



A security guard spoke with federal immigration officers who searched for a man near a shopping center in Minneapolis on Friday.

Iran Supreme Leader Vows Further Crackdowns

By LEILY NIKOUNAZAR and AURELIEN BREEDEN

Iran's supreme leader vowed on Friday that the government would “not back down” in the face of protests that have rocked the country in recent weeks, as the country’s leadership threatened to escalate its crackdown on demonstrators.

“There are people whose job is only about destruction,” Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said in a televised speech in Tehran, the capital, as he accused the protesters of being vandals who were trying to

Accuses Demonstrators of Trying to Appease President of U.S.

“please” President Trump. Hours later, Iran’s Supreme National Security Council said that “saboteurs” would be shown “no leniency.” It was one of several official statements on Friday that appeared to signal the government would heighten its repression of the uprisings, despite Mr.

Trump’s pledge to aid protesters if they faced lethal force.

Ali Salehi, Tehran’s public prosecutor, said in comments carried by Iran’s state broadcaster that saboteurs, vandals and those involved in clashes with security forces could face death by hanging. “We will not compromise with armed terrorists,” he said.

Iran was plunged into an internet blackout on Thursday as demonstrations demanding the ouster of the government spread and grew in size. The protests began in late December over a currency

Continued on Page A5



Mario Miralles spent decades acquiring the finest spruce and maple to make string instruments.

Lost to Wildfire: Wood That Made Strings Sing

By MATT STEVENS

LOS ANGELES — Angry orange flames crackled in every direction. Mario Miralles was hiking more than two miles into a canyon northeast of Los Angeles, clearing fallen tree limbs off the road to create a possible escape path.

He desperately needed to reach his cabin in the forest, his place of refuge, where he had crafted world-class violins for decades. When he and his girlfriend, Noël Shimizu, made it to the workshop

A World-Class Luthier Mourns a Prized Lot

at last, he felt himself spinning as he scanned the room and wondered: “What can’t I afford to live without?”

She told him to take his hang-glider harness. He would surely need to decompress, she reasoned, whenever all the chaos ended.

He scooped up his brother’s

Martin guitar. He could not fathom letting it burn.

And he seized a violin he had been making for the better part of 10 years. It was almost finished. He owed it to the conductor Gustavo Dudamel.

A year later, the breadth of the Eaton fire’s destruction in Altadena, Calif., is vast: residents killed, thousands of buildings destroyed, a neighborhood forever changed and a deep wound to Miralles’s livelihood.

Miralles, 62, is a renowned

Continued on Page A20



PHOTOGRAPHS BY MICHAEL SCHMELLING FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

More From the White House

JOBS REPORT The unemployment rate fell in December, but job growth across 2025 was the lowest in five years. PAGE B1

RENOVATIONS The president now wants to build a second level on top of the West Wing colonnade at the White House. PAGE A16

BLOCKED A federal judge halted the Trump administration’s freeze of social services funding for five Democratic-led states. PAGE A15

INTERVIEW Listen to an extended session between New York Times reporters and President Trump. nytimes.com/thedaily

U.S. WEED FARMS HAVE CHINA TIES

A Lucrative Sideline for Sons of Beijing

This article is by Jay Root, Bianca Pallaro and Michael Forsythe.

OKLAHOMA CITY — The police found him in his bedroom in Edmond, Okla., facedown, dead from a gunshot wound and still gripping the bloody kitchen knife he had used to try to defend himself.

His name was Wyan Wang, his job was in cannabis and he was a victim, investigators would say, of a robbery, one of many targeting the cash-heavy marijuana industry in Oklahoma in recent years.

But his web of connections extended far from the prairies of suburban Oklahoma City — to the boardrooms of Manhattan, where he was a protégé of a real estate mogul named John Lam.

Mr. Lam had developed at least 50 projects in New York and had recently teamed up with the British billionaire Richard Branson to open a trendy hotel in Midtown Manhattan. He was a prominent fund-raiser for Mayor Eric Adams.

And he had served as a top leader of a New York City Chinese heritage organization, known among the diaspora as a hometown association. It was one of a number of such groups that have maintained close ties to Beijing — and have become useful tools of China’s government to undermine politicians who oppose its authority.

Continued on Page A18

Local Officials Demand Role In ICE Inquiry

Minnesota Is Wary of Federal Conclusions

By MITCH SMITH

With the Minneapolis area in a state of upheaval, Minnesota officials renewed their calls on Friday for state agents to be allowed to help investigate the fatal shooting of a woman by an Immigration and Customs Enforcement officer earlier this week.

Two days after the federal officer shot and killed Renee Nicole Good on a residential street, immigration agents remained in Minneapolis, public schools were closed and the Minnesota National Guard was activated in what Gov. Tim Walz’s office described as a precautionary move.

State and local officials have pressed for the Minnesota Bureau of Criminal Apprehension to be allowed to investigate the shooting of Ms. Good alongside the F.B.I., as was initially announced in the hours after the shooting on Wednesday. But after the Trump administration and Minnesota’s Democratic leaders sparred over the circumstances of the killing, state officials said on Thursday that state investigators had been denied access to evidence and were withdrawing from the case.

“Our ask is to embrace the truth,” Mayor Jacob Frey said on Friday, adding that he was worried that the federal government had already concluded that the shooting was justified. “Our ask is to include the Bureau of Criminal Apprehension in this process, because we in Minneapolis want a fair investigation.”

Kristi Noem, the homeland security secretary, said on Thursday that state investigators were not cut out and that “they don’t have any jurisdiction in this investigation.” State prosecutors would face significant legal and practical obstacles if they sought to file criminal charges against the ICE officer who opened fire.

The tension in Minneapolis comes months into a campaign by the Trump administration to increase immigration enforcement in Democratic-led states and cities. In Portland, Ore., another place singled out for criticism, Border Patrol agents shot two people during what they called a “targeted vehicle stop.”

In Minnesota on Friday, a few dozen protesters faced off with federal agents outside a government building. Agents shot pepper balls at demonstrators who approached a fence, and at least one person was taken into custody by law enforcement personnel. The Department of Homeland Security also announced plans on Friday to re-examine thousands of refugee cases in Minnesota, framing that effort as a way to root out fraud.

The shooting of Ms. Good, a U.S. citizen, came after weeks of mounting disagreements and heated rhetoric between the

Continued on Page A14

TRUMP IS URGING U.S. OIL INDUSTRY TO TAP VENEZUELA

ADDRESSES EXECUTIVES

Risks Worry Companies — Military Seizes Another Tanker

This article is by Rebecca F. Elliott, Emiliano Rodríguez Mega, Eric Schmitt and Michael Levenson.

President Trump prodded American energy executives on Friday to quickly tap Venezuela’s vast oil reserves, hours after the United States military intercepted another tanker carrying Venezuelan oil.

The tanker, which American forces boarded in the Caribbean Sea early Friday, was the fifth that they have boarded or seized in the past month, as the Trump administration seeks to control Venezuela’s oil exports.

Mr. Trump said Friday afternoon in a meeting with oil executives at the White House that he did not expect more U.S. attacks on Venezuela after American commandos captured its president, Nicolás Maduro, in a raid on the capital, Caracas, last weekend. Mr. Trump praised the country’s interim leaders but said that American warships — which he called an armada — would stay in place off the Venezuelan coast.

Trump administration officials have outlined a sweeping but bare-bones plan to take over Venezuela’s lucrative oil industry and have said they expect the country’s new leaders to follow orders from Washington. Mr. Trump has said that U.S. oversight of the country could last years.

In the meeting with American oil executives, Mr. Trump said their companies would “rapidly rebuild Venezuela’s dilapidated oil industry and bring millions of barrels of oil production to benefit the United States, the people of Venezuela and the entire world.” He said that U.S. oil companies would invest at least \$100 billion in Venezuela.

But it is not clear that oil executives are prepared to commit to that investment.

Darren Woods, the chief executive of Exxon Mobil, the largest U.S. oil company, emphasized the opportunities that Venezuela presents — and the big hurdles it would need to clear for Exxon Mobil to return to the country.

“We’ve had our assets seized there twice, and so you can imagine to re-enter a third time would require some pretty significant changes,” Mr. Woods said at the White House meeting. “Today it’s uninvestable.”

He said that Exxon Mobil was prepared to send an exploratory team to Venezuela within the next few weeks if it received security guarantees.

Other executives were similarly cautious.

Continued on Page A9



DANIEL BEREHULAK/THE NEW YORK TIMES

An Election in Myanmar’s Capital

Almost five years after a coup, the country’s military is struggling to project an image of control over a crumbling nation. Page A4.



ARTS C1-6

In Scripts, a Favored Swear

How directors and writers striving for a PG-13 rating have learned to ration the use of a four-letter obscenity. PAGE C4

A ‘Star Wars’ Mission

Shawn Levy is aiming to bring his director-producer skills, and his inner child, to a Lucasfilms project. PAGE C1

INTERNATIONAL A4-11

Concealing Assad’s Crimes

Thousands of documents and interviews with officials show how the regime covered up evidence of its atrocities during the Syrian civil war. PAGE A6

Court Case Over Swiss Fire

A prosecutor has asked for one of the owners of the bar where 40 people died on New Year’s to be detained. PAGE A7

TRAVEL C7-8

No Spirits, but Still Spirited

Evening pickleball, glacial ice plunges and mocktails are ways hotels woo travelers for Dry January. PAGE C7

NATIONAL A12-21, 24

Kirk Group’s Push in Schools

Chapters of Turning Point USA’s affiliate for teenagers have more than doubled since Charlie Kirk’s death. Not everyone is supportive. PAGE A12

Astronaut Has Medical Issue

After canceling a spacewalk planned for Thursday, NASA said it was bringing a crew of four home from the international space station weeks early. PAGE A24

Doubts Over Tests for Autism

Companies are selling tests they claim can predict a child’s risk using a strand of hair or a mother’s blood, but critics say they aren’t ready to market. PAGE A24

BUSINESS B1-5

The Prompt and the Furor

Grok’s racy images of real people stirred an outcry. Elon Musk then limited the A.I. feature to subscribers. PAGE B1

A Trade ‘Bait and Switch’?

A Chinese “free trade port” island signals an opening up, Beijing says. But some aren’t buying it. PAGE B1



SPORTS B6-9

Turning Up the Pressure

Bryce Young, the Panthers’ quarterback, faces a big test as he makes his N.F.L. playoff debut. PAGE B6

Skating for Their Legacy

Maxim Naumov is fighting for an Olympic spot a year after his parents died in a plane crash. PAGE B9

OPINION A22-23

David Wallace-Wells

PAGE A22

