



GUERCHOM NDEBO FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

M23 fighters were a strong presence Feb. 6 at the first public meeting in Goma since the militia captured the Congolese city Jan. 31.

Online Scammers Launder Money With Ruthless Efficiency

By SELAM GEBREKIDAN and JOY DONG
PHNOM PENH, Cambodia — Every few weeks, fireworks light up the night sky in Cambodia, set off by scammers to salute their biggest swindles. By the time the shells pop and crackle, somebody’s life savings are probably gone. Maybe the victim fell for an online romance scam or bought into a fake cryptocurrency exchange. Whatever the scheme, the money has vanished, sucked into a complex money-laundering network that

moves billions of dollars at a dizzying speed. The F.B.I., China’s Ministry of Public Security, Interpol and others have tried to combat scammers, who often lurk on social media and dating apps, luring people into bogus financial schemes or other ruses. Telecom companies have blocked numbers. Banks have issued repeated warnings. Yet the industry persists because its money-laundering operation is so efficient. Unsuspecting victims worldwide lose tens of billions of dollars each year, money that must be scrubbed of its criminal

How Life Savings Can Vanish Instantly

origins and deposited into the legitimate economy. The money-laundering system is so hydra-headed that when governments strike it in one place, it pops up in another. This underworld peeks out in the Cambodian capital, Phnom Penh, home to a global clearinghouse for money launderers. It can be glimpsed, too, in the coastal

city of Sihanoukville, a notorious refuge for fraudsters. Scammers ply their trade from call centers, operating in fortified compounds or on the upper floors of unfinished high-rises. Seaside restaurants are packed with money launderers and other criminals doing business over spicy Chinese food. We obtained a cache of documents, a kind of money-laundering handbook, and spoke to nearly a half-dozen scammers and their launderers. The documents are not linked to any one scam or victim. *Continued on Page 14*

Kennedy Files Are Gold Mine, In Other Fields

By JENNIFER SCHUESSLER and JULIAN E. BARNES
In June 1973, a C.I.A. employee wrote a memo at the request of William E. Colby, the agency’s director, listing various ways the C.I.A. had, to put it delicately, “exceeded” its charter over the years. The seven pages matter-of-factly described break-ins at the French Consulate in Washington, planned paramilitary attacks on Chinese nuclear facilities and injections of a “contaminating agent” in Cuban sugar bound for the Soviet Union. The memo ended with an offhand aside about John A. McCone, the agency’s former director.

“Finally, and this will reflect my Middle Western Protestant upbringing, McCone’s dealings with the Vatican, including Pope John XXIII and Pope Paul VI, would and could raise eyebrows in certain quarters,” the author wrote. It was just one paragraph in the roughly 77,000 pages the National Archives posted online last week as part of the latest — and supposedly final — release of its vast collection of documents related to the assassination of President John F. Kennedy. But for some of the scholars who immediately started combing through the documents, the brief passage, seen unredacted for the first time, raised eyebrows for sure. “This opens a door on a whole history of collaboration between the Vatican and the C.I.A., which, boy, would be explosive if we could” *Continued on Page 19*



JESSICA PONS FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

The site of Tesla’s drive-in: an all-night restaurant, theater and charging station in Los Angeles.

A Diner for the Future, Caught in Musk’s Present

By PETE WELLS
A retro-futuristic diner is rising on Santa Monica Boulevard in Los Angeles. Curved, silvery and flanked by two outdoor film screens, it looks as if a flying saucer had sailed out of a 1950s drive-in movie and come to rest in the parking lot. An opening date has not been announced, but Tesla’s all-night diner, theater and charging station is clearly on its way. Which means that the company’s leader, Elon Musk, is about to enter the hospitality business. In 2023, when Mr. Musk posted on X that Tesla would build a diner

Tesla’s Culinary Venture Shadowed by Politics

in the city, he described it as “Grease meets Jetsons with Supercharging.” As he has often done, he put his finger on a major piece of culture ripe for reinvention — in this case, gas-station dining in the age of electric cars, which need longer to recharge than it takes to top off a tank — and put a visionary, gee-whiz spin on it. That was before the chain saw. Before DOGE and the “fork in the

road” email and the what-did-you-do-last-week email. Before anti-Musk protests at Tesla dealerships became weekly occurrences in Los Angeles and other cities. Before the White House promised to treat vandalism against Teslas as domestic terrorism. Before a 50 percent drop in Tesla’s stock price took shareholders on a fast ride from “gee-whiz” to “look out below.” All of which have made Tesla’s foray into restaurants a far more loaded prospect than it seemed a short time ago. Construction on the half-acre complex, designed by the engineer, *Continued on Page 22*

Congo Rebels Solidify Hold On Rich Area

Rwanda-Backed M23 Taps Mineral Wealth

By ELIAN PELTIER
GOMA, Democratic Republic of Congo — Rare-earth minerals critical for smartphone manufacturing. Lucrative trafficking routes and dizzying stockpiles of weapons. The lives of millions of people. All are now under the control of the M23 militia and its powerful backer, Rwanda. M23 reigns over a vast territory in the eastern region of the Democratic Republic of Congo, home to bountiful mines and other natural resources. In the major city of Goma, on the border with Rwanda, M23’s soldiers now patrol the streets and M23-appointed officials rule the city. Congo’s large but inept army has not slowed the group’s advance, nor has condemnation by the United Nations Security Council.

After months of fighting, the leaders of Congo and Rwanda held talks in Qatar last week and called for an immediate cease-fire. M23 declined to comment. On Wednesday, despite the calls for a cease-fire by its patron, Rwanda, the group entered Walikale, a strategic town at the intersection of four provinces in Congo, in the heart of a territory that is home to many gold mines. Last month, The New York Times traveled to Goma days after its capture by M23. M23, once a ragtag militia, now behaves like a governing entity in buzzing cities, coltan and gold mines, and strategic border crossings. Its immigration officers stamp passports, and in a city still scarred by deadly fighting, its leaders have urged young people to join its army so they can “liberate Congo.”

The group has vowed to march on Kinshasa, Congo’s capital. That makes M23 and Rwanda a threat to the sovereignty of Congo, the biggest country in sub-Saharan Africa by territory, with more than 100 million people, where millions of people have died in the last three decades in endless wars. M23 is named after the date March 23, 2009, when, it claims, the Congolese government failed to honor an earlier peace agreement. *Continued on Page 16*

HOW A LAW FIRM DECIDED TO FOLD INSTEAD OF FIGHT

TARGET OF RETALIATION

Trump Adversary Sees a Business Threat and Bends to His Will

This article is by Michael S. Schmidt, Matthew Goldstein, Jessica Silver-Greenberg and Ben Protess.

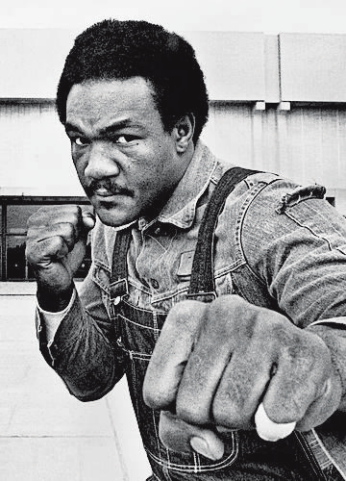
Since President Trump’s first term, Brad S. Karp, the chairman of the law firm Paul, Weiss, Rifkind, Wharton & Garrison, championed himself as a bulwark against what he saw as an unlawful and unpredictable presidency. Mr. Karp, who has a long history of fund-raising for Democrats, sought to unite major law firms in “a call to arms” to fight Mr. Trump in court on issues like his administration’s policy of separating migrant children from their parents. He publicly said lawyers were obligated to defend the rule of law.

He hosted a “Lawyers for Biden” fund-raiser in 2023, and one of his top partners prepared Vice President Kamala Harris for her debates with Mr. Trump. So it was not surprising that Mr. Trump targeted Paul Weiss with an executive order this month that created a potential existential threat for the firm, although the order was legally dubious and undercut fundamental principles of the justice system. In response, Mr. Karp began discussions with another big firm about presenting a unified and bipartisan front and challenging the order in court. But on Wednesday, Mr. Karp walked into the Oval Office around 8:30 a.m., leaving behind the adversarial approach. Now, he wanted to make a deal. A day later, Mr. Trump announced that Mr. Karp had agreed to pledge \$40 million in pro bono legal services to issues the president has championed, including a task force being run by the Justice Department aimed at combating antisemitism “and other mutually agreed projects.” The White House said the firm had committed to stop using diversity, equity and inclusion poli- *Continued on Page 24*

GEORGE FOREMAN, 1949-2025

A Boxing Champ Transformed Into a Heavyweight Pitchman

By VICTOR MATHER
George Foreman, a heavyweight boxing champion who returned to the sport to regain his title at the improbable age of 45, and who parlayed his fame and his amiable personality into a multimillion-dollar grill business, died on Friday night in Houston. He was 76. His family announced the death, in a hospital, on his Instagram account. Roy Foreman, George’s brother, said the cause was not known. When Foreman returned to the ring after 10 years away, there was skepticism that a fighter of his years could beat anyone younger, much less come back to the top of the game. But in 1994, he shocked the world by beating the undefeated Michael Moorer to reclaim the world title. Foreman’s career spanned generations: He fought Chuck Wepner in the 1960s, Dwight Muhammad Qawi in the ’80s and Evander Holyfield in the ’90s. With his fellow heavyweights Joe Frazier and Muhammad Ali, Foreman embodied a golden era in the 1970s, when boxing was still a cultural force in America. The three great champions thrilled



BETTMAN, VIA GETTY IMAGES

George Foreman in 1976, before his entrepreneur days.

fans with one classic bout after another. Foreman was the last living member of the trio. His popularity also helped him make millions selling grills after his retirement. George Edward Foreman was born on Jan. 10, 1949, in Marshall, Texas. His father, J.D. Foreman, was a railroad construction worker. His mother was Nancy *Continued on Page 28*

INTERNATIONAL 4-16

Heathrow Reopens, Chaotically
Hundreds more employees were on duty, and flights were added, to accommodate thousands of extra passengers, the London airport said. *PAGE 8*

METROPOLITAN

A Massacre Narrowly Averted
Two men were thrown together by institutions that left them more troubled than when they went in, and brought them to the brink of violence. *PAGE 1*

SUNDAY OPINION

Ben Rhodes *PAGE 6*



SPECIAL SECTION

When Hope Springs Eternal
Does Juan Soto put the Mets over the hump? Did the Dodgers get, gulp, even better? It’s almost baseball season.

OBITUARIES 28-30

Mental Health Advocate
Kitty Dukakis became a proponent of electroshock therapy after it helped with her depression. She was 88. *PAGE 29*

SUNDAY STYLES

What Women Want?
Evie, a women’s publication that its editor says is opposed to “modern” feminism, assumes that its readers aspire to be wives and mothers. *PAGE 10*

The Office Is Their Runway
Influencers put their work styles on display by making on-the-job videos to share daily with their fans. *PAGE 1*



SPECIAL SECTION

Pasta’s Time to Shine
As the days get longer but a chill lingers in the air, mealtime calls out for something bright that can still comfort.

SUNDAY BUSINESS

A Classic, Now a Controversy
Over the decades, Disney had tried to modernize “Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs.” Now that it has released a live-action remake, is the film doomed by culture war skirmishes? *PAGE 4*

‘Will I Lose My Job?’
As federal workers flock to Reddit to find answers, vent or seek solace, the online forum’s unpaid moderators are working overtime to keep up. *PAGE 1*

