



CHRISTIAN MONTERROSA FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Since the hurricane raged through, there are but two ways into Bat Cave, N.C.: across Broad River by boat or over a damaged bridge.

Left Stranded
In Mountains
After Helene

By NICHOLAS BOGEL-BURROUGHS
BAT CAVE, N.C. — Morgan Ladlee and her fiancé loaded their backpacks with supplies and began a journey up the mountain that, a week ago, would have taken about five minutes by car. Now, it felt more like an odyssey. Step by grueling step, they teetered along the edge of a cracked highway, entire stretches of which had fallen into the creek below. They leaped from rock to rock to avoid sinking into thick mud that had fallen from the mountainside. They helped each other up and down ledges and over fallen trees and power lines. Finally, after climbing 500 feet in elevation, Ms. Ladlee, 22, reunited with her parents and younger brother for the first time since the remnants of Hurricane Helene inundated western North Carolina and killed more than 90 in the state. They embraced tearfully, as if they had been through a battle and survived.

In some ways, they had. The storm sent torrents of water and mud shooting down from the region's many mountains and into isolated towns. Places like the tiny town of Bat Cave, N.C., where Ms. Ladlee and her fiancé live, and nearby Gerton, where her parents live, had no way to prepare for the historic deluge, and many are now cut off from the outside world. Just to get into Bat Cave on Tuesday, one had to either float across the Broad River in a raft or walk across a wobbly plank that had been placed over broken portions of a bridge. There is no way for cars to get in; food and water have been dropped off by helicopters or carried over the river on foot or by a raft.

Ms. Ladlee's fiancé, Anthony Norwood, 26, grew up nearby and said it has been difficult, since the storm, to find out what is happening in other places. Turning on the radio the other night, he found it surreal to hear a sportscast. Spending all day navigating his devastated town makes it hard to imagine that things are normal elsewhere, he said. “From here, you can’t tell that
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WHO PAYS? As storms intensify, so do the legal clashes with insurers and aid agencies. PAGE A16

Vance Skirts Debate Question,
But His Answer Reveals a Lot

By MATT FLEGENHEIMER
JD Vance wanted to focus on the future, he said. His past, and his party's, intervened. For some 90 minutes, Mr. Vance, a proud Republican ambassador to the online right, had largely tailored his debate-night message to a mass audience, avoiding most detours into conservative fever swamps, as if determined to deliver a rolling rebuttal to Democrats' longstanding suggestion that he was “weird” and out of step. But when the debate turned, near its final frames, to the subject of the 2020 election, Mr. Vance faced a choice: He could validate, once more, Donald J. Trump's relentless lies about his defeat four years ago. Or he could try something else in the spirit of moving forward. It did not seem like a difficult decision for him. “What President Trump has said is that there were problems,” Mr. Vance said when asked about his own past assertion that he would not have certified the 2020 election. “We should fight about those issues, debate those issues, peacefully in the public square. And that’s all I’ve said. And that’s all that Donald Trump has said.” His debate opponent, Tim Walz, stared at him, unblinking, and then looked down at his lectern. “Remember,” Mr. Vance said of Mr. Trump, “he said that on January the 6th, the protesters ought to protest peacefully. And on January the 20th, what happened? Joe Biden became the president. Donald Trump left the White House.” This accounting was short a few details — the violence, the deaths and injuries, the alleged criminal scheming, the “Hang Mike Pence” of it all. Mr. Vance pivoted jarringly to the subject of censorship. Mr. Walz glanced up at the camera, silent, like a television character
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MICHELLE GUSTAFSON FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

When pressed by Tim Walz, JD Vance refused to acknowledge the truth about Donald J. Trump's lies about his defeat in 2020.

Judge Unseals
New Evidence
In Jan. 6 Case

By ALAN FEUER and CHARLIE SAVAGE
When told by an aide that Vice President Mike Pence was in peril as the rioting on Capitol Hill escalated on Jan. 6, 2021, President Donald J. Trump replied, “So what?” When one of his lawyers told him that his false claims that the election had been marred by widespread fraud would not hold up in court, Mr. Trump responded, “The details don’t matter.” On a flight with Mr. Trump and his family after the election, an Oval Office assistant heard Mr. Trump say: “It doesn’t matter if you won or lost the election. You still have to fight like hell.” Those accounts were among new evidence disclosed in a court filing made public on Wednesday in which the special counsel investigating Mr. Trump made his case for why the former president is not immune from prosecution on federal charges of plotting to overturn the 2020 election. Made public by Judge Tanya S. Chutkan of the Federal District Court in Washington, the 165-page brief was partly redacted but expansive, adding details to the already extensive record of how Mr. Trump lost the race but attempted nonetheless to cling to power. The brief from the prosecution team led by the special counsel, Jack Smith, asserts that there is ample evidence that Mr. Trump's efforts to remain in office were those of a desperate losing candidate rather than official acts of a president that would be considered immune from prosecution under a landmark Supreme Court ruling this summer.
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Israeli Troops, Clashing
With Hezbollah, Find
It Can Still Fight Back

NEWS ANALYSIS
Wider War Arrives,
As Biden Warned

By DAVID E. SANGER
The long-feared “wider war” in the Middle East is here. For the last 360 days, since images of the slaughter of about 1,200 people in Israel last Oct. 7 flashed around the world, President Biden has warned at every turn against allowing a terrorist attack by Hamas to spread into a conflict with Iran's other proxy force, Hezbollah, and ultimately with Iran itself. Now, after Israel assassinated the Hezbollah chief, Hassan Nasrallah, and began a ground invasion of Lebanon, and after Iran retaliated on Tuesday by launching nearly 200 missiles at Israel, it has turned into one of the region's most dangerous moments since the Arab-Israeli War of 1967. The main questions now are how much the conflict might intensify, and whether the United States' own forces will get more directly involved. The past few days may prove to have been a turning point. Since Israel killed Mr. Nasrallah on Friday, the Biden administration has been shifting from cautioning against a wider war to trying to manage it. Officials have defended Israel's right to strike back at Iran, but Mr. Biden said on Wednesday that he would not support direct attacks on its nuclear facilities that could tip the conflict out of control, warning that Israel must respond “proportionally.” This is the spiral that Mr. Biden has cautioned against repeatedly, but has not been able to stop, even with 40,000 American forces in the region. “From Israel's perspective, we have been in a regional war since Oct. 7, and that war is now an all-out war,” said Michael Oren, a former Israeli ambassador to the United States, a historian and one of the country's more hawkish diplomats. “We are in a war for our national survival, period.” Winning over the next few weeks, he said, is a “duty” for a nation “created in the aftermath of the Holocaust.”
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Netanyahu Weighing
Payback for Iran’s
Missile Salvo

This article is by Euan Ward, Liam Stack, Farnaz Fassihi, Matthew Mpoke Bigg and Michael Levenson.
BEIRUT, Lebanon — Israeli troops and Hezbollah militants said on Wednesday that they were fighting at close range in southern Lebanon, in what appeared to be the first direct ground confrontation between the two sides since the Israeli invasion began. The clashes came as Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel weighed a military response to Iran's launch on Tuesday of nearly 200 missiles at Israel, an attack that further set the region on edge. Israel's military said on Wednesday that eight of its soldiers had been killed in combat in southern Lebanon. Five were members of the elite Egoz Unit, which the military said had been engaged in “close-range engagements” with Hezbollah militants. The fighting showed that Hezbollah remained capable of carrying out deadly attacks despite a devastating Israeli bombing campaign targeting its military infrastructure and many of its top commanders, including strikes that killed its longtime leader, Hassan Nasrallah. On Wednesday, Israel threatened to respond forcefully to Iran, Hezbollah's patron, after it launched the missile barrage. One man was killed in the Israeli-occupied West Bank. “We are in the middle of a tough war against Iran's axis of evil, which seeks to destroy us,” Mr. Netanyahu said in a short video, referring to Iranian-backed regional militias, including Hezbollah in Lebanon, Hamas in Gaza and the Houthis in Yemen. “This will not happen.” President Biden, signaling a renewed effort by his administration to seek restraint from Israel in the hopes of avoiding an all-out war in the region, said on Wednesday that he would not support an Israeli strike on Iran's nuclear sites. [Page A6.] The idea had been raised by former Prime Minister Naftali Bennett of Israel, and analysts had
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ERIK MARMOR/GETTY IMAGES

The remains of a missile in Arad, Israel, on Wednesday after an attack by almost 200 missiles from Iran the previous night.

As Dockworkers Strike for Higher Wages, Truckers Worry About Their Own Pay

By PETER S. GOODMAN
NEWARK — Every workday, on his early-morning drive to his job overseeing a warehouse in northern New Jersey, Sean Murphy takes in the frenetic scene of the busiest port on the East Coast. Towering cranes lift shipping containers off vessels newly arrived at Newark from points around the globe. Mile-long freight trains pull cargo to and from the docks. Belching trucks clatter down the highway, hauling containers to distribution centers from Maine to Florida. Not on Tuesday. As 45,000 dockworkers began a strike, shutting most of Newark and three dozen other shipping terminals along the Gulf and East Coasts, Mr. Murphy was confronted with the spectacle of a busy industrial hub now largely devoid of activity. Here was a visual encapsulation of the challenge confronting the global economy: cargo marooned, commerce frozen and no clarity on when normalcy will return. “It was eerie, like a ghost town,” Mr. Murphy said. “It was really creepy, if I can be honest with you. It was dead silent. I’ve never seen that in my entire life.” Beyond the atmospheric, the effective shutdown of Newark and other major ports threatens the livelihoods of millions of people who work near the affected docks — and businesses that depend on the flow of exports and imports. Mr. Murphy's employer, Flexport, manages shipping and trucking for major brands in industries like clothing, electronics, furniture and construction materials. Normally, this means receiving containers freshly plucked off ships, sorting the contents across the shiny concrete floor and then sending goods by truck to warehouses and stores. But the strike has halted the influx of containers at the northern New Jersey port complex, so Mr. Murphy found himself wondering how much more freight was on its way. The previous week, his warehouse received three times its
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Despite raised hopes, the ordination of female deacons is not on the agenda of an assembly at the Vatican. PAGE A5

Upbeat U.K. Conservatives
At its annual conference, the party seems largely undisturbed by questions over its electability. PAGE A5

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Prosecutors said more charges against Mayor Eric Adams of New York City were possible and that charges against other people were likely. PAGE A17

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John Amos, 84, was the stern patriarch in America's first sitcom featuring a two-parent Black family. PAGE B12

Student Leader of Red Guards
Song Binbin, known for her role in the killing of an educator during China's Cultural Revolution, was 77. PAGE B11

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The Knicks, with all their top-level talent, will only go as far as their superstar point guard takes them. PAGE B7



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On her new album, the Irish songwriter Orla Gartland makes a complicated relationship sound “squonky.” PAGE C1

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Trendy clubs are defending the party vibe by requiring that stickers be placed over cellphone cameras. PAGE C5

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Tulle, camouflage, denim and all those buckles: Paris Fashion Week seemed to have a little of everything. PAGE D6

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