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What's News

Business & Finance

- ◆ **Memory-chip maker** CXMT soared in its stock-market debut to become the most valuable company listed in mainland China. **A1**
- ◆ **Sector rotation in U.S.** stocks helped keep major indexes on a relatively even keel, with the Nasdaq falling 0.2% and the Dow and S&P 500 rising 0.5% and less than 0.1%, respectively. **B10**
- ◆ **Oil prices plunged** more than 5% after the U.S. paused military strikes against Iran, raising the prospect of renewed diplomatic efforts to end the war. **B10**
- ◆ **Ford joined the competition** to build the Army's newest tactical truck, a pickup that would double on the battlefield as a stealthy power bank on wheels. **B1**
- ◆ **Cracker Barrel CEO** Julie Masino, who proposed changes at the restaurant chain that alienated some diners, will step down and cede the role to an Outback veteran. **B1**
- ◆ **J&J agreed to pay** up to \$5.5 billion to resolve remaining lawsuits that alleged the company's talc products caused ovarian cancer. **B1**
- ◆ **A former JPMorgan** Chase employee accused the bank's leveraged finance team of racial discrimination and harassment in a lawsuit brought in federal court. **B1**
- ◆ **Audi cut its full-year** guidance as a worsening market in China and escalating tensions in the Middle East weigh on the automaker's performance. **B3**
- ◆ **Porsche said that it** would cut 5,000 jobs as part of a broader agreement with worker representatives and their powerful union. **B3**

Worldwide

- ◆ **Ukrainian drones** have hit military-supply lines connecting Russia and Iran through the Caspian Sea, exploiting a new front in two increasingly intertwined wars. **A1**
- ◆ **A lull in fighting** between the U.S. and Iran has accelerated diplomacy aimed at finding a short-term fix to restart shipping through the Strait of Hormuz. **A6**
- ◆ **Saudi Arabia said it** intercepted a number of drones that Iran-backed militias in Iraq had launched at the kingdom's oil facilities. **A6**
- ◆ **The Trump administration** asked the Supreme Court to allow federal agencies to implement an executive order that would curb mail-in ballots ahead of the midterm elections. **A3**
- ◆ **New York City halted** construction work at another Manhattan office tower that is being converted into apartments over structural concerns. **A3**
- ◆ **Three people were killed** and four others wounded in what authorities believe was a gang-related shooting at a Seattle food festival. **A2**
- ◆ **Trump in recent weeks** expressed optimism about Ukraine and Volodymyr Zelensky in a remarkable change of fortune for Kyiv's wartime leader. **A7**
- ◆ **Entries from Anthony** Fauci's 'Covid-era' journals released by Sen. Rand Paul reveal the doctor's efforts to placate Trump while focusing on his media image. **A3**
- ◆ **Former FBI Director** James Comey urged a judge to throw out federal charges against him in connection with an image he posted on social media. **A2**

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Monsoon Floods Death Toll Tops 100 in Pakistan



SWAMPED: People waded through floodwaters Monday after the Ravi River overflowed in Lahore, Pakistan. Flooding triggered by heavy monsoon rains has claimed more than 100 lives in the nation in the past month, and more rain is forecast. **A8**

Fed Chairman Is Now Getting His Wish: A ‘Good Family Fight’

Warsh's tight-lipped approach to economy faces test this week as rate panel meets

By NICK TIMIRAOS

On the evening of June 15, before the first day of his first policy meeting as Federal Reserve chairman, Kevin Warsh sat down to dinner with the 18 officials who set interest rates alongside him. Gathered around a rectangular table, he announced his plan: five panels of outside experts would

spend the next few months examining how the Fed reads the economy and explains itself.

Governor Christopher Waller, a former economics professor with a reputation for saying what others won't, put Warsh on the spot, according to several people familiar with the dinner. What's the point of all this, he asked. Tell me who you're putting on these groups, he said, and I'll tell you what they'll say. There were no brilliant ideas out there that everyone had somehow missed.

The dinner was an early sign of the central tension of

Warsh's chairmanship. He is determined to remake the Fed and convinced it can't afford to wait. Last year, Warsh persuaded the most rate-cut-hungry president in modern memory to hand the central bank to him despite his long record of worrying about inflation. Now he faces another tricky sale: convincing his colleagues to abandon the intellectual habits of an economics profession he thinks led it astray.

The Fed meets again this week with an outcome that is unusually uncertain. Many expect it to hold rates steady, but a renewed inflation scare

has put a surprise increase in play. Part of why it is so hard to call is Warsh's signature early move on Fed reform: He is saying less—about the economy, about where policy is headed, about his own thinking—and that silence is generating its own tension.

Last month's dinnertime exchange was, in one sense, exactly what Warsh says he wants: a “good family fight,” in the phrase he uses often, over outcomes not settled in advance. Waller had obliged, insinuating Warsh was importing outside authority to

Please turn to page A2

Ukraine, Iran Wars Converge In Caspian

By JARED MALSIN

ISTANBUL—Ukrainian drones have hit military-supply lines connecting Russia and Iran through the Caspian Sea, exploiting a new front in two increasingly intertwined wars.

Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky claimed responsibility for the strikes, saying in a tweet Saturday: “We also achieved very strong results with long-range strikes in the Caspian Sea—including vessels used in military cargo shipments involving Iran, as well as a warship.”

The Security Service of Ukraine, an intelligence agency, said that it launched drone strikes in the Caspian against a Russian oil field, a Russian missile boat and ships used to transport Iranian drones to Russia.

The strikes, part of a long-range drone campaign that also has reached deep into Russia, have brought Iran and Ukraine one step closer to a direct confrontation.

For years, Iran has supplied lethal drones that Russia has used against Ukraine, while the Kremlin has helped Tehran this year with intelligence to assist in its response to the U.S. and Israeli bombing campaigns.

Iran's foreign minister, Abbas Araghchi, blamed Zelensky for the strikes.

- ◆ **Iran, Oman seek pact on** Strait of Hormuz..... **A6**
- ◆ **Oil prices fall after U.S.** pauses strikes..... **B10**

INSIDE



SPORTS
Golf's next prodigy, barely a month after turning pro, wins his first PGA Tour title. **A16**



BUSINESS & FINANCE
Cracker Barrel's CEO, who walked back controversial changes, is stepping down. **B1**

You Think You've Found the One. Then You Crunch the Numbers.

Young adults are consulting spreadsheets to grade their dates; ‘friends feedback’ tab

By MOLLY REINMANN

Carolyn Travis was smitten by a man she met in an entrepreneurship course. It took a spreadsheet to realize the relationship was doomed.

After a few dates, the 27-year-old debriefed her two best friends over lunch. When she went to the bathroom, they got to work. They plugged Travis's core values into an app one of the friends built to assess compatibility. Then they entered everything they knew about her date, an engineer more than a decade her senior.

The spreadsheet crunched the numbers. The result? A

portrait of incompatibility. Her perspective shifted. She saw him a few more times before breaking things off. Now she uses the app, called Spread, to track all of her dating data.

“Talking with friends is one thing, but having that visual representation of what I want versus what I'm allowing is another,” said Travis, a child-welfare advocate.

Travis is among a cohort of spreadsheet singles, or “love hackers,” who believe data could hold the cure to their dating woes. They say dating apps that spit out an unlimited number of potential

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U.S. Cities Face Drop in Children

Big metro areas confront rapid decline of resident families with kids

By RACHEL LOUISE ENSIGN
AND PAUL OVERBERG

When Fernando and Patricia Escobedo moved to the Willows, an affluent neighborhood in El Paso, Texas, 25 years ago, kids were everywhere.

About half of the homes on their cul-de-sac had children. Growing up, the couple's twin daughters used to ride their scooters outside

with other neighborhood kids. At an annual block party, they jumped around in a bouncy house and climbed into the local firetruck.

The twins are now in college—and the neighborhood feels a lot different. The Escobedos also have a 12-year-old at home, and Fernando said she is one of a few children under 18 on the block. The local elementary school

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Whistleblower Set Off Probe of Dodgers Owner

The problems for Mark Walter's sprawling sports and financial empire began with an internal whistleblower complaint.

By Margot Patrick,
Justin Baer,
Andrew Beaton
and Dave Michaels

The complaint questioned how Walter's asset-management firm, Guggenheim Investments, booked revenue from dealings with insurance companies and had drawn interest from federal prosecutors by last year, people familiar with the matter said.

Within months, the investigation evolved to focus on investments in private credit, a lending business that has boomed on Wall Street in the past decade and a half and which supplied the financial

firepower for Walter's 2012 acquisition of the Los Angeles Dodgers alongside partners.

The U.S. Attorney's Office in Manhattan and the Securities and Exchange Commission are now examining how around \$16 billion in loans extended to companies tied to Walter or his conglomerate, TWG Global, wound up on the books of insurance companies he owns after passing through a third entity, the people familiar with the matter said. The authorities are trying to determine whether the activity constituted fraud, one of the people said.

Such related-party transactions must be disclosed to insurance regulators, a rule meant to limit conflicts of interest and protect policyholders. Walter's insurance firms said in recent filings that they had reviewed

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Reasons to believe Seattle can win Super Bowl again

Among encouraging signs for Seahawks: the return of most core players. **In Sports**

Fox embraces role of being face of Parkinson’s disease

Actor reflects on advocacy and life purpose. Plus, Carly Simon reveals her diagnosis. **In Life**

Looking to save on supplies

With rising costs still a big concern, parents plan to maximize savings on back-to-school items during tax-free shopping days. **In Money**

Markets guessing on Fed’s direction

New chair Kevin Warsh keeps his cards close

Rachel Barber
USA TODAY

As many Americans struggle to make ends meet, Federal Reserve Chair Kevin Warsh has pledged to bring inflation back to its 2% target, but it remains unclear exactly how he plans to get there as the central bank heads into its July meeting.

The Fed often finds itself at a crossroads, balancing its dual mandate of maximum employment and stable prices. It has two main tools it uses to address both: its balance sheet and the federal funds rate, a benchmark for interest rates. The Fed typically raises its target range for the rate to tame inflation and lowers the rate to stimulate the job market.

After three months of accelerating inflation, it slowed in June, though some forecasters expect it may tick back up amid renewed U.S.-Iran hostilities. And after three months of positive job growth, U.S. employer hiring fell in June — leaving the Fed to sort out whether the swings are just noise or the start of new trends.

The Fed may also be at a crossroads when it comes to delivering on Warsh’s

See FED, Page 2A

Follow live developments online at usatoday.com

Keep up with the latest as Federal Reserve holds its two-day meeting.

Revoking citizenship, once rare, is revving up

Christopher Cann
USA TODAY

Revoking an immigrant’s citizenship has proven to be a costly and controversial practice over the years, but the Trump administration says hundreds of people deserve to have their citizenship stripped anyway.

The plan calls for ramping up the previously rare denaturalization process as a part of a broader immigration enforcement agenda, expanding a practice President Donald Trump started in his first term.

The Justice Department has moved to revoke the citizenship of nearly 90 people since the start of 2025. By October, the government aims to file at least 250 denaturalization cases in federal court.

Under federal law, the government can ask a judge to revoke the citizenship of someone who obtained it through fraud or misrepresentation — such as using a false identity or concealing a disqualifying criminal record during the naturalization process.

See CITIZENSHIP, Page 3A



Jacob Carnes and Lili White of the Washington Department of Ecology collect water samples from a pond near the Army’s Yakima Training Center. Wells at more than 140 homes nearby have tested over the Environmental Protection Agency’s drinking water limit for PFAS. PROVIDED BY WASHINGTON DEPARTMENT OF ECOLOGY

Military bases delay toxic PFAS cleanup



Phoebe Hyatt, 11, fills a glass from a water dispenser in her family’s kitchen in East Selah, Washington, near the Army’s Yakima Training Center. PROVIDED BY BRANDI HYATT

The War Department “chose to quietly remove the previous cleanup schedule from its website and publish new timelines. This is ultimately a violation of trust.”

Sen. Patty Murray, D-Washington

‘Forever chemicals’ remediation put off decades in some cases

Austin Fast
USA TODAY

It’s been almost five years since Brandi and Brad Hyatt found out the well at their home next to an Army base in Washington is contaminated with “forever chemicals.”

They started using bottled water for everything from making coffee to rinsing off toothbrushes. The couple even carted their two small children across town to bathe at a gym so they couldn’t accidentally swallow contaminated bathwater.

The Army installed a filter last year, but the well remains contaminated. The kids will be long grown by the time the military provides a permanent fix, now delayed until after 2042.

Hundreds of military bases have been putting off cleanup of toxic PFAS, or perfluoroalkyl and polyfluoroalkyl substances, for years, according to a new USA TODAY analysis of military records. The latest round of delays, which the Pentagon posted in an obscure corner of its website in May, has pushed some deadlines out decades,

See PFAS CLEANUP, Page 6A



Check military bases near you

Scan the QR code to search for military sites in your area and see their timeline for PFAS cleanup.

Alone in the open ocean, ‘I borrow their bravery’

Swimmer goes distance for cancer survivors

Ansley Gavlak
USA TODAY

One of ultra-marathon swimmer Maya Merhige’s biggest fears is jellyfish. Yet she willingly spends hours swimming through some of the world’s largest and most dangerous bodies of water.

Why?

Because she swims for those who can’t.

Every time Merhige jumps into

freezing water surrounded by sharks and jellyfish, she is raising money for cancer research and patient programs through the nonprofit Swim Across America.

“If those patients can do cancer treatment — if those 7-year-olds and 4-year-olds can go through a day of cancer treatment — then I can most definitely swim another 20 strokes,” she says.

So far, Merhige, 18, has raised more than \$172,000 for cancer research.

She aims to become the youngest person to complete the Oceans Seven challenge, a series of the world’s seven

See MAYA MERHIGE, Page 6A



Maya Merhige, 18, aims to become the youngest person to finish the Oceans Seven open-water swim challenge. PROVIDED BY SWIM ACROSS AMERICA

“All the News
That’s Fit to Print”

The New York Times

THE WEATHER

Today, cloudy, humid, a heavy storm, high 77. Tonight, cloudy, humid, a heavy storm, low 69. Tomorrow, cloudy, a heavy thunderstorm, high 77. Weather map, Page B12.

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TUESDAY, JULY 28, 2026

Prices in Canada may be higher

\$4.00



Ebola Virus Stalks Crowded Camps in Congo
There are a million people displaced by violence in the epicenter. They live in dangerous conditions and are fighting the virus with very little clean water. Page A10.

Hope vs. Fear As Fire Nears French Refuge

By MARK LANDLER and GIULIA IMBERT

BORDEAUX, France — As a fierce, fast-moving and capricious wildfire spread to within a few miles of Bordeaux on Monday, the city, France’s sixth largest, had become a refuge for thousands of people evacuated from their towns and villages.

Many of them took shelter in Bordeaux’s cavernous exhibition center, united by fear, confusion and a determination to get back their homes, which they desperately hoped would be spared by the flames.

There are differing voices in this instant community, attesting to the divergent lives of the people across the Gironde region. Fear is leavened by hope, gratitude to the firefighters is tinged by anger toward the authorities, and optimism in a swift recovery is offset by uneasiness about the natural forces that led to this disaster.

“I don’t want to start again at zero to find a new apartment,” said Imane El Idrissi, 35, a single mother who fled at 4 a.m. on Saturday, after the police pounded on her door to warn her it was time to leave. “I don’t have the means.”

Ms. El Idrissi, who was born in Morocco, said she had carefully gathered all her immigration and residency documents, filling her suitcase with papers in place of

Continued on Page A5

Tours Must Go On at Gutted Kennedy Center

By ELIZABETH WILLIAMSON

WASHINGTON — Some days no one turns up for a tour at all. Most days there are only a few, including those curious about all the reports of ruin. When people do come, what do they see?

In the Opera House, which no longer has an opera, there is an empty orchestra pit scattered with trash. On the grand terrace overlooking the Potomac River, the flower beds are wilting and weedy. In the corridors and lounges, artwork has disappeared.

And yet Sandy Weisswasser, a retired sixth grade teacher who for 18 years has given hundreds of people free tours of the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, keeps reporting for duty. In a dogged demonstration of love and loyalty for an institution that has elevated life for her and millions of visitors, she still arrives every Monday for her tour day, knowing she may soon find the doors locked.

“This place used to be really thriving and busy and crowded,” Ms. Weisswasser, 87, said. “Now it’s a black hole.”

No one yet knows whether President Trump, who in his second term gutted the center’s leadership, purged its programming and whose handpicked board had his name drilled into the building front, will close the Kennedy Center in the coming weeks, as part of what he says is a two-year renovation plan. The center’s board is expected to make a final determination in August. But at this point it scarcely matters, Ms. Weisswasser said.

Last month the National Symphony Orchestra played its final Kennedy concert for the season, unsure of when or if it will return. Marquee bookings and artists have fled. Everywhere is the heavy, closed-curtain silence of an institution that has lost some 90 percent of its employees and 100 percent of its paying audience.

Ms. Weisswasser keeps coming to give tours, she said, to bear witness, to tell her dwindling visitors that the shabby emptiness they see is not what the Kennedy Center was. For more than half a century it was a grand democratic project, she tells them, bringing the beauty and inspiration of the arts to everyone.

Ms. Weisswasser offers herself as proof its mission did not fail. She is a daughter of Polish immigrants whose grandmother was lost in World War II and presumed by the family to have died in a Nazi

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Dedicated Guides Wait as Visitors Decline



Sandy Weisswasser said visitors used to crowd the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, but “now it’s a black hole.”

Balancing Act As Netanyahu Heads to U.S.

By ISABEL KERSHNER

JERUSALEM — For Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel, a meeting with President Trump is always an opportunity to showcase their close relationship even if they, at times, disagree.

This time, the stakes are especially high.

Both leaders are facing electoral challenges in the months ahead and are expected to meet at the White House on Tuesday as their interests appear to be diverging sharply on the war with Iran.

Before departing for Washington on Monday, Mr. Netanyahu said in a statement that this would be his eighth meeting with Mr. Trump since the president was elected for his second term, and that Iran would be “first and foremost” on the agenda.

“I am embarking on this mission with one clear goal — to ensure the security, strength, and future of our dear state of Israel,” he added.

Mr. Netanyahu, who is trailing in the opinion polls at home before Israel’s fall vote, is under pressure to show his domestic audience that he still has a close working relationship with Mr. Trump, analysts say, despite their differences. Mr. Trump is heading into U.S. midterm elections in November after an unpopular war that many believe he was dragged into

Continued on Page A8

HOUTHIS LOCATED SAUDI WEAK SPOT IN U.S.-IRAN WAR

SHIP ROUTES IN RED SEA

Hoping Pressure on Oil Exports Yields More Power in Yemen

By VIVIAN NEREIM and SHUAIB ALMOSAWA

RIYADH, Saudi Arabia — After four years of political deadlock in Yemen, the Houthis were growing increasingly frustrated. A truce between the Iranian-backed militia and neighboring Saudi Arabia had turned into a brittle stalemate, and the Houthis, feeling they had little to lose, wanted greater authority over Yemen and its oil resources.

Saudi officials, for their part, had no interest in another clash with the Houthis. Their previous bombing campaign in Yemen had turned into a decade-long quagmire that contributed to the deaths of hundreds of thousands of Yemenis from violence, hunger and disease. They wanted to avoid another expensive conflict that could endanger their plans to transform the kingdom into a business and tourism hub.

Into this tinderbox, the U.S. war with Iran flung a spark. Over the past few weeks, the Houthis and Saudi Arabia have spiraled into new clashes that risk expanding into another full-blown war.

“The Houthis have one solution for every problem in the world, which is go to war,” said Farea al-Muslimi, a Yemen-focused fellow at the London-based research group Chatham House. “The Saudis solve every problem by trying to shower it with money,” he added, “and the Houthis by shooting at it.”

The last Saudi-Houthi war pushed Yemen to the brink of famine, until it paused with a fragile truce in 2022. By then, the Houthis had created a de facto state in northern Yemen, and the south was nominally controlled by Yemen’s internationally recognized government, which is financially and militarily dependent on Saudi Arabia. Talks toward a durable peace deal eventually stalled.

The limbo was never going to last, but Saudi Arabia, distracted by other crises, appeared to hope it would hold a bit longer.

The Saudi ambassador to Yemen, Mohammed al-Jaber, said in a social media post on Saturday that the kingdom was keen to de-escalate. He blamed the Houthis for “insisting on a path of escalation

Continued on Page A8



Portraits of the Houthi leader, Abdul-Malik al-Houthi.

Cubans Counter an Oil Blockade With Ingenuity

By JACK NICAS

HAVANA — For months, President Trump has been predicting that Cuba is about to collapse. “It’s just going to fall,” he told reporters on Jan. 4, a day after taking control of Venezuela’s oil, which had been Cuba’s lifeline.

He then imposed an oil blockade that has pushed the island into its worst-ever energy crisis, with mass blackouts now lasting nearly all day. And yet, more than six months later, the Cuban government and people are still standing.

This month, we visited the country to understand how. After a week on the ground, we found that while Cubans are clearly suffering, they are also doing what perhaps they do best: adapting.

They are swapping their gas-guzzling 1950s American cars for electric motorcycles and rickshaws from China; importing hefty lithium batteries to keep televisions and fans running through blackouts; jury-rigging generators to run on more acces-

Continued on Page A7

On Police Academy, a Name and an Inspiration

By MARIA CRAMER

Officer Steven McDonald could not move or speak.

He had been lying in a bed at Bellevue Hospital in Manhattan for nearly nine months, recovering from gunshot wounds that had severed his spinal cord and left him paralyzed from the neck down. Shavod Jones, the 15-year-old boy who had shot him on July 12, 1986, was behind bars.

Officer McDonald’s 1-month old son, Conor, was about to be baptized in the hospital chapel in front of reporters and news photographers.

Officer McDonald was eager to send a message to the teenager who shot him. But all he could do was mouth his words, which his wife, Patti Ann McDonald, wrote down.

“I’m sometimes angry at the teenage boy who shot me, but more often I feel sorry for him,” Ms. McDonald said, reading his words to reporters, as his respiration

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INTERNATIONAL A4-11

A Once-Outlawed Art Form

Young Maori in New Zealand are embracing ta moko, the ritual tattoos banned under British rule. PAGE A4

Feeling Unsafe in Berlin

The killing of a woman last weekend rattled a gay community that has faced a surge in threats. PAGE A6

NATIONAL A12-18

Filing to Restrict Mail Voting

The Trump administration asked the Supreme Court to intervene after an appeals court blocked key parts of a mail-in voting executive order. PAGE A16

Baby Bust in Beehive State

Utah, known for its big Mormon families, now leads the country in plummeting fertility rates. PAGE A16

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Author of ‘Pumping Iron’

Charles Gaines, 84, wrote the book and movie that made Arnold Schwarzenegger a household name. PAGE A22

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Depp’s Humbug Era

The actor’s career seemed to spiral downward a few years ago, but he will be back in “Ebenezer: A Christmas Carol,” out this November. PAGE C1

Where Westeros Took Him

The “House of the Dragon” star Fabien Frankel discusses a pivotal point in his long journey on the show. PAGE C1

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Failure to Communicate

Commissioner Cathy Engelbert over- sees a prospering W.N.B.A. But she can’t seem to earn acceptance. PAGE B8



BUSINESS B1-7

Resurrecting a Nuclear Reactor

The first U.S. attempt at reopening a shuttered power plant is encumbered by one thing after another. PAGE B1

Open-Source Safety Alliance

Days after reports of A.I. models going rogue, Nvidia announced a coalition to work on shared security tools. PAGE B1

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New Take on Rare Ailments

A nonprofit wants gene therapy for unusual diseases to be more of a routine procedure. PAGE D1

Defending What Lies Above

Residents who live near Mexico in West Texas say a border wall will threaten the region’s spectacular sky. PAGE D8

OPINION A20-21

Jeffrey Toobin PAGE A20





Severe p.m. t-storm 85/70 • Tomorrow: A t-storm 86/70

Democracy Dies in Darkness

TUESDAY, JULY 28, 2026 • \$4

Cocaine still flowing despite U.S. strikes

Pentagon, DEA contradict Trump's claim of deadly boat attacks' success

BY ALEX HORTON, TERRENCE MCCOY, SAMANTHA SCHMIDT AND DYLAN MORIARTY

The Trump administration's deadly military strikes on alleged drug trafficking boats have not reduced the amount of cocaine entering the United States, but they're prompting criminal organizations to develop new strategies and tactics and undermining traditional investigative methods, according to a previously unreported assessment by the Drug Enforcement Administration, a closed-door congressional briefing and interviews with current and former U.S. and foreign officials.

In a recent assessment reviewed by The Washington Post, DEA analysts found the strikes had failed to affect the supply or price of cocaine in the United States and had led traffickers to diversify beyond go-fast boats and to avoid international waters, opting instead for larger boats and hemming close to coastlines, where U.S. forces are less likely to open fire. In a closed-door briefing last month, Pentagon officials told lawmakers the strikes in international waters off South and Central America had not reduced its purity.

Traffickers are also relying more on aircraft, which take off from clandestine airstrips along the Colombian-Venezuelan border and head east to Guyana and

SEE COCAINE ON A6



REBECCA NOBLE/FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

Water storage tanks on the edge of Kearny, Arizona, a town that is an extreme example of the water crunch across the West.

A desert town may run out of water. Others could face the same fate.

BY HANNAH KNOWLES

KEARNY, ARIZ. — Mayor Curtis Stacy starts every morning checking two websites that tell him how much he needs to worry about water.

One site tells him about the reservoir that supplies his tiny desert town — it's effectively empty. The other site tells him if the town gets additional water that other communities with more senior rights aren't using; right now, the answer is yes.

But Stacy tries to remind Kearny's roughly 2,000 residents that they could easily tip back into crisis mode, just like

this spring. In newsletters, he underscores that fragility with no fewer than 20 exclamation points. If other communities call for more water, they will have to cut back again.

"!!!!!!!!!!!!THIS SITUATION IS ALMOST CERTAINLY TEMPORARY!!!!!!!!!!!!" he wrote in one bulletin posted on the Kearny Facebook page and taped up and down the glass doors of the town office.

Kearny is an extreme example of the water crunch facing communities across the West as states and cities stare down a future of "megadrought" and fight over scarce resources. An unusually dry winter

this year left the Southwest parched, with not enough water for everyone laying claim to it. In the complex web of water rights that govern how that short supply is distributed, the tiny town of Kearny comes last.

Other cities around the West could face similar challenges and cutbacks. The federal government is set to release a plan for the shrinking supply of Colorado River water this summer that could force dramatic cuts. Kearny is not directly affected by the Colorado River negotiations, officials say, but its dilemma shows how

SEE ARIZONA ON A4

Trump targets mail-in voting

NEW LIMITS WANTED AHEAD OF MIDTERMS

Supreme Court's help sought for executive order

BY JUSTIN JOUVENAL

The Trump administration asked the Supreme Court on Monday to clear the way for a sweeping executive order that would place major new restrictions on mail-in voting for November's midterm elections.

A divided panel of a Massachusetts-based appeals court last week upheld a federal judge's block on the order, finding that it would "sow confusion" and "threaten disenfranchisement of many eligible voters." Judges appointed by Joe Biden and George W. Bush voted for the block, while a Trump appointee voted against it.

In the administration's filings with the high court, the Justice Department said that the executive order lays out general policies and that agencies have yet to finalize rules on based on it, so it was premature for courts to block it.

The Supreme Court appeal is part of a push by President Donald Trump and his allies to put fresh limits on voting ahead of the pivotal elections where control of both the House and the Senate is at stake. Trump claims that voting irregularities are widespread, despite a lack of evidence.

SEE TRUMP ON A7

SpaceX's fall makes Musk a 'Former' Trillionaire

BY FAIZ SIDDIQUI

It seemed to be only good news for Elon Musk and investors in companies he oversees.

SpaceX had marked a record-setting IPO, Musk was the first trillionaire in history, and the rocket company vaulted to an all-time high of more than \$225 per share.

That was last month. Since then, their fortunes have shifted.

Musk has shed hundreds of billions in wealth, demoting him from trillionaire status, and SpaceX's stock price has been cut practically in half. On top of that, electric vehicle maker Tesla has lost more than 18 percent of its value over the past week, in part after falling short of its quarterly earnings expectations, as investor patience for its artificial intelligence and robotics bets has worn thin.

Musk cheekily nodded at the situation in a post on X on Friday.

"(Former) Trillionaire," he wrote.

But while the world's richest person could become a trillionaire again with a few big up days in the market, the challenges for SpaceX are deeper. It's a new era for a company that was once on a glide path, that seemingly could do no wrong on its way to a historic \$75 billion initial public offering.

SEE SPACEX ON A15

Police vetted dubious accusation only after Buttigieg, children separated

BY OLIVIA GEORGE, ERIN COX AND AARON SCHAFER

Officials who separated former Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg from his young twins last month relied on a vague and unsubstantiated allegation from an accuser authorities later deemed possibly "mentally unstable," according to previously unreported police records.

The records, obtained by The Washington Post, and an interview with the apparent complainant offer the most detailed account yet of how a false tip led investigators to the home of one of the country's most prominent Democrats, drawing bipartisan outrage.

Child welfare experts who reviewed the documents at The Post's request said they illuminate a flawed process that was

made worse by poor judgment by agencies and a lack of communication among investigators from two states.

Michigan State Police reports detail the chain of events from the allegation to its eventual termination it was unfounded and potentially politically motivated. Indiana child welfare authorities who received a tip on a hotline with "very limited information" about Buttigieg did not

pass along the caller's name or contact information when notifying officials in Michigan, where Buttigieg now lives.

Michigan police waited six days after approaching Buttigieg to attempt to identify the caller.

By then, Buttigieg, a former mayor of South Bend, Indiana, and 2020 presidential candidate, had gone public with the ordeal in a June Substack post, describing it as "the ugliest thing that

has happened to me since my career in service began."

Michigan authorities had told Buttigieg he could not be alone with his 4-year-old children until they could be interviewed away from their parents the next day, Buttigieg recounted. The children stayed with their grandparents who lived nearby. Buttigieg, who is widely expected to run for president again, called that

SEE BUTTIGIEG ON A9



AMIR COHEN/REUTERS

People hold flags as they march toward the Gaza Strip in a July 19 demonstration.

Gaza Board of Peace lowers ambitions as plans fizzle

Israel, Trump-established organization seem to be on a collision course

BY KAREN DEYOUNG

Israel's right-wing government and the Board of Peace created by President Donald Trump to implement his Gaza peace plan appear on a collision course over the future of the enclave.

"We are coming home. Gaza is ours," National Security Minister Itamar Ben Gvir said as he led a demonstration of hundreds of supporters, along with other Israeli government ministers and lawmakers, to the northern Gaza border July 19.

A number of Israeli officials, without contradiction by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu,

hu, have said that Israel is not leaving Gaza and vowed to re-establish settlements that were dismantled when it agreed to "disengage" from the enclave more than a decade ago.

A White House official confirmed that Trump will meet Tuesday with Netanyahu, who is traveling to Washington to attend a memorial service for Sen. Lindsey Graham. The meeting is likely to center on Iran and Trump's peace efforts in Lebanon.

Trump's Board of Peace has struggled to make progress moving beyond the first phase of his plan, which included the release of all remaining Hamas-held hostages and a ceasefire that left what is now more than 60 percent of Gaza cleared of Palestinians and occupied by the Israel Defense Forces, and the rest controlled by Hamas.

SEE GAZA ON A11

IN THE NEWS

On the offensive President Donald Trump on Monday traveled to Michigan, where he promoted his economic agenda to quell Republican fears of midterm fallout. A2

Trump mocks reporter The president's post of a doctored image of CNN's Collins renews calls to end the correspondents' dinner. A5

THE NATION The Pentagon relabeled U.S. casualties caused by Iran amid scrutiny of wartime transparency. A5
Mitch McConnell, who has been away from the Senate for six weeks, will remain in rehab. A7

THE WORLD Ukraine's Zelensky became the first foreign head of government to meet with new British PM Burnham. A11
Find out what it's like to use a North Korean smartphone under Kim Jong Un. A12

THE ECONOMY A new study conducted by British scientists shows that the stress of being poor can cause long-term damage to your brain. A14
Stocks on Wall Street drifted to a mixed close Monday as oil prices fell after the U.S. and Iran paused attacks. A14.

STYLE Alan Ritchson, the star of "Reacher," is actually a comedian who is masquerading as a Greek god. B1
SPORTS Tennis returned to the nation's capital, with Venus Williams and other stars taking the court for the DC Open. B7

THE REGION A court-appointed lawyer faces felony charges over alleged sexual abuse of his disabled client. B13
A counselor who saved people in crisis questions why no one saved her son, who was shot and killed by police in Maryland in March. B13

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PLAYERS vie for the basketball at the Venice Beach courts. Recent monsoonal activity has fueled mugginess.

GENARO MOLINA Los Angeles Times

Jordan caught in regional security dilemma

The war on Iran has brought unwelcome attention to Amman's ties with the U.S.

By NABIH BULOS

AMMAN, Jordan — When Iranian ballistic missiles repeatedly struck Jordan last week, killing three American service members and wounding dozens of others, it brought the spotlight on a U.S. military presence the government of this desert kingdom has long worked to downplay.

Jordan has been a decades-long military and counterterrorism partner with the United States, opening its territory over the years to U.S. and other Western troops in their engagements throughout the region. But faced with a population that is overwhelmingly pro-Palestinian and suspicious of the U.S. for its all-out support of Israel, the government had kept those relationships at a low profile.

But now, Jordan's growing role in the United States' war with Iran — and the intensifying Iranian retaliation that role invites — is spurring uncomfortable conversations for the government.

[See Jordan, A3]

Muggy conditions make summer heat unbearable

With warmer nights, warnings of more heat illness

By ALEX WIGGLESWORTH

It's not your imagination: This summer has been unusually sticky in Los Angeles, with humidity levels making conditions feel more like the Deep South than Southern California.

As summer heat settles over the Southwest, it changes the circulation in the atmosphere enough to pull up monsoonal moisture from the Pacific and Gulf of California, fueling warm rain and thunderstorms — or, in this case, mugginess.

The phenomenon is known as the North American monsoon, said Bryan Lewis, a National Weather

Service meteorologist in Oxnard. This stretch of monsoonal activity has been notable for the L.A. area because it's been prolonged, yet it hasn't fueled any rainstorms that could offer relief from the heat, he said.

The remnants of Tropical Storm Elida, followed by Hurricane Fausto, have also pushed tropical moisture into the area, he said.

Exacerbating the conditions, the ocean water just off the coast has been unusually warm, with readings of 74 degrees off Hermosa Beach and 70 degrees off Zuma Beach as of Sunday, Lewis said.

The sea surface temperature at Scripps Pier in La Jol-

la was measured to be 75.7 degrees Monday afternoon. Normally, it would be around 68 degrees this time of year, according to Daniel Cayan, climate researcher at Scripps Institution of Oceanography at UC San Diego.

Cayan attributed the unusual warmth to a weather pattern that's established itself over the past three months or so. Plentiful sunshine has heated the surface water, while winds have been too light to mix with the cooler water below, he said.

"We've got this warm lens of water not only along the Southern California coast but extending well down off

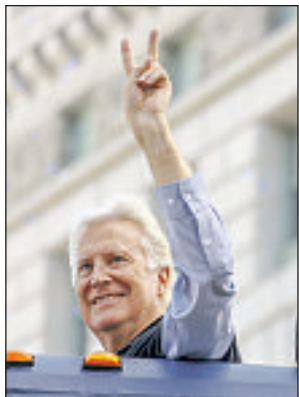
[See Heat, A7]

Dodgers, Lakers owner focus of reported loan fraud investigation

By LAURENCE DARMIENTO

The business empire of Dodgers and Lakers owner Mark Walter reportedly is being probed by the U.S. attorney's office and securities regulators over \$16 billion in possibly fraudulent loans.

The loans by two Delaware life insurers that Walter owns were made to companies tied to him or his TWG Global holding company but were not disclosed as "related party" transactions as required, the Wall Street Journal reported Sunday.



KAYLA BARTKOWSKI L.A. Times

MARK Walter waves to fans at last fall's Dodgers championship parade.

Related party transactions made by insurers are required to be reported to limit conflicts of interest and protect policyholders, who have an interest in the financial strength of their insurers.

Walter, 66, chief executive of investment firm Guggenheim Partners, led a group that included Todd Boehly — another Guggenheim executive — and Magic Johnson in acquiring the Dodgers for \$2.15 billion in 2012, a record for a pro sports team at the time. Last year, Walter and TWG acquired a controlling stake in the Lakers at a

[See Walter, A11]

A plan to speed up vote count in California

Elections group suggests shorter time to verify signatures, among other actions.

By JENNY JARVIE

In the wake of a painfully slow June vote count in California that led to unfounded claims of election irregularities, a voter watchdog group Monday recommended the state and counties carry out a number of voting reforms that could speed up tabulations. Not all of them, however, are likely to happen before November.

The California Voter Foundation, a nonprofit group with a mission to improve the election process for voters, issued a report pushing for several changes to the ballot signature-curing process: The state, it said, should shorten the curing timeline from 22 to 14 days, expand voter access to and awareness of electronic ballot signature curing, and have the state collect and publish comprehensive signature-curing data.

The group also urged the state to enable most close races to be called by the Fri-

day after election day and let counties, in extremely close contests, prioritize counting those ballots first. The state, it said, should also provide local election offices with additional funding to enable them to speed up ballot processing, improve the public reporting of unofficial results with clearer terminology and real-time updates, and inform voters they can help by returning vote-by-mail ballots earlier or voting in person.

"California doesn't have to choose between an accessible, secure election system and timely results," Kim Alexander, president of the California Voter Foundation, said in a statement. "Our research shows we can combat the long vote count while preserving — and in some cases strengthening — the protections that make California elections accessible and trustworthy."

Alexander told The Times that two of the California Voter Foundation's 10 recommendations — providing election officials with more funding and encouraging voters to cast ballots earlier or in person — are already underway.

Four more recommendations [See Ballots, A7]

Energy cuts made to hurt blue states

Trump administration admits in court filing decisions were based solely on politics.

By HAYLEY SMITH

The fate of hundreds of clean energy projects hangs in the balance after court documents revealed that the Trump administration targeted California and other blue states solely for political reasons when it slashed funding for the initiatives last year.

Large companies, startups, utilities, universities and other nonprofits were among those that lost out on \$7.6 billion in clean energy funding terminated by the White House in October. They include the University of California, the California Energy Commission, the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power, and California's nascent hydrogen hub, the Alliance for Renew-

able Clean Hydrogen Energy Systems, or ARCHES.

At the time, Trump administration officials said the grants were terminated because they "did not adequately advance the nation's energy needs, were not economically viable, and would not provide a positive return on investment of taxpayer dollars."

But in court documents filed as part of a lawsuit challenging the cuts, the Department of Energy states the selection of grants was "based solely on the political identity of the grant recipient's state, i.e., whether the recipient's location and/or place of performance was in a Blue State or a non-Blue State."

It also concedes that neither the inclusion of ARCHES, nor any other grants in the October tranche, was "based on any programmatic, statutory, cost-reduction, or performance-based factor."

California and the 15 other states that lost fund-

[See Energy, A7]

BETYE SAAR, 1926 – 2026

L.A. artist who 'liberated' Aunt Jemima

Her works subverted 'mammy,' other racist figures by arming them



CHRISTINA HOUSE Los Angeles Times

ICONIC AND INFLUENTIAL

Artist Betye Saar, photographed at her home in Laurel Canyon in June, used assemblages to explore difficult aspects of U.S. history.

By CAROLINA A. MIRANDA

Betye Saar, a Los Angeles artist who transformed collections of bigoted bric-a-brac — Sambo dolls, ceramic mamies and crude renderings of pickaninies — into potent works of assemblage that mined the searing history of race in the United States, and whose works influenced generations of artists, has died. She was 99.

Saar died in her sleep — just a few days short of her 100th birthday Thursday — in Los Angeles, her longtime gallerist Julie Roberts at Roberts Projects said. Saar's death was confirmed by her publicist Hannah Gottlieb-Graham.

"Betye Saar was one of the greatest artists of our time, and it has been an immense honor to work with her for nearly 20 years," Roberts said. "Her singular vision transformed the course of contemporary art, and her legacy will continue to inspire generations of artists, scholars

[See Saar, A6]



EMMA DA SILVA Associated Press

A REGION AFLAME

France says it hopes to get a huge wildfire under control before a forecast rise in temperatures. Above, a fire crew outside Bordeaux. **WORLD, A2**

Feds drop case against Huerta

Labor leader calls it a victory after his arrest last summer during a protest at immigration raid. **CALIFORNIA, B1**

Weather
Fog, then sun.
L.A. Basin: 89/67. **B6**

Markets **A11**
Opinion Voices **A12**

D4vd to stand trial for murder

Singer is accused of killing 14-year-old girl and dismembering her body. **CALIFORNIA, B1**

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