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Democracy Dies in Darkness

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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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