

Musk Provides
Fraud Claims,
But Not Proof

Blasts Federal Workers
From the Oval Office

This article is by Maggie Haberman, Theodore Schleifer and Zolan Kanno-Youngs.

WASHINGTON — The billionaire Elon Musk said in an extraordinary Oval Office appearance on Tuesday that he was providing maximum transparency in his government cost-cutting initiative, but offered no evidence for his sweeping claims that the federal bureaucracy had been corrupted by cheats and officials who had approved money for “fraudsters.”

Answering questions from the news media for the first time since his arrival in Washington to run the so-called Department of Government Efficiency, Mr. Musk stood next to the Resolute Desk and asserted that his work was in the interest of the public and democracy. President Trump sat behind the desk, chiming in with approval as he let the world’s richest man expound for roughly 30 minutes on the rationale for the drastic overhaul of the federal bureaucracy.

The goal is to “restore democracy,” Mr. Musk said. “If the bureaucracy’s in charge, then what meaning does democracy actually have?”

Among Mr. Musk’s claims, which he offered without providing evidence, was that some officials at the now-gutted U.S. Agency for International Development had been taking “kick-backs.” He said that “quite a few people” in the bureaucracy somehow had “managed to accrue tens of millions of dollars in net worth while they are in that position,” without explaining how he had made that assessment. He later claimed that some recipients of Social Security checks were as old as 150.

“We are actually trying to be as transparent as possible,” Mr. Continued on Page A16

NEW YORK President Trump has found leverage over the city and its jeopardized mayor. PAGE A20



SAHER ALGHORRA FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES
Jabaliya in northern Gaza. Hamas has accused Israel of violating terms of the cease-fire, including by slowing humanitarian aid.

‘I Was Dying’: Rushdie Testifies About Stabbing

By ALYCE McFADDEN
MAYVILLE, N.Y. — Salman Rushdie was preparing to give a talk to more than 1,000 people in an idyllic amphitheater along Chautauqua Lake when he suddenly became aware of a figure onstage, rushing toward him.

“I was very struck by his eyes,” Mr. Rushdie, the renowned author, said. They were dark, he said. And ferocious.

Before he could react, a man was upon him, striking his cheek, his jaw, his neck and, “most painfully and most dangerously,” his right eye. At first, Mr. Rushdie said, he thought he was being punched. But then he became aware of “a very large quantity of blood pouring out onto my clothes.”

He had actually been stabbed

His Assailant Onstage
Left Author With
Lasting Scars

repeatedly around his head and face.

Mr. Rushdie testified on Tuesday in the trial of Hadi Matar, the man on trial in the knife attack the author believed would kill him, coming face to face with the man accused of attempting to murder him. He gave jurors a vivid account of the stabbing.

The stab to his eye was “intensely painful,” Mr. Rushdie said. “And after that I was screaming because of the pain.”

The knife severed his optic nerve, he said, leaving the eye blind.

“That’s what’s left of it,” he told jurors, lifting the distinctive eyeglasses he has worn in public since the attack. One lens is clear, and the other is black. Behind the black lens, his ruined eye appeared mostly closed.

The attack occurred during a summertime arts conference at the Chautauqua Institution in western New York in 2022, as Mr. Rushdie was preparing to deliver a lecture on asylum for exiled writers.

After he was struck five or six times in his face and head, Mr. Rushdie told the jury, he attempted to flee, but the attack continued. He was stabbed and slashed about 15 times, he said.

At several points in his testimony, Mr. Rushdie pointed to places on his body where he was injured: his cheek, his chest, his Continued on Page A11

Trump’s Envoy
Gets American
Freed by Russia

This article is by Jonathan Swan, Maggie Haberman, Julian E. Barnes and Anton Troianovski.

WASHINGTON — President Trump on Tuesday secured the release of an American imprisoned in Russia as part of a deal with the Kremlin negotiated by Mr. Trump’s special envoy to the Middle East, Steve Witkoff.

Marc Fogel, a teacher who was arrested on charges of bringing medical marijuana into Russia in August 2021, was released by the Kremlin and flown out of the country on Mr. Witkoff’s plane. Though he began serving a 14-year sentence in June 2022, Mr. Fogel was classified as wrongfully detained by the Biden administration only late last year.

Mr. Witkoff, a billionaire New York real estate executive and close friend of Mr. Trump’s, had been secretly negotiating the deal, though his presence in Moscow became apparent when he flew there on his private jet, alerting online flight trackers. It was the first known trip to Moscow by a senior U.S. official since William J. Burns, then the C.I.A. director, flew to the Russian capital in November 2021 to try to head off an invasion of Ukraine.

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ISRAEL THREATENS
TO RENEW COMBAT
IN HOSTAGE CRISIS

ULTIMATUM TO HAMAS

Vowing to End the Truce
Unless the Release of
Captives Resumes

This article is by Lara Jakes, Patrick Kingsley, Ronen Bergman and Thomas Fuller.

JERUSALEM — The future of the cease-fire in Gaza and the territory’s long-term fate hung in the balance on Tuesday as Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel warned Hamas that if the scheduled release of hostages did not take place on Saturday, the truce would end and Israeli troops would resume “intense fighting.”

Mr. Netanyahu’s warning came after Hamas said on Monday that it would indefinitely postpone the next round of hostage releases, which he said amounted to a “decision to violate the agreement.”

His statement echoed President Trump’s demand a day earlier that all remaining hostages must be freed by 12 o’clock on Saturday or “all hell is going to break out.” But the prime minister did not say that all captives still in Gaza had to be freed; under the terms of the cease-fire, only three were supposed to be let go on Saturday.

Mr. Netanyahu also reiterated an order he issued on Monday night to reinforce troops in and around Gaza, but he did not say they were planning to recapture territory from which Israel had recently withdrawn.

“This operation is currently underway,” he said. “It will be completed as soon as possible.”

Analysts said it was possible that Israel and Hamas would reach a compromise before Saturday on this weekend’s scheduled round of hostage releases. Another hurdle looms in March, when the cease-fire is set to expire unless Hamas and Israel negotiate an extension.

“The crisis is a prelude for a Continued on Page A8



ERIC LEE/THE NEW YORK TIMES
MEETING “We will have Gaza,” President Trump told King Abdullah II of Jordan. Page A8.

After a Century, a Crackdown Could Redefine Who Is American

By AMY QIN

In August 1895, a young cook named Wong Kim Ark was about to disembark from the S.S. Coptic, after a long journey home to San Francisco from China, when U.S. customs officials denied him re-entry.

He was not a U.S. citizen, they said. Never mind that Mr. Wong had been born in San Francisco’s Chinatown, not far from the port where he was now being held. The 14th Amendment’s provision for automatic citizenship for all people born on U.S. soil did not apply to him, officials later argued, because he and his parents were not “subject to the jurisdiction” of the U.S. at the time he was born.

Rather than back down, Mr. Wong took his case to the courts — and won.

In Mr. Wong’s case, the Supreme Court affirmed the constitutional guarantee of automatic citizenship for nearly all children born in the United States, a right that has deep roots in common law. Since that 1898 ruling, that expansive understanding of birthright citizenship has been the law of the land.

Now, the Trump administration wants to roll back the Wong Kim Ark ruling — and birthright citizenship more broadly — as it moves to crack down on immigration.

On his first day back in office, President Trump signed an executive order declaring that the gov-



BRANDON THIBODEAUX FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES



NATIONAL ARCHIVES

Wong Kim Ark, left, was born in 1870 in the Chinatown neighborhood of San Francisco, which has attracted Chinese immigrants for over 150 years. His father ran a grocery store there.

ernment would stop treating U.S.-born children of parents who are undocumented or are in the country temporarily as U.S. citizens.

The order prompted a flurry of lawsuits, mostly from Democratic attorneys general and civil rights groups. Last week, the order was indefinitely blocked. One federal judge called it “blatantly unconstitutional.” The Justice Department has already appealed one of the injunctions.

The Trump administration is pushing forward a reinterpretation of the 1898 decision, drawing on ideas from a small group of legal scholars like John Eastman, a lawyer known for drafting a plan to block congressional certification of the 2020 presidential election.

It is not clear that the Supreme Court, even with its conservative majority, would be inclined to take Continued on Page A19

Netflix Wanted a Top Oscar.
It’s Gotten a Headache Instead.

By NICOLE SPERLING

LOS ANGELES — Two weeks ago, Netflix’s chief content officer, Bela Bajaria, strutted across the stage of the Egyptian Theater in Los Angeles and crowed about the company’s 13 Oscar nominations for its Spanish-language musical, “Emilia Pérez.”

“We just received more Oscar nominations than any other studio,” she boasted.

Finally the most coveted prize, the Academy Award for best picture, which had eluded the streaming giant, seemed within its grasp.

How fleeting that moment would prove to be.

Just three days later, Netflix was releasing an apology on behalf of the film’s lead actress,

Karla Sofia Gascón — the first openly trans actor to be nominated for an Academy Award — after a journalist resurfaced a series of derogatory comments Ms. Gascón had posted years ago on Twitter, now known as X. In them, she denigrated an array of people, from Muslims to George Floyd, and even the Oscars.

The streaming giant has one of the largest global awards operations in the business. Under the guidance of Lisa Taback, a leading Oscar strategist who cut her teeth in the rough-and-tumble campaign era of Harvey Weinstein, the company employs around 60 people dedicated to promoting their movies and shows for vari-

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European Troops in Ukraine?

Detering Russia from re-invading its neighbor could require 150,000 soldiers and American help with air cover, intelligence experts say. PAGE A4

Anger Over Steel Tariffs

Canada, Mexico and European nations criticized President Trump’s levies, saying a trade war may occur. PAGE A7

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Competing for Their Countries

National pride, at least for the invited countries, will be on the line in the N.H.L.’s 4 Nations Face-Off. PAGE B7

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Ever More Stories to Tell

Anne Tyler, a fixture of the literary world for more than six decades, has released yet another novel. PAGE C1

A Most Liberating ‘Substance’

As Demi Moore prepares for her first Oscars as a nominee, she discusses the film that revitalized her career. PAGE C1



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Effect of Dropping Charges

It is unclear if a dismissal of the indictment against Mayor Eric Adams would sway New York voters to his side in his re-election bid. PAGE A21

Fallout From Fire at Plant

A battery-storage facility that went up in flames in Northern California is raising concerns about contamination and effects on health. PAGE A10

Gone Too Soon

A look at the lives of some of the 67 victims of the collision between a passenger jet and an Army helicopter over the Potomac on Jan. 29. PAGE A14

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Sharing a Soupy Quest

As Lanzhou beef noodle soup catches on globally, a critic sets out to find the best bowls in New York City. PAGE D5

Get Weird? Milk’s New Vibe.

Dairy aisles are filling up with options and ideologies: organic, humanely raised, ultrafiltered and more. PAGE D6



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Confusion Reigns at C.F.P.B.

Employees at the consumer bureau have been trying to decipher what their stop-work orders mean. PAGE B1

Musk Bids for OpenAI

A group led by Elon Musk has made a \$97.4 billion offer to buy the nonprofit that controls the start-up. PAGE B1

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Michelle Goldberg

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