruciate ligament, but inside or outside, the line could use more pass-rushing juice for 2026 and beyond. *JESSE NEWELL*



JUSTIN CASTERLINE/GETTY IMAGES

**BROWNS** Is Shedeur Sanders the answer at quarterback? The team won't know without an improved line and more playmakers.



ADAM GLANZMAN/GETTY IMAGES

**TEXANS** The beating C.J. Stroud took against the Patriots in the postseason indicates a need for long-term solutions on the offensive line.



ROSS D FRANKLIN/ASSOCIATED PRESS

**VIKINGS** J.J. McCarthy is seemingly not a surefire solution at quarterback. The tricky part is finding reinforcements, or a possible new starter.



ADAM HUNGER/ASSOCIATED PRESS

**GIANTS** For Jaxson Dart to continue developing at quarterback, the team needs to find more cornerstone pieces on the offensive line.

### N.F.L. Offenses, 2025-26

| | TEAM | YARDS PER CARRY |
|---|---|---|
| 1. | Baltimore Ravens | 5.2 |
| 2. | Buffalo Bills | 5 |
| 3. | Chicago Bears | 4.9 |
| 4. | Washington Commanders | 4.7 |
| | Miami Dolphins | 4.7 |

| | TEAM | YARDS PER RECEPTION |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Seattle Seahawks | 12.5 |
| 2 | New England Patriots | 12.4 |
| 3 | Los Angeles Rams | 12.1 |
| 4 | Chicago Bears | 12 |
| 5 | Baltimore Ravens | 11.8 |

### N.F.L. Defenses, 2025-26

| | TEAM | YARDS PER CARRY |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Seattle Seahawks | 3.7 |
| 2 | Jacksonville Jaguars | 3.9 |
| | Denver Broncos | 3.9 |
| | Indianapolis Colts | 3.9 |
| | Las Vegas Raiders | 3.9 |

| | TEAM | YARDS PER RECEPTION |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Seattle Seahawks | 9.6 |
| 2 | Green Bay Packers | 9.8 |
| 3 | Jacksonville Jaguars | 9.9 |
| 4 | New England Patriots | 10 |
| 5 | Las Vegas Raiders | 10.2 |

Source: N.F.L. THE NEW YORK TIMES

## Minnesota Vikings

**Quarterback**

At a bare minimum, the Vikings need a quarterback to pair with J. J. McCarthy. Coach Kevin O'Connell, who also calls the plays, is entering his fifth season. The Vikings have not won a playoff game during that time. Constructing a quarterback room that gives Minnesota the best chance at going deeper is the primary focus. The Vikings may try to swing big at the position, but if they can't, they will find themselves in a similar situation to last spring. Will they guarantee the starting spot to a quarterback candidate? If not, what type of quarterback will they really be able to acquire? *ALEC LEWIS*

## New England Patriots

**Edge rusher**

For a team that was in the Super Bowl, the Patriots have a lot of positions at which they need to improve, including offensive line, wide receiver and tight end. But with K'Lavon Chaisson an unrestricted free agent, the answer for where the Patriots need the most help is edge rusher. They dominated on the interior of the D-line this season; if they can improve on the outside, this could be a really good front four. *CHAD GRAFF*

## New Orleans Saints

**Wide receiver**

It is amazing how well the rookie quarterback Tyler Shough played after the Saints moved on from their Nos. 2 and 3 wideouts, trading Rashid Shaheed and releasing Brandin Cooks around midseason. Shough and the top receiver Chris Olave could use a little help in 2026. Leaning on Devaughn Vele, whom the Saints acquired via trade shortly before the 2025 season, might be a bit of a gamble. April's draft could solve problems at the position, though. *LARRY HOLDER*

## New York Giants

**Offensive line**

Now is not the time for the team to become complacent. The veterans of the right side of the offensive line — tackle Jermaine Eluemunor and guard Greg Van Roten — are free agents, and the position coach Carmen Bricillo followed Brian Daboll to the Titans. Aside from left tackle Andrew Thomas (when healthy), the Giants do not have any cornerstone pieces on their offensive line. They need to continue investing in the position that has the greatest effect on quarterback Jaxson Dart's development. *DAN DUGGAN*

## Seattle Seahawks

**Offensive continuity**

The Seahawks were the most complete team in football and proved it with a dominant showing in the Super Bowl. They have several notable free agents, including running back Kenneth Walker III, but their biggest loss so far was the offensive coordinator Klint Kubiak, who is now the head coach of the Las Vegas Raiders. After a search that included internal and external candidates, Coach Mike Macdonald hired Brian Fleury, who had been the tight ends coach for the 49ers. Can the offense maintain its identity under a new coordinator? *MICHAEL-SHAWN DUGAR*

## Tampa Bay Buccaneers

**Edge rusher**

The Buccaneers' biggest off-season need in 2026 was also their biggest in 2025. They hoped Haason Reddick would solve their problem at edge rusher, but he had only 2.5 sacks, and he is now a free agent. The Bucs had one player with more than 4.5 sacks: Yaya Diabi had seven, tied for 35th in the N.F.L. The Bucs need to generate more pressure with a four-man rush to help their defensive backs if they are going to have a more effective defense than last season. Getting defensive tackle Calijah Kancey back from injury will help, but Tampa Bay needs an edge player who can close on the quarterback. *DAN POMPEI*

## Tennessee Titans

**Edge rusher**

This need is a glaring one, just ahead of receiver and cornerback. If Robert Saleh's first Tennessee team is going to make a quick turnaround on the side of the ball that he commands, it has to find someone who can rush quarterbacks from the outside. Last year's second-round pick, Femi Oladejo, was a non-factor before he was hurt, and it is not clear if he fits into Saleh's 4-3 defense. Jeffery Simmons is coming off an All-Pro, 11-sack season inside, but getting him help on the edge is the top priority. *JOE REXRODE*

## Washington Commanders

**Edge rusher**

The Commanders tried to do without an elite edge rusher the past two seasons, and it cost them. Finding one (or two) is now a must. Washington's void up front became especially glaring when defensive end Dorance Armstrong went down with a season-ending injury. From Week 8 on, the Commanders ranked 26th in the league in pressure rate (32.4 percent of opponent dropbacks). Combined with poor tackling and an often confused secondary, the Commanders' defense was a mess. Correcting it starts up front. *NICKI JHABVALA*

BASEBALL

ANALYSIS

# A Salary Cap's Wide-Ranging, Game-Changing Effects

By EVAN DRELLICH
The Athletic

A salary cap would be a seismic shift for M.L.B., changing far more than how much teams can spend.

Team and league officials describe a cap as an egalitarian reset, a leveling of the playing field that would allow teams in all markets to compete more fairly. To the players' union, arguments about such competitive balance are age-old red herrings, distractions from the team owners' ultimate goal of increasing their franchise values and lining their pockets.

But the effects of a cap would be so broad that any single talking point is liable to undersell the impact. Entrenched systems of free agency and salary arbitration would most likely be radically revised. Revenue sharing — how clubs divide money — would change, too. Player pay would most likely wind up in escrow, and the list goes on.

"Every day we hear from fans across the country who believe their team doesn't have a fair opportunity to compete," Glen Caplin, a league spokesman, said in a statement. "Our message to those fans is that we hear your concerns, and are committed to a solution that levels the playing field."

The union has opposed the concept for decades.

"Salary caps in the other sports have not led to competitive balance," Bruce Meyer, the deputy director of the union, said in an interview. "In fact — baseball, which is the only one of the four major sports that does not have a salary cap — actually has better competitive balance than the other sports. A salary cap punishes competition, punishes clubs that want to go out and acquire the best players and put the most exciting product on the field for the fans. It gives owners who prefer not to compete an all-purpose excuse not to do so."

Formal negotiations between team owners and players over the next collective bargaining agreement are expected to begin early in the regular season. A December lockout is widely expected. The big question is whether it costs the sport regular-season games in 2027. The N.B.A., N.F.L. and N.H.L. all have caps, but none were agreed to eagerly by players.

"You never see salary caps that would pay players more than the aggregate fair-market value — there's no point to it from the owners' standpoint," said Don Fehr, former head of the baseball and hockey unions.

What follows is an explanation of how a salary cap could change baseball. How a cap would work depends on what M.L.B. ultimately proposes. The league declined an interview request for this article.

## It's not just a cap. It's a floor, too.

Any reference to a cap system really means a cap-and-floor system. One would not arrive without the other.

Before bringing a cap proposal to players, team owners have to choose limits they are comfortable with. Small-market teams will want to keep payroll as low as possible.

Whatever the owners first propose probably is not where they will be willing to end up. A reasonable goal from an ownership perspective might be $240 million at the top and $160 million at the bottom, one source briefed on management thinking who was not authorized to speak publicly said.

A ceiling will not be a hard sell for the richest owners. Teams like the Los Angeles Dodgers, who have a league-high $402 million payroll, the New York Mets and New York Yankees would actually benefit from a limit on their spending.

"The biggest beneficiaries are going to be the biggest markets, and the biggest losers will be the small markets," said the management source.

The cap and floor would not take full effect immediately. A phase-in period would be needed. Teams would have grace periods to comply, raising or lowering payroll.

Industry sources said it was unlikely owners would ask to alter existing contracts: Long-term deals reached in the current system would be honored. The union would oppose any clawbacks.

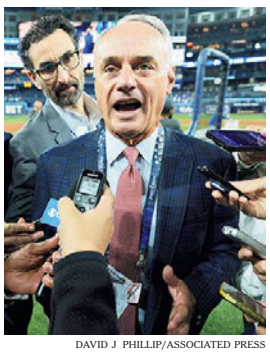
*Evan Drellich is a senior M.L.B. writer for The Athletic.*




ASHLEY LANDIS/ASSOCIATED PRESS




CHRIS O'MEARA/ASSOCIATED PRESS



DAVID J. PHILLIP/ASSOCIATED PRESS

The Dodgers, top, have a payroll that's more than four times as large as teams like the Marlins and the Rays, left. Commissioner Rob Manfred, above.

## The league and the players would formally split baseball's money.

The most important change in a cap system might be the creation of a formal revenue split from which everything else would flow.

M.L.B. and the players would negotiate what percentage of the industry's revenue goes to each side. For 2024, M.L.B. estimated the total haul to be about $12.1 billion. Caplin said he could not provide a 2025 figure because it was not yet final.

The league office and the union can calculate how much of that money goes to the players and how much to the owners, and the percentages change, at least a little, every year. Last summer, Commissioner Rob Manfred said, the players' share was about 47 percent.

Meyer said that if you include all the compensation paid pursuant to the current agreement, "the players' share is comfortably over 50 percent."

A cap system eliminates year-to-year variability. The sides would negotiate the percentages they receive in advance.

"My first deal where I was the chief negotiator in 2002, we were spending 63 percent of our revenue on players," Manfred said.

Manfred has told players in meetings across the league that had they long ago adopted a system in which they shared revenue equally with owners, players would have made billions more.

The union has several objections to Manfred's claim.

"We don't know what proposal Rob is referring to, but first of all, it doesn't make sense on the most basic level," Meyer said. "If they're saying, 'Oh, we're willing to pay you more,' then why do they want the system? It's obviously worth even more than that to them."

The players' split would also probably go down over time, Meyer warned.

"Whatever the special introductory offer is, the history has shown that doesn't last," Meyer said. "Once they get you in that system, you never get out, and they drive that percentage down by repeated lockouts. In fact, in the salary-cap sports since 1994, they've had way more work stoppages, way more lockouts, way more missed games than in our sport."

But how the split is calculated — revenue definition — would also be contested. It is even today without a cap.

Many team owners have real estate developments and other ancillary business that owners would fight to exclude, and players to include. The union thinks the current system accounts for some of that value.

## Say goodbye to the free-agent megadeal.

If M.L.B. gets its way, contracts like the 15-year, $765 million deal Juan Soto signed with the Mets could never be given out again.

M.L.B. is eyeing an N.H.L.-style "hard cap," a source said, which would create firm limits in three areas: club payroll, individual contract length and individual player salary.

But caps can take different forms. M.L.B. could initially propose a max number of years for individual contracts and then relent, for example.

The N.B.A. has what is referred to as a "soft cap," where the limit on team payroll has some flexibility — but when the dust settles, everything still falls in line with the overall split.

The free agency and arbitration processes would also change. In the current system, it would be almost unthinkable for owners to let players become free agents sooner than the current wait time of six years, or to hit arbitration earlier than the current standard of three years. But a cap could reduce those wait times.

A big bump in the minimum salary, which is $780,000 this year, would probably be on the table as well, one larger than the league would otherwise propose.

"I think it's going to be very persuasive for a lot of the players," a management source said. "You're seeing a lot of players now see the N.B.A., N.F.L. and N.H.L., nobody's in the poor house. There's a lot of money going around to a lot more people."

A cap makes those changes much easier, but in some ways, less meaningful. When the amount of money going to both sides is predetermined, the issues are distributional.

Manfred has positioned the current economic system as a great deal for baseball's elite, but not the rest of the players. A key contested matter is whether a cap would improve other players' earnings and opportunities.

## The end of the guaranteed contract?

The revenue split means the sides more directly share in year-to-year booms and busts. The league paints this as a positive that better aligns everyone.

But to the union, it means the end of guaranteed contracts. Today, baseball players are entitled to the salary their agreements call for, regardless of how the industry fares in a given year. A cap would require salary adjustments depending on how much money actually comes in.

In some leagues that is achieved through escrow, putting money aside until the results are in. For the 2024-25 N.B.A. season, players had to effectively give back nearly $500 million amid declining TV revenues. Sources said M.L.B. would most likely propose escrow.

Then there's roster churn to fit the cap. In the N.F.L., free agency pushes players who are under contract out the door.

"Every free-agent period, it's blood in locker rooms as they cut players," Meyer said.




SARAH YENESEL/EPA, VIA SHUTTERSTOCK

If M.L.B. gets its way, contracts like the 15-year, $765 million deal Juan Soto signed with the Mets could never be given out again.

## Will teams be worth more?

All clubs, in markets large or small, would ultimately gain in a cap system, because franchise values would jump everywhere.

M.L.B. teams were worth $2.6 billion on average entering last season, per Forbes.

## Is competitive balance actually broken? And if so, would this fix it?

The public arguments always circle back to what fans care about most: what baseball looks like on the field. A large series of debates, then, turns into two others: whether M.L.B. has a problem with parity, and how to improve it either way.

The sides disagree on both fronts, and have for a long time.

"The only way to fix baseball is to do a salary cap and a floor," the Colorado Rockies owner Dick Monfort, the head of M.L.B.'s labor committee, told The Denver Gazette last year. "Something's got to happen. The competitive imbalance in baseball has gotten to the point of ludicrosity now. It's an unregulated industry."

The optics are poor when the Dodgers have a payroll more than four times as large as teams like the Miami Marlins and Tampa Bay Rays. The league says payroll disparity has never been greater, while the union's numbers show otherwise.

"We have businesses that are literally not similar in terms of the overall revenue that they're generating," Manfred said in 2023.

But these arguments have been around for a long time.

"It's nonsense," said Gene Orza, a retired players' union lawyer. "That's just a ruse, that's propaganda, that's not real. The Yankees won three in a row — 'competitive balance, competitive balance' — now the Yankees haven't won in 17 years. Why has the value of every franchise gone up, every single one of them?"

Manfred himself said before the 2024 World Series, which featured the Dodgers and Yankees, that "our record on competitive balance is darn good." But more recently, he has harped on perception, saying smaller-market fans worry their teams cannot compete.

Caplin of M.L.B. cited a few statistics: The World Series has been won by a top-10 payroll club for four consecutive years, and for six of the last seven. A bottom-15 market, meanwhile, has not won a World Series since the 2015 Kansas City Royals.

"In the last three seasons, we've had 22 teams make the playoffs," Meyer countered. "In the last three seasons, we've had 11 different teams make the league championships. We've had 18 different teams in the World Series since 2012."

A distinction could be drawn between small-market teams' competitiveness for top free agents and their ultimate ability to contend for a championship. The Milwaukee Brewers have won three consecutive division titles, but they just traded the ace Freddy Peralta to the Mets.

Small-market teams today sometimes sign homegrown players to long-term deals, but a cap could help them more frequently compete for the biggest fish in free agency as well. The union argues that teams today just don't want to spend.

"The problem is not with the teams that are spending money to try to make their teams better," Meyer said. "The problem is with the teams that are willing to go along and not do everything they can to put the best team on the field, even though they can afford to. That affects fans in many markets, and can be addressed without a salary cap."


## THE NEW YORK TIMES CLASSIFIED LISTINGS

### MARSHAL/ SHERIFF SALES
3650

MARSHAL EXECUTION SALE
PUBLIC AUCTION
Re: Park ng Violations Vs. Various
Judgment Debtors I Will Sell
At Public Auction For
City Marshal Richard A. Capuano
By Courtney Morris, Auctioneer On
Wednesday March 4, 2026 At 9:30AM
At 5 J's Towing 62-02 Beach Channel Dr
Arverne, New York, 11692.
All R/T/I in & to the Following Vehicles:

| | |
|---|---|
| 12 CHEVR | 2GNALFEK4C1246607 |
| 07 VOLKS | WVWDS71K67W031359 |
| 07 LEXUS | JTHBJ46G672037472 |
| 08 FORD | 2FMDK39C98BB38507 |
| 11 VOLKS | 3VWDZ7AJ5BM350261 |
| 09 HONDA | 1HGCP26349A043187 |
| 09 FORD | 1FAHP35N79W159876 |
| 07 TOYOT | JTMZD33V176033102 |
| 13 BMW | WBA3C3C55DF981598 |
| 07 NISSA | 1N4AL21E47C210584 |
| 04 LEXUS | JT2HA31U94C035971 |
| 13 HYUND | KM8SNDHF4DU032082 |
| 07 HYUND | 5NPET46C37H224916 |
| 08 HONDA | 5FNRL38248B091521 |
| 15 MITSU | 4A4AR3AU0FE009590 |
| 10 NISSA | 1N6AD0FV1AC440575 |
| 10 JEEP | 1J4NF1GBXAD619923 |
| 13 FORD | 1FMSK8D8XDGB45618 |

Following Vehicles Sold With Liens

| | |
|---|---|
| 24 NISSA | JN1DF0CD0RM741708 |
| 15 CHRYS | 1C3CCCABXFN697148 |
| 19 HONDA | 1HGCV1F30KA156253 |
| 21 TOYOT | JTDEPMAE8MJ158346 |
| 17 HYUND | KJM8J3CA2HU256770 |
| 23 KIA | KNDEU2AA8P7422967 |
| 14 DODGE | 2C3CDYAG3EH158500 |
| 21 TOYOT | JTDS4MCE0MJ060355 |
| 18 NISSA | 1N4AA6AP4JC369465 |
| 16 NISSA | 1N4AL3AP7GN330312 |
| 16 ME-BE | WDDHF8JB5GB236597 |
| 20 ME-BE | WDDWF8DB1LR549375 |
| 16 AUDI | WA1L2AFP5GA040381 |
| 17 NISSA | 1N4AL3AP7HC294022 |
| 18 TOYOT | JTMBFREVXJJ722748 |
| 17 ME-BE | 4JGDA5HB5HA815846 |
| 22 LEXUS | 58ADZ1B18NU127246 |

CASH ONLY Inspect ½ Hr. Prior to Sale
City Marshal Richard A. Capuano
Badge #22 Phone (718) 478-0400

MARSHAL EXECUTION SALE
PUBLIC AUCTION
Re: Parking Violations Vs. Various
Judgment Debtors I Will Sell
At Public Auction For
City Marshal Matthew Regan
By Courtney Morris, Auctioneer
On Wednesday March 4, 2026
At 10:00AM At 5 J's Towing
62-02 Beach Channel Drive,
Arverne, New York, 11692.
All R/T/I n & to the Following Vehicles:

| | |
|---|---|
| 10 VOLKS | 3VWRZ7AJ8AM066157 |
| 22 VOLK | S3VWCM7BU7NM015221 |
| 17 NISSA | 1N4AL3AP3HC219513 |
| 08 CHEVR | 1GBHG31681209075 |
| 16 HONDA | 1HGCR3F9XGA014357 |
| 10 ME-BE | 4JGBF7BE8AA618702 |
| 09 HONDA | 1HGCS12869A025641 |
| 07 GMC | 1GKFK66857J370406 |
| 09 NISSA | 1N4AL21E89N551705 |
| 16 JEEP | 1C4NJPBB3GD790584 |
| 17 HONDA | 1HGCR3F8XHA001603 |
| 07 ME-BE | WDDDJ72X17A090657 |
| 07 MITS | JA4MT41XX7U014481 |
| 12 CHRYS | 2C3CCAETXCH261234 |
| 05 HONDA | 2HGES16515H521953 |
| 10 ACURA | JH4CU2F65AC033230 |
| 05 FORD | 1FTRX02W65KE56536 |
| 05 TOYOT | 4T1BE32K35U422816 |
| 07 JEEP | 1J8HG48K17C690712 |
| 15 TOYOT | 4T1BF1FK4FU074638 |
| 07 HONDA | 5FNRL38427B033388 |
| 15 HYUND | KMHGN4JE1FU037542 |
| 00 NISSA | 1N4DL01D0YC229112 |
| 04 FORD | 1FDWE35L34HA61524 |
| 15 NISSA | 1N4AL3AP2FN333956 |
| 06 TOYOT | JTEEP21A260143752 |
| 05 ACURA | JH4DC54825S002588 |

Following Vehicles Sold With Liens

| | |
|---|---|
| 18 NISSA | JN8AT2MV7JW315278 |
| 17 JEEP | 1C4RJFAGXHC767383 |
| 19 HONDA | 5FNYF6H54KB071677 |
| 19 HYUND | 5NMS5CADXKH008705 |
| 18 TOYOT | 2T3WFREV1JW475820 |
| 19 CHEVR | 3G1BE6SM6KS538767 |
| 12 TOYOT | 4T1BF1FK1CU095568 |
| 11 NISSA | 3N1AB6AP6BL678368 |
| 15 ME-BE | 4JGDA5HBXFA444678 |
| 10 HONDA | 1HGCP2F8XAA130270 |
| 17 NISSA | 3N6CM0KN9HK720179 |
| 04 BMW | WBANB33584B087842 |
| 15 ME-BE | WDCGG5HB0FG416962 |
| 17 ME-BE | WDDZF4KB7HA237818 |

Following Vehicles Sold As Salvage

| | |
|---|---|
| 14 CHEVR | 1G11B5SL8EF116627 |
| 13 HONDA | 1HGCR2F36DA142855 |
| 04 ACURA | 19UUA66204A010698 |
| 04 INFINI | 5N3AA08C24N805803 |

CASH ONLY Inspect ½ Hr. Prior to Sale
C ty Marshal Matthew G. Regan
Badge#5 Phone (929) 251 7497

SOCCER

# Games on Schedule, But Small Town Asks Who's Paying the Bill

By ADAM CRAFTON
The Athletic

Mark Elfman is a middle-aged chiropractor catering to the aches and pains of residents of Foxborough, Mass. Yet last month he sat in a town hall building and set aflame FIFA, the world governing body for soccer, just four months before the World Cup begins across North America.

Elfman is one of five members of the select board for a town of only 18,000 inhabitants that is also home to Gillette Stadium, the 65,000-seat venue set to host seven games this summer. That includes two group-stage games involving Scotland, England's fixture against Ghana, two matches featuring Erling Haaland's Norway (including one against France), a round-of-32 game and a quarterfinal.

The select board sets local policy for the town and seeks to protect the interests of its citizens. Its members are elected, and they are not paid beyond a $90 monthly stipend. It is also the board that decides whether to hand out entertainment licenses to those who wish to put on events in Foxborough. And right now, Elfman and his four board colleagues are not playing ball with FIFA.

> About $7.8 million for police and other safety expenses.

Stephanie McGowan, the vice chairwoman of the select board, claimed that the games are "probably more of a headache" than they are worth to Foxborough and "not a moneymaker," and she warned: "It's going to be a flat no, unless we know the money is there."

Foxborough has calculated a cost of around $7.8 million to cover police and public safety expenses during the tournament, yet so far, nobody has provided financial commitments to cover the full costs. Until they do so, the select board says it will not provide a license for the games. And without a license, there are no games.

Licenses for N.F.L. games at Gillette Stadium are usually agreed upon directly with its owner, the Kraft Group, which is led by Robert Kraft, the billionaire owner of the New England Patriots and the New England Revolution. Yet as the stadium owners have essentially sublet the stadium to FIFA during the World Cup, a new license is required.

*Adam Crafton covers soccer for The Athletic.*

The select board says it was not part of the original agreements made by FIFA, the Boston host committee and the Kraft Group, and as such, it sees no reason that a small town and its taxpayers should absorb the costs. Indeed, it says it would be reckless to do so.

There is money in the pipeline. The 11 U.S. World Cup host cities secured a combined $625 million of funding within President Trump's policy and spending bill last summer, and Boston was allocated $46 million. Yet the funding is still to be administered via the Federal Emergency Management Agency, the agency tasked with processing the grant program.

Matters have not been helped by the partial federal government shutdown, which has affected operations at the Department of Homeland Security. But even if or when that grant money comes, the select board says its allocation will not cover the entire cost of the security operations because it will be shared across different Massachusetts agencies, leaving an unspecified funding gap.

The Kraft Group, according to the select board chairman, Bill Yukna, is prepared to backstop the equivalent money to the grant, but a significant difference remains.

The select board has set a deadline of March 17 for a license to be awarded, arguing that police and security officials must plan for materials and staffing months ahead of the event. The costs mount up, it says, because FIFA requires the venue to be secured for the entire 39 days of the tournament, not only the seven game days.

As things stand, disagreement remains over who, exactly, should foot the bill. At a tense meeting in mid-February, the select board brought in Mike Loynd, the chief executive of Boston's host committee, and Kevin Clark, FIFA's venue operations director for Boston, to discuss the concerns.

"What's very confusing to us is who is the responsible party for funding," Yukna said. "The Kraft Group says they're not. A lot of people point to your group, which really doesn't have any funding. That's a problem. FIFA is going to be the licensee. So, are they, in the end, responsible?"

A long pause ensued. Loynd replied: "That's sort of a broad question."

Elfman shot back: "It's really not — it's a very specific question."

Clark said he would defer to the stadium and the host committee, claiming that the agreement is between those two parties. Loynd, however, claimed a joint responsibility, as he said the host committee is responsible for public safety in the stadium (including the costs of water), while FIFA takes on the operational elements.

Debbie Giardino, a select board member, said: "Both you guys are almost pointing at each other. Nobody wanted to answer the question. That speaks volumes to the frustration this board is feeling. The concern is who is the third guy that's going to answer. I feel very strongly that without those answers, this won't go forward."

McGowan was even more forceful: "We are not prepared to issue this license unless everything is in place. I've seen people say, 'Oh, there's no way they won't.' But I am going to tell you: This board will not issue this license. I don't feel like we're getting the answers."

She said the license would be issued only if hard cash is provided or bonded money is set up, adding: "The money has to be here. We're a small town. This is almost 10 percent of our whole annual budget."

Elfman continued: "It baffles my mind that you guys are sitting here in front of me and we still have no idea where this money's coming from. I'm shocked, especially after talking to you two guys weeks ago where you assured us that we're all set, and now you're saying you're not responsible for it, pointing fingers back and forth."

Elfman said local townspeople had told him they were bewildered that an event run by a billion-dollar organization such as FIFA in a venue owned by the Kraft Group could be relying on grant money from the federal government.

Julie Duffy, chief marketing and communications officer for the Boston host committee, told The Athletic last week: "All key stakeholders are collaboratively engaged in continued partnership, progress is being made daily, and we remain confident we'll reach a positive outcome over the coming weeks."

She did not respond when asked to clarify any specifics that could be considered as progress. FIFA declined to comment, and the Kraft Group did not respond to questions.

The issue in Foxborough magnifies what is becoming a broader angst. Under the terms of the original hosting agreements, FIFA takes all income from ticketing, broadcast deals, in-stadium sponsorship and even parking fees. At the same time, contracts seen by The Athletic show that cities have taken on overall responsibility for costs including "safety, security and protection." This extends to public areas, FIFA fan fest locations, airports, other transport hubs and vehicles used in competition. It also includes providing police escorts for teams, referees and FIFA President Gianni Infantino and his delegation. The host city is also expected to provide medical services and fire protection around matches free of charge.

In return, FIFA has claimed that the United States will see money pour into its cities via tourism and excitement surrounding games. Infantino said recently that he expected FIFA revenues from the tournament to exceed $11 billion, but he claimed that the U.S. economy will receive $30 billion in economic impact.

"We may get a little more in meals tax and hotel tax," McGowan said. "But this is not a moneymaker for this town. In fact, it's probably more of a headache than it's worth.

"This is nothing more than seven events up there. If World Cup wasn't coming, we'd probably have seven concerts in that time. We're not gaining much of anything by hosting this event. I think people need to know that too. This is not a lot of money coming into our town."

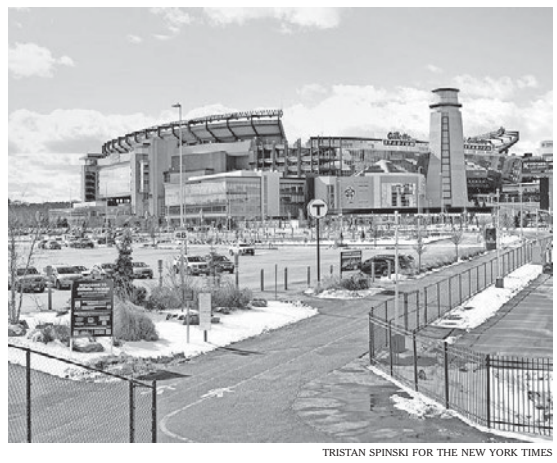



FOXBORO CABLE ACCESS

From left, the select board members Mark Elfman; Stephanie McGowan, vice chair; and Bill Yukna, chairman, at a meeting.




DANIELLE PARHIZKARAN/THE BOSTON GLOBE, VIA GETTY IMAGES



TRISTAN SPINSKI FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Mike Loynd, chief executive of the Boston World Cup 2026 host committee, which hopes to have seven games at Gillette Stadium.

HOCKEY

# Giving an Extra Point for a Regulation Victory Has Merit, and Powerful Foes

By SEAN McINDOE
The Athletic

With the Milan-Cortina Games in our rearview mirror, now might be a good time to wonder whether the N.H.L. could learn something from how the Olympic ice hockey tournament was structured.

No, I don't mean using three-on-three overtime to settle championships; fans around the world seem to agree that part was bad. I'm thinking of an element you might have forgotten about, as it was in place for the round-robin tournament only: Should the N.H.L. borrow a page from the Olympics and move to a 3-2-1-0 points system?

That's where teams receive 3 points for a regulation win, 2 points for an overtime/shootout win, 1 point for an overtime/shootout loss and zero points for a regulation loss. Is that better than what we have now?

I think so. The loser point is bad. And while the 3-2-1-0 system has a muted version of the loser point, it fixes most of the other problems the current 2-1-0 system produces. So I'm on board, and I know I'm not alone.

But not everybody is, and that list includes somebody whose opinion counts for more than mine: Gary Bettman, the N.H.L. commissioner, who has never shown much interest in 3-2-1-0 and who recently reaffirmed his support of the status quo.

But is he right? Maybe. Given that the N.H.L. is closing in on two decades of its current points system, we should at least consider the idea that the league has it right and the 3-2-1-0 fans have it wrong. So today, let's do that. Let's run through six of the most common arguments against a 3-point format, and see how many of them hold up.

*Sean McIndoe is a senior N.H.L. writer for The Athletic.*

**Argument: The current system keeps the playoff races close.**

**POINT** You can complain about loser points and artificial parity all you like, but you cannot deny recent seasons have served up some great theater. That makes for good entertainment, but also good business. It's not easy to sell tickets when a fan base knows a team is out of the running by December. Keeping teams in the hunt for as long as possible is good for the league, its fans and the bottom line. Switching to a system that jeopardizes that would be foolish.

**COUNTERPOINT** All of that makes sense, except for one minor problem: The central premise isn't true. The current system does not make the playoff races any closer than they would be under any other system. Is there more parity now than there was in the precap era? Sure, but that is because of the cap, not the points system, which happened to come along with it. Playoff races would be just as exciting with a 3-2-1-0 system, and maybe even more so because of teams trying to win in regulation.

**DOES IT HOLD UP?** Nope. And that should be a problem since it's the main argument Bettman and friends like to use. But it's not the only one, so let's keep going.

**Argument: Changing the standings now will mess up history.**

**POINT** The record for points in a season by an N.H.L. team is 135, set by the Boston Bruins a few years ago. That broke a long-standing mark held by the 1976-77 Montreal Canadiens, who had 132. The 1995-96 Detroit Red Wings fell just short at 131, and the 2018-19 Tampa Bay Lightning came close with 128. Cool, right? Except that once we switch to 3-2-1-0 and start handing out 3 points for each and every game, all of those records would be shattered in Year 1. Any comparison across eras becomes impossible.



VINCENT CARCHIETTA/USA TODAY SPORTS

Overtime victories, such as one by the Devils in 2023, give the loser a consolation prize that helps provide the illusion of parity.

**COUNTERPOINT** Impossible, sure, if the idea of multiplying by 1.5 makes your eyes glaze over. For the rest of us, it wouldn't be that hard to compare one era to another, even by total points. Or even better, just use points percentage. If anything, that sort of adjustment is preferable to the way the current system inflates everyone's record, and leaves us wondering if a team like those 2022-23 Bruins were really better than the 1976-77 Canadiens, or if they just benefited from loser points and teams playing for overtime.

**DOES IT HOLD UP?** Not really.

**Argument: The standings are complicated enough without having four columns.**

**POINT** Quick, your team just finished the season 37-14-6-25, is that good? Are they better than the team that's 33-18-9-32? Doesn't that feel like way too many numbers? The N.H.L. standings have always had three columns. We should keep it that way.

**COUNTERPOINT** It would be awkward at first, sure. But we'd get used to it. In fact, the N.H.L. did have four-column standings from 1999 to 2004, when it introduced the loser point for overtime losses but also still had ties. It wasn't great, but it wasn't the end of the world. You just looked at the points column and went from there.

**DOES IT HOLD UP?** Honestly, it does a bit. But would it be any more annoying than having to talk about winless streaks or having philosophical arguments about where the extra point even comes from?

**Argument: I don't like the current system, but I have a better idea than 3-2-1-0.**

**POINT** What about just having wins and losses? Or bringing back ties? Or this other system that's kind of like what you're proposing but with a few minor tweaks?

**COUNTERPOINT** All of those systems might be better than what we have now. But if every time the topic comes up we all break into small clusters and insist on our preferred solution being the only one, nothing will ever change.

**DOES IT HOLD UP?** It shouldn't.

**Argument: The current system may not be perfect, but it's good enough.**

**POINT** When in doubt, stick with the status quo. Changing to a 3-2-1-0 system would be a big change, and a league like the N.H.L. should not make a big change absent a compelling reason. There isn't one here. The current system, even if it's not perfect, is good enough.

**COUNTERPOINT** It's true enough that we shouldn't fix what isn't broken. But the current system *is* broken, and not just because it makes some games more valuable than others. The status quo very obviously encourages teams to play for overtime, which transforms the third period of a tie game from edge-of-your-seat suspense to a just-get-it-over-with slog. Oh, and despite the whole "keep the races close" mantra, all fans know the feeling of watching their team reel off a few wins down the stretch and barely gain ground because everyone else is going to overtime every night.

That's the beauty of the 3-2-1-0 system. Though it does not eliminate the loser point, it takes away its power. Teams now have an incentive to try to win in regulation. And they can gain ground far more quickly on any teams that still try to play for overtime.

**DOES IT HOLD UP?** Clearly it does for Bettman. And so far, that's all that matters.

**Argument: I am an N.H.L. general manager, and I love how the current system inflates my record.**

**POINT** We can argue about this stuff all we want, but ultimately it would be the N.H.L. general managers who vote on this stuff. And that just happens to be the same group of people who benefit the most from a system that rewards (or at least obfuscates) failure.

Imagine you were one of the 32 people who had managed to land one of these coveted jobs, and really wanted to hold on to it for as long as possible. Wouldn't you want to keep a system where almost everyone can finish over .500 every year, and teams who lose more than they win can still claim winning records?

**COUNTERPOINT** All of that may be true, but none of it is good for the fans, the product or the sport. Are we really going to keep this broken system just for sake of 32 guys trying to pad their résumés?

**DOES IT HOLD UP?** You have to at least give this one credit for honesty.

OLYMPICS

# A Gold Medal Moment Special Enough That a Figure Skater Inspired 2 Murals

**By TORREY HART and MARK KIM**
The Athletic

OAKLAND, Calif. — For one muralist, it was nearly instant. For another group, it took a few days to realize Alysa Liu's golden moment in the Olympic spotlight was worthy of enshrinement.

The beginnings of a mural in the Los Angeles area by the artist Gustavo Zermeño Jr. depicting the widely recognized image of Liu biting her Olympic gold medal in women's singles figure skating at the Milan-Cortina Games, went viral last week.

Liu, 20, who also won a gold medal in the team event, has ties to Los Angeles as a U.C.L.A. student. But her home rink is in Oakland, roughly 400 miles north.

The Illuminaries, a mural and design collective in Oakland, started their own Liu project on Friday in the city's Temescal neighborhood after being flooded with requests.

"Once she did that pose, the 'thizz face' pose, so many people hit us up and sent us the pictures," Steve Ha, an Illuminaries member, said.

The group was known for a piece depicting Stephen Curry of the Golden State Warriors doing a thizz face, a facial expression characterized by a scrunched-up, contorted look, in 2015. Still, the Illuminaries were not sure they wanted to hop on the Liu bandwagon.

"To be honest, we didn't even know who she was," Ha said. "But after reading more about her story, and seeing she's such an inspiration, it was like, 'How could we not?'"

Zermeño continued to add elements to his mural in Los Angeles on Friday. His artwork is often based on athletes who inspire him. And once he heard Liu's story, he was motivated to paint.

"I want to do something special not just for her, but for the community here," Zermeño said.

Ha and his team saw the Los Angeles mural and were goaded by Bay Area fans' messages and social media tags. So they decided to put their own spin on it, funding the project themselves.

"We wanted to show the Bay has style," Ha said. "We're going to do it, but we're going to do it with style."

Zermeño said he did not mind other Liu murals popping up. The same thing happened after Kobe Bryant died.

"It's a similar situation where someone has wanted to paint a mural, and now they have the inspiration to do it," Zermeño said.

Liu, who initially retired from figure skating four years ago only to return two years later, has become a fan favorite for taking control of her career and being true to herself in her second go-round. Her performances in Milan bubbled with joy as she became the first American woman to win an Olympic medal in singles figure skating in 20 years.

At a watch party at Liu's home rink last month, the former pro skater Carrie Maultsby-Lute said she felt Liu perfectly represented the city and "could only have come out of Oakland — to have just such unapologetic power and joy."

"I'm just glad that I could bring Oakland to Milan," Liu said after her win.

Liu's eagerness to represent Oakland, which is planning a communitywide celebration of her, stands in contrast to the pro sports organizations that have recently left the city. The Illuminaries have done plenty of sports murals, many of them depicting teams and athletes that are no longer in Oakland, such as Golden State in the N.B.A. and the Athletics in M.L.B.

"For her to embrace Oakland is this new energy," Ha said. "It's inspiration. Oakland needs that. America needs that right now."

The Illuminaries' new mural covered an old one of Klay Thompson, who won four N.B.A. titles with Golden State before joining the Dallas Mavericks in 2024.

"Art is impermanent," Ha said. Gold? Not so much.

Thompson had seen the piece, so "for it to have had its run, for us to bless the wall, that was good enough," Ha said. "Now it's time for some new blood."




TORREY HART/THE ATHLETIC

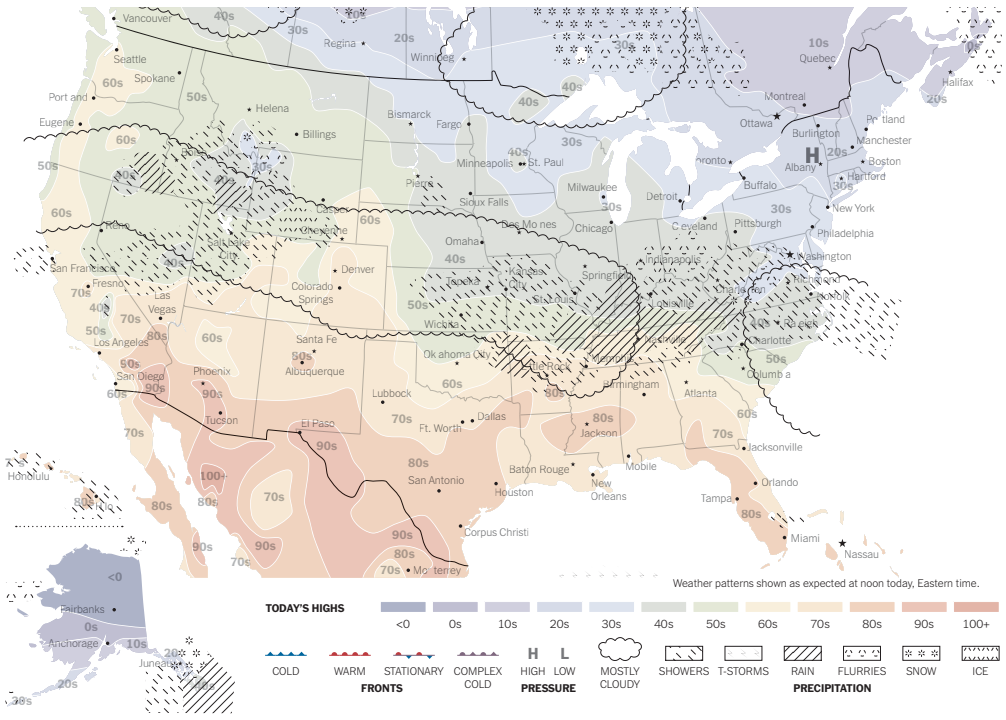
The Illuminaries, a mural and design collective in Oakland, started an Alysa Liu project after being flooded with requests.

## Painting Alysa Liu in Los Angeles and then in the Bay Area after she went viral.

*Torrey Hart is deputy managing editor of The Athletic's newsletters; Mark Kim is The Athletic's senior social media editor.*

# Weather Report

Meteorology by **AccuWeather**




## Metropolitan Forecast

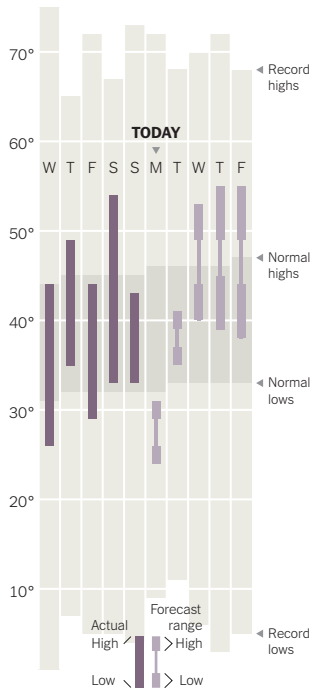
**TODAY** .....Partly sunny and cold
High 30. An Arctic high pressure system nearby will bring a bitterly cold day with clouds and sunshine. The afternoon high will be around 15 degrees below normal.

**TONIGHT** .....Some clouds
Low 25. High pressure across the region will bring a partly cloudy sky along with a light and variable breeze. Low temperatures will range from 5 to 10 degrees below normal.

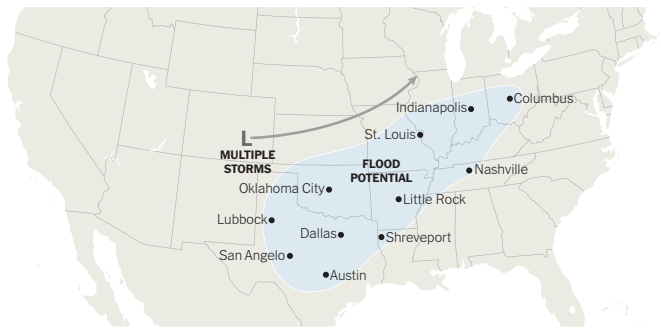
**TOMORROW** .....Wintry mix, then rain
High 40. As a storm moves in, a wintry mix of snow, sleet and rain will change to all rain by the afternoon. The wind will blow from the east at 4 to 8 miles per hour.

**WEDNESDAY** .....Mostly cloudy
High 51. It will be a mostly cloudy day, but not as cold during the afternoon. The wind will blow from the southwest at 6 to 12 m.p.h.

**THURSDAY**
**FRIDAY** .....Some rain and drizzle
Thursday will be cloudy, with rain and drizzle. High 52. Friday, rain may linger in the morning, then the afternoon will be cloudy. High 52.




## Highlight: Thunderstorms Bring Flooding Risk




Throughout this week, multiple storms are forecast to move from the Colorado Rockies into the Midwest, bringing rounds of wet weather. Rain and thunderstorms will be frequent from Texas to Ohio, bringing a heightened risk for flooding. Some storms could be severe.

## National Forecast

A storm is forecast to spread rain from Missouri to Virginia. Along the northern edge of precipitation, snow, sleet and freezing rain will mix in. While roads are expected to be mainly wet across much of the region, there may be slippery spots in the morning from southern Indiana to the West Virginia mountains.

Very cold air is projected to linger across the Northeast, but a good deal of sunshine is in store. There will be a bit more clouds from Texas to Florida, but it is expected to be warm. Elsewhere, temperatures are forecast to be above average from the Plains to the West Coast.

Showers are forecast to sprawl across portions of the Rockies with snow across the highest elevations. A gusty wind is anticipated in the Desert Southwest.

## Cities

High/low temperatures for the 16 hours ended at 4 p.m. yesterday, Eastern time, and precipitation (in inches) for the 16 hours ended at 4 p.m. yesterday.
Expected conditions for today and tomorrow.

**C** ..... Clouds
**F** ..... Fog
**H** ..... Haze
**I** ..... Ice
**PC** ..... Partly cloudy
**R** ..... Rain
**Sh** ..... Showers
**S** ..... Sun
**Sn** ..... Snow
**SS** ..... Snow showers
**T** ..... Thunderstorms
**Tr** ..... Trace
**W** ..... Windy
**–** ..... Not available

| N.Y.C. region | Yesterday | Today | Tomorrow |
|---|---|---|---|
| New York City | 43/ 33 0.01 | 30/ 25 PC | 40/ 36 Sn |
| Bridgeport | 38/ 30 Tr | 29/ 23 PC | 38/ 34 Sn |
| Caldwell | 40/ 31 Tr | 32/ 21 PC | 39/ 37 Sn |
| Danbury | 38/ 25 Tr | 32/ 13 S | 39/ 36 Sn |
| Islip | 36/ 31 0.01 | 29/ 20 PC | 42/ 37 Sn |
| Newark | 41/ 34 Tr | 32/ 26 PC | 41/ 39 Sn |
| Trenton | 40/ 31 0 | 33/ 24 PC | 40/ 36 I |
| White Plains | 39/ 31 Tr | 30/ 19 S | 38/ 36 Sn |

| United States | Yesterday | Today | Tomorrow |
|---|---|---|---|
| Albany | 33/ 4 Tr | 29/ 16 S | 35/ 30 I |
| Albuquerque | 79/ 47 0 | 81/ 48 PC | 71/ 40 C |
| Anchorage | 7/ -7 0 | 9/ -4 PC | 10/ -3 S |
| Atlanta | 78/ 56 0 | 66/ 50 C | 69/ 53 C |
| Atlantic City | 44/ 23 0 | 33/ 29 C | 46/ 43 R |
| Austin | 82/ 64 0 | 82/ 65 PC | 86/ 68 W |
| Baltimore | 53/ 26 0 | 36/ 30 C | 47/ 44 I |
| Baton Rouge | 82/ 52 0 | 79/ 60 S | 83/ 67 PC |
| Birmingham | 77/ 54 0 | 77/ 56 PC | 75/ 55 PC |
| Boise | 54/ 42 0.03 | 55/ 35 R | 63/ 47 S |
| Boston | 38/ 9 0.09 | 29/ 17 S | 36/ 32 Sn |
| Buffalo | 25/ 11 Tr | 34/ 26 S | 40/ 31 Sn |
| Burlington | 22/ -3 Tr | 22/ 16 S | 36/ 28 C |
| Casper | 58/ 35 0.01 | 58/ 34 Sh | 54/ 32 C |
| Charlotte | 77/ 45 0 | 50/ 41 Sh | 58/ 50 PC |
| Chattanooga | 77/ 50 0 | 68/ 50 R | 69/ 50 C |
| Chicago | 32/ 26 0 | 44/ 34 S | 42/ 34 R |
| Cincinnati | 43/ 30 0 | 43/ 39 Sn | 60/ 52 R |
| Cleveland | 27/ 20 Tr | 41/ 34 PC | 49/ 36 R |
| Colorado Springs | 61/ 31 0 | 71/ 43 PC | 58/ 33 Sh |
| Columbus | 40/ 24 0 | 45/ 40 Sn | 54/ 51 R |
| Concord, N.H. | 34/ 2 0.07 | 28/ 3 S | 35/ 26 Sn |
| Dallas-Ft. Worth | 81/ 62 0 | 78/ 64 PC | 84/ 67 PC |
| Denver | 65/ 41 Tr | 74/ 38 C | 48/ 33 Sh |
| Des Moines | 36/ 27 0 | 45/ 36 PC | 50/ 36 C |
| Detroit | 32/ 17 0 | 36/ 27 S | 40/ 33 I |
| El Paso | 89/ 53 0 | 90/ 56 S | 85/ 52 S |
| Fargo | 26/ 17 0 | 42/ 24 S | 36/ 27 PC |
| Hartford | 36/ 7 Tr | 31/ 12 S | 36/ 35 Sn |
| Honolulu | 81/ 69 0.07 | 82/ 71 C | 83/ 73 Sh |
| Houston | 80/ 60 0 | 82/ 66 PC | 81/ 68 C |
| Indianapolis | 42/ 29 0 | 47/ 39 Sn | 58/ 49 R |
| Jackson | 81/ 49 0 | 81/ 58 C | 81/ 63 PC |
| Jacksonville | 73/ 47 0 | 76/ 53 PC | 77/ 55 PC |
| Kansas City | 37/ 33 0.24 | 46/ 42 Sh | 55/ 45 R |
| Key West | 81/ 71 0 | 81/ 70 S | 80/ 73 S |
| Las Vegas | 85/ 64 0 | 79/ 56 S | 74/ 52 S |
| Lexington | 50/ 33 0 | 45/ 40 R | 67/ 56 R* |
| Little Rock | 72/ 51 0 | 75/ 55 Sh | 79/ 64 C |
| Los Angeles | 82/ 56 0 | 71/ 54 S | 75/ 53 S |
| Louisville | 52/ 34 0 | 43/ 39 Sn | 69/ 56 R |
| Memphis | 74/ 57 0 | 74/ 59 PC | 77/ 62 C |
| Miami | 84/ 70 0.15 | 80/ 70 PC | 80/ 70 PC |
| Milwaukee | 31/ 23 Tr | 39/ 33 S | 40/ 33 I |
| Mpls.-St. Paul | 28/ 20 0 | 40/ 33 S | 47/ 33 PC |
| Nashville | 66/ 47 0 | 65/ 55 R | 72/ 59 W |
| New Orleans | 74/ 55 0 | 76/ 63 S | 79/ 66 C |
| Norfolk | 61/ 37 0 | 41/ 35 Sh | 62/ 52 PC |
| Oklahoma City | 73/ 38 0.16 | 60/ 54 C | 74/ 53 C |
| Omaha | 37/ 28 0 | 43/ 36 PC | 51/ 33 C |
| Orlando | 79/ 60 0 | 80/ 62 PC | 81/ 62 S |
| Philadelphia | 50/ 21 Tr | 36/ 27 PC | 44/ 41 I |
| Phoenix | 93/ 63 0 | 94/ 63 PC | 86/ 58 S |
| Pittsburgh | 39/ 20 0 | 45/ 33 C | 51/ 46 R |
| Portland, Me. | 33/ 1 Tr | 23/ 11 S | 36/ 28 Sn |
| Portland, Ore. | 59/ 41 0 | 60/ 46 S | 57/ 48 C |
| Providence | 39/ 8 0.07 | 27/ 10 PC | 38/ 36 Sn |
| Raleigh | 76/ 40 0 | 45/ 40 Sh | 59/ 52 PC |
| Reno | 62/ 36 0.06 | 58/ 33 PC | 65/ 38 S |
| Richmond | 64/ 33 0 | 43/ 33 Sn | 55/ 50 R |
| Rochester | 26/ 9 0.02 | 32/ 25 PC | 43/ 32 Sn |
| Sacramento | 67/ 48 0 | 68/ 45 PC | 71/ 48 PC |
| Salt Lake City | 64/ 42 0 | 50/ 40 Sh | 56/ 37 PC |
| San Antonio | 83/ 66 0 | 83/ 66 PC | 87/ 71 PC |
| San Diego | 76/ 57 0 | 68/ 56 PC | 69/ 56 PC |
| San Francisco | 64/ 53 0 | 66/ 52 Sh | 63/ 53 PC |
| San Jose | 68/ 51 0 | 68/ 52 PC | 68/ 50 PC |
| San Juan | 86/ 73 0 | 85/ 73 Sh | 86/ 74 Sh |
| Seattle | 57/ 36 0 | 60/ 44 S | 51/ 45 Sh |
| Sioux Falls | 33/ 20 0 | 44/ 34 PC | 51/ 32 C |
| Spokane | 53/ 32 0 | 56/ 33 S | 57/ 42 PC |
| St. Louis | 47/ 35 0 | 46/ 42 R | 69/ 53 R |
| St. Thomas | 88/ 76 0 | 87/ 76 PC | 87/ 75 S |
| Syracuse | 24/ 9 Tr | 27/ 19 S | 40/ 32 Sn |
| Tampa | 80/ 62 0 | 83/ 64 S | 82/ 65 S |
| Toledo | 35/ 19 Tr | 42/ 30 S | 44/ 36 R |
| Tucson | 91/ 57 0 | 91/ 57 PC | 86/ 52 S |
| Tulsa | 69/ 44 0.20 | 61/ 55 Sh | 79/ 57 W |
| Virginia Beach | 55/ 37 0 | 41/ 36 Sh | 60/ 52 PC |
| Washington | 55/ 30 0 | 35/ 32 C | 52/ 47 I |
| Wichita | 45/ 35 0.09 | 52/ 48 Sh | 72/ 45 T |
| Wilmington, Del. | 51/ 24 Tr | 37/ 29 C | 43/ 40 I |

| Africa | Yesterday | Today | Tomorrow |
|---|---|---|---|
| Algiers | 66/ 54 0 | 70/ 56 PC | 77/ 62 PC |
| Cairo | 65/ 44 0 | 64/ 49 C | 68/ 51 PC |
| Cape Town | 64/ 58 0.11 | 72/ 55 PC | 75/ 59 S |
| Dakar | 73/ 64 0 | 73/ 64 PC | 73/ 64 PC |
| Johannesburg | 75/ 56 0.16 | 79/ 55 PC | 76/ 57 T |
| Nairobi | 74/ 62 0.54 | 75/ 61 T | 76/ 62 T |
| Tunis | 70/ 48 0 | 68/ 56 C | 67/ 56 C |

| Asia/Pacific | Yesterday | Today | Tomorrow |
|---|---|---|---|
| Baghdad | 66/ 42 0 | 64/ 44 PC | 69/ 45 PC |
| Bangkok | 99/ 81 0.02 | 100/ 80 PC | 100/ 79 PC |
| Beijing | 42/ 28 0 | 40/ 32 Sn | 55/ 28 S |
| Damascus | 55/ 30 0 | 59/ 33 S | 64/ 35 S |
| Hong Kong | 76/ 69 0.07 | 79/ 65 Sh | 69/ 60 T |
| Jakarta | 90/ 77 0.02 | 89/ 76 T | 87/ 75 T |
| Jerusalem | 53/ 37 0 | 57/ 41 S | 59/ 43 S |
| Karachi | 86/ 70 0 | 90/ 66 PC | 93/ 66 S |
| Manila | 91/ 75 0 | 92/ 77 C | 93/ 77 S |
| Mumbai | 86/ 71 0 | 89/ 76 PC | 95/ 77 PC |
| New Delhi | 88/ 61 0 | 88/ 63 PC | 91/ 63 PC |
| Riyadh | 78/ 57 0 | 74/ 54 Sh | 63/ 51 Sh |
| Seoul | 54/ 37 0 | 45/ 35 R | 53/ 29 PC |
| Shanghai | 57/ 51 0.58 | 52/ 43 C | 51/ 44 C |
| Singapore | 90/ 79 0 | 90/ 77 R | 89/ 76 R |
| Sydney | 81/ 66 0.11 | 81/ 72 PC | 82/ 72 PC |
| Taipei City | 77/ 66 0.36 | 86/ 58 Sh | 63/ 57 R |
| Tehran | 61/ 44 0 | 57/ 40 PC | 54/ 38 S |
| Tokyo | 61/ 50 0 | 55/ 47 R | 51/ 40 R |

| Europe | Yesterday | Today | Tomorrow |
|---|---|---|---|
| Amsterdam | 54/ 39 0.12 | 60/ 42 PC | 58/ 41 S |
| Athens | 59/ 44 0 | 62/ 43 S | 64/ 46 PC |
| Berlin | 52/ 41 0 | 58/ 32 C | 60/ 38 S |
| Brussels | 54/ 39 0 | 61/ 43 S | 61/ 42 S |
| Budapest | 59/ 27 0 | 57/ 35 PC | 59/ 33 PC |
| Copenhagen | 46/ 39 0.14 | 46/ 35 PC | 50/ 34 S |
| Dublin | 55/ 45 0.22 | 52/ 37 PC | 49/ 36 S |
| Edinburgh | 55/ 41 0.01 | 52/ 36 Sh | 51/ 30 S |
| Frankfurt | 57/ 32 0 | 60/ 36 S | 60/ 38 PC |
| Geneva | 55/ 39 Tr | 57/ 35 S | 57/ 34 PC |
| Helsinki | 40/ 32 0.13 | 37/ 25 C | 36/ 31 Sn |
| Istanbul | 50/ 41 0 | 53/ 40 S | 53/ 41 C |
| Kyiv | 53/ 28 0 | 44/ 33 PC | 36/ 29 C |
| Lisbon | 64/ 45 0 | 56/ 50 R | 67/ 53 C |
| London | 57/ 46 0 | 60/ 45 PC | 58/ 43 C |
| Madrid | 55/ 42 0 | 64/ 45 PC | 64/ 45 PC |
| Moscow | 39/ 34 0.04 | 37/ 31 Sh | 34/ 24 C |
| Nice | 61/ 50 0 | 62/ 51 PC | 64/ 50 S |
| Oslo | 39/ 32 0.29 | 38/ 35 Sn | 48/ 28 PC |
| Paris | 55/ 37 0 | 63/ 42 S | 63/ 43 S |
| Prague | 45/ 37 0.10 | 47/ 32 PC | 52/ 34 S |
| Rome | 61/ 46 0 | 60/ 48 C | 64/ 48 PC |
| St. Petersburg | 38/ 32 0.16 | 36/ 28 Sn | 33/ 30 C |
| Stockholm | 40/ 32 0.11 | 40/ 30 S | 48/ 28 C |
| Vienna | 55/ 36 0 | 54/ 38 PC | 58/ 38 PC |
| Warsaw | 54/ 32 0 | 54/ 38 PC | 52/ 35 PC |

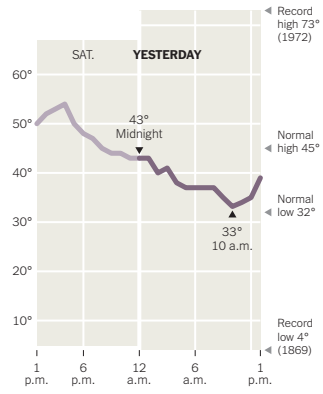
| North America | Yesterday | Today | Tomorrow |
|---|---|---|---|
| Acapulco | 86/ 72 0 | 87/ 70 PC | 87/ 70 PC |
| Bermuda | 73/ 68 0.21 | 68/ 61 PC | 65/ 61 PC |
| Edmonton | 21/ 3 0 | 23/ 18 Sn | 23/ 7 C |
| Guadalajara | 82/ 53 0 | 88/ 53 PC | 85/ 52 T |
| Havana | 88/ 67 0 | 85/ 69 S | 85/ 66 Sh |
| Kingston | 88/ 76 0 | 88/ 75 PC | 89/ 76 S |
| Martinique | 86/ 73 0 | 86/ 75 Sh | 86/ 75 R |
| Mexico City | 72/ 48 0 | 79/ 46 S | 76/ 50 S |
| Monterrey | 78/ 62 0 | 86/ 60 PC | 84/ 61 PC |
| Montreal | 23/ 12 0.01 | 18/ 11 S | 34/ 25 C |
| Nassau | 79/ 68 0.02 | 80/ 71 PC | 80/ 71 Sh |
| Panama City | 93/ 72 0 | 93/ 72 PC | 93/ 72 S |
| Quebec City | 16/ 7 0.01 | 11/ 4 S | 28/ 20 C |
| Santo Domingo | 84/ 68 0.02 | 88/ 69 S | 87/ 69 R |
| Toronto | 21/ 14 0.02 | 27/ 20 S | 37/ 29 Sn |
| Vancouver | 45/ 34 0 | 54/ 42 PC | 51/ 44 R |
| Winnipeg | 5/-15 0 | 30/ 7 W | 22/ 16 C |

| South America | Yesterday | Today | Tomorrow |
|---|---|---|---|
| Buenos Aires | 81/ 72 0 | 84/ 71 S | 80/ 71 C |
| Caracas | 86/ 75 0 | 86/ 75 S | 88/ 75 S |
| Lima | 77/ 71 0 | 80/ 70 PC | 81/ 71 S |
| Quito | 70/ 50 0 | 69/ 53 R | 67/ 54 R |
| Recife | 84/ 76 0.43 | 87/ 78 T | 85/ 80 Sh |
| Rio de Janeiro | 81/ 73 0.06 | 82/ 72 R | 83/ 72 S |
| Santiago | 88/ 61 0 | 81/ 56 S | 87/ 56 S |

## Metropolitan Almanac

In Central Park, for the 13 hours ended at 1 p.m. yesterday.

**Temperature**




Avg. daily departure from normal this month..... -0.8°
Avg. daily departure from normal this year..... -3.7°

**Reservoir levels** (New York City water supply)
Yesterday ..... 77%
Est. normal ..... 90%

**Precipitation** (in inches)
Yesterday ..... 0.01
Record ..... 2.95
Snow ..... Trace
Since Oct. 1 ..... 43 4

*For the last 30 days*
Actual ..... 2.61
Normal ..... 3.44

*For the last 365 days*
Actual ..... 41.67
Normal ..... 49.52

LAST 30 DAYS

**Air pressure**
High ..... 30.23 noon
Low ..... 30.03 1 a.m.

**Humidity**
High ..... 89% 2 a.m.
Low ..... 54% 7 a.m.

**Heating Degree Days**
*An index of fuel consumption that tracks how far the day's mean temperature fell below 65*
Yesterday..... 27
So far this month..... 27
So far this season (since July 1) ..... 3735
Normal to date for the season ..... 3409

**Trends**

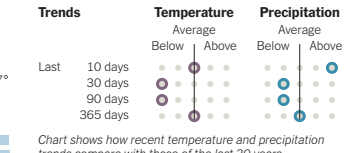



*Chart shows how recent temperature and precipitation trends compare with those of the last 30 years.*

## Recreational Forecast

**Sun, Moon and Planets**

| | Full | Last Quarter | New | First Quarter |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Mar. 3 6:37 a.m. | Mar. 11 | Mar. 18 9:24 p.m. | Mar. 25 |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Sun | RISE | 6:29 a.m. | Moon | S | 6:06 a.m. |
| | SET | 5:48 p.m. | | R | 5:10 p.m. |
| | NEXT R | 6:27 a.m. | | S | 6:29 a.m. |
| Jupiter | S | 3:52 a.m. | Mars | R | 6:05 a.m. |
| | R | 12:54 p.m. | | S | 4:43 p.m. |
| Saturn | R | 7:25 a.m. | Venus | R | 7:07 a.m. |
| | S | 7:23 p.m. | | S | 6:52 p.m. |

**Boating**

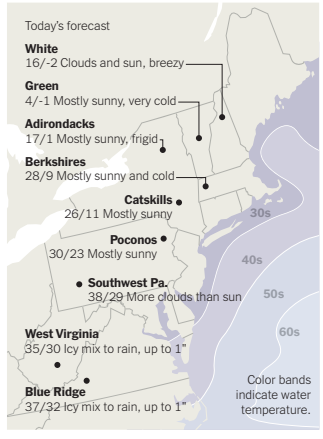
*From Montauk Point to Sandy Hook, N.J., out to 20 nautical miles, including Long Island Sound and New York Harbor.*

Wind will be from the north to northeast at 10-20 knots. Waves will average 1-2 feet on Long Island Sound and 2-3 feet on the ocean. Visibility unlimited to the horizon.

**High Tides**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Atlantic City | 6:30 a.m. | | 6:57 p.m. |
| Barnegat Inlet | 6:38 a.m. | | 7:04 p.m. |
| The Battery | 7:14 a.m. | | 7:41 p.m. |
| Beach Haven | 8:04 a.m. | | 8:32 p.m. |
| Bridgeport | 10:15 a.m. | | 10:40 p.m. |
| City Island | 10:46 a.m. | | 11:10 p.m. |
| Fire Island Lt. | 7:32 a.m. | | 8:00 p.m. |
| Montauk Point | 7:55 a.m. | | 8:11 p.m. |
| Northport | 10:34 a.m. | | 11:00 p.m. |
| Port Washington | 10:54 a.m. | | 11:20 p.m. |
| Sandy Hook | 6:46 a.m. | | 7:14 p.m. |
| Shinnecock Inlet | 6:27 a.m. | | 6:52 p.m. |
| Stamford | 10:27 a.m. | | 10:53 p.m. |
| Tarrytown | 9:03 a.m. | | 9:30 p.m. |
| Willets Point | 10:42 a.m. | | 11:06 p.m. |

**Mountain and Ocean Temperatures**




A storm moving into the Mid-Atlantic will bring some rain and a wintry mix to the mountains of Virginia. Some ice and snow will make it as far north as western Maryland by late in the day. Farther north, high pressure will keep the mountains dry. It will be cold from Pennsylvania to Maine.