

# The Washington Post

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Democracy Dies in Darkness

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## Israel mulls strike on Iran to send a 'message'

Muted reprisal could placate allies, bolster anti-Tehran strategy

BY STEVE HENDRIX, LOVEDAY MORRIS AND SHIRA RUBIN

JERUSALEM — Israel's war cabinet deliberated Monday how to respond to Iran's unprecedented aerial assault without ranking allies and squandering an opportunity to build an international alliance against Tehran.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has asked the Israel Defense Forces to provide a target list, according to an official familiar with high-level discussions, who said Israel is mulling retaliation that would "send a message" but not cause casualties.

The options include a potential strike on a facility in Tehran or a cyberattack, according to the official, who spoke on the condition of anonymity because of the sensitivity of the talks.

"Everybody agrees that Israel must respond," the official said. "How to respond, when to respond, is the question."

The United States, the United Nations, and Israel's European and regional allies have all called for restraint after the Iranian barrage of more than 300 drones and missiles overnight Saturday.

The five-hour, carefully choreographed onslaught — in response to an Israeli strike on an Iranian diplomatic compound in Syria that killed two senior commanders this month — caused limited damage after being repelled by an international alliance including the United States. SEE ISRAEL ON A14

**Biden's dilemma:** Iran's attack muddles message to Israel. A13

## Russian arms help Tehran strengthen its defenses

BY JOBY WARRICK

Last March, a Russian arms maker invited a delegation of Iranians to a VIP shopping tour of its weapons factories. The 17 visitors were treated to lunches and cultural shows and, on the final day, toured a plant that makes products long coveted by Tehran: advanced Russian air defense systems for shooting down enemy planes.

The factory, NPP Start, in the city of Yekaterinburg, is under U.S. sanctions for supporting Russia's war against Ukraine. Among its wares are mobile launchers and other components for anti-aircraft batteries — including Russia's S-400, which military analysts assess to be capable of detecting and destroying stealth fighter jets flown by Israel and the United States.

A leaked Russian document, part of stolen Iranian emails posted online in February by a hacker group, described the tour as a showcase for "scientific and technical potential and production capabilities" that Russia could offer Iran.

Whether the visit led directly to a purchase is unknown. But the trip is emblematic of what intelligence officials describe as a SEE IRAN ON A12

# Trump hush money trial opens

BY DEVLIN BARRETT, DAVID NAKAMURA AND SHAYNA JACOBS

## FIRST PROSECUTION OF AN EX-PRESIDENT

His sex life emerges as a key theme in N.Y. case

NEW YORK — The opening day of Donald Trump's criminal trial delved deep into his tabloid-fodder sex life, as lawyers and the judge debated how many salacious details jurors should eventually hear as they decide whether he broke the law to cover up hush money payments.

The historic first trial of a former U.S. president began Monday in a storied courthouse that has seen a host of high-profile cases over the years, from rap stars to movie moguls, but never one with such potential consequences for the nation and the world.

The dry rituals of court only made the proceedings more surreal, as New York Supreme Court

Justice Juan Merchan warned Trump he could be removed or sent to jail if he disrupted the trial or failed to appear, and prosecutors said they would seek to hold Trump in contempt even before a single potential juror had been questioned.

Trump, the presumptive Republican presidential nominee, was openly contemptuous of the trial when he spoke to reporters at the end of the day in the courthouse hallway. "We are not going to be given a fair trial," he said, calling the prosecution "a scam."

Inside the courtroom, however, Trump was anything but disruptive. He frequently appeared bored or uninterested in the legal jousting that took up the entire morning session, but was mostly attentive once jurors began to be questioned.

Shortly after the lunch break, as Merchan read a lengthy series of instructions to prospective jurors, Trump closed his eyes and at times appeared to nod off. He then would abruptly catch himself and stiffen his posture.

The former president's most animated moments in court came when the judge was not on the bench. Trump chatted with his lawyers at the defense table, sometimes making them laugh or smile.

While hundreds of potential jurors waited on another floor of SEE TRUMP ON A8



JABIN BOTSFORD/THE WASHINGTON POST

**Donald Trump in criminal court in Manhattan on Monday. Jury selection was part of the day's proceedings, and may take weeks.**

**The Fix:** Case may remind voters of facts they've long found troubling. A2

**Election fallout:** Focus on tawdry scandal may matter at the margins. A7



JONATHAN NEWTON FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

**Investigators board the Dali cargo ship Monday, where the crew has remained on board. The FBI has opened a criminal investigation into the circumstances surrounding the collapse of the Francis Scott Key Bridge in Baltimore after it was struck by the ship.**

## FBI investigating Key Bridge crash

BY KATIE METTLER, DEVLIN BARRETT, DANNY NGUYEN AND PETER HERMANN

Authorities seek to determine if crew knew about issues beforehand

The FBI has opened a criminal investigation focusing on the massive container ship that brought down the Francis Scott Key Bridge in Baltimore last month — a probe that will look at least in part at whether the crew left the port knowing the vessel had serious system problems, according to two U.S. officials familiar with the matter.

Authorities are reviewing the

events leading up to the moment when the Dali, a 985-foot Singapore-flagged ship, lost power while leaving the Port of Baltimore and slammed into one of the bridge's support pillars, said the officials, speaking on the condition of anonymity to discuss the ongoing probe.

Just after dawn Monday, dozens of law enforcement officials dressed in all black began arriving at the Dali — where the crew has remained since the crash — pulling up to the ship's bow in numerous boats and climbing aboard using a ladder. The FBI later confirmed that agents were on board, and the Justice Department said authorities were conducting a "court-approved search."

The news of the criminal investigation, which one official said is being handled by the U.S. attorney's office in Maryland,

came the same day that multiple private law firms separately announced that they had been retained to represent the Baltimore mayor's office and some of the men who were working construction on the bridge when it collapsed.

The moves signal an escalating effort to seek accountability and determine what caused the crash that left six of the eight men dead, a question that both SEE BRIDGE ON A9

**Debris removal:** Workers extract largest piece from river so far. B1



PATRICK PLEUL/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

**Tesla vehicles at a German factory in 2022. The company reported a sharp decline in vehicle deliveries in the first quarter of 2024.**

## Tesla will cut over 10% of its workforce

BY AARON GREGG, FAIZ SIDDIQUI AND TRISHA THADANI

Tesla notified employees Monday that the company would slash more than 10 percent of its staff, the latest setback for one of the world's top electric-vehicle makers, which is struggling to hold its place as a vanguard in the EV industry amid cooling demand, increasing scrutiny from regulators and controversy around its unpredictable chief executive, Elon Musk.

In a layoff notice obtained by The Washington Post, employees

were told early Monday morning that Tesla, which has a large presence in California and Texas and factories in Germany and China, is cutting a significant number of jobs after a "thorough review of the organization."

"Over the years, we have grown rapidly with multiple factories scaling around the globe," according to the email, which was shared with The Post. "With this rapid growth, there has been duplication of roles and job functions in certain areas. As we prepare the company for our next phase of growth, it is extremely important to look at every aspect

of the company for cost reductions and increasing productivity."

The job cuts — which include more than 14,000 workers from a range of departments, including sales, engineering and policy — are a blow to a company considered a bellwether for the state of the EV market. The company disclosed earlier this month that sales had fallen faster than expected amid waning demand for EVs. As competition with foreign players, especially in China, has intensified, Tesla's stock has taken a beating, shedding a third of SEE TESLA ON A18

## IN THE NEWS

**Rising temperatures** Warmer ocean waters might presage a widespread coral bleaching event, which could devastate sea life. A11

**D.C. teen killed** A 15-year-old girl was shot dead in Southeast Washington, the third slaying of a juvenile in the city this month even as the pace of homicides ebbs. B1

**THE NATION** NASA announced an overhaul of its troubled mission to bring Mars samples to Earth. A3  
**Two years** after a \$107 billion financial lift, USPS says it needs an additional \$14 billion. A7

**THE WORLD** Sudan marked a year of civil war as it struggles in the shadow of other conflicts. A10  
**A military review** disputes that Marines had the Kabul airport bomber in their sights. A15

**THE ECONOMY** Gen Z workers say they can take criticism, but it should be timely, collaborative, empathetic and balanced. A17  
**The IRS's** Direct File program received rave reviews in its first season but saw relatively few users compared with other filing options. A18

**THE REGION** A lawyer who helped defend her Virginia high school's "race-neutral" admissions policy in court is keeping up her DEI efforts. B1  
**A friendly pigeon** that had frequently visited a Maryland animal shelter was adopted by a family from New Jersey. B1

**STYLE** Silent book clubs offer a community for those who want to read but might not want to chat about it. C1

**HEALTH & SCIENCE** For 18 years, a woman suffered from an episodic illness featuring hives and fevers. The cause was mind-blowing. E1

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