



SAMAR ABU ELLOUF FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

SCARED, AND SCARRED FOR LIFE, IN GAZA

A photojournalist followed some Palestinians whose worlds were ripped apart in one of the deadliest wars of the 21st century. One of them, Mohamed Abu Rteinah, 12, was burned when a bomb hit his home in late October. Pages A6-7.

In Carlson Talk  
Putin Says U.S.  
Could End War

By ANTON TROIANOVSKI

President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia has worked for decades to win allies in the West, using his spy agencies to interfere in elections and deploying diplomats to build links with Kremlin-friendly politicians.

On Thursday, the world witnessed a new, verbose chapter in those efforts: Mr. Putin’s two-hour interview, taped in a gilded hall at the Kremlin, with one of America’s most prominent and most divisive conservative commentators.

Speaking to Tucker Carlson, the former Fox News host, Mr. Putin called on the United States to “make an agreement” to cede Ukrainian territory to Russia in order to end the war. He sought to appeal directly to American conservatives just as Republican lawmakers are holding up aid to Ukraine on Capitol Hill, echoing the talking points of politicians like former President Donald J. Trump who say that the United States has more pressing priorities than a war thousands of miles away.

“Don’t you have anything better to do?” Mr. Putin said in response to Mr. Carlson’s question about the possibility of American soldiers fighting in Ukraine. “You have issues on the border, issues with migration, issues with the national debt.”

He went on: “Wouldn’t it be better to negotiate with Russia?”

Much of the interview constituted a familiar Kremlin history lesson about Russia’s historical claim to Eastern European lands, beginning in the ninth century, that Mr. Putin made little effort to distill for American ears. He opined on artificial intelligence, Genghis Khan and the Roman Empire. He also laid out his well-worn and spurious justifications for invading Ukraine, asserting that Russia’s goal was to “stop this war” that he claims the West is waging against Russia.

But Mr. Putin was more direct than usual about how he sees his Ukraine invasion ending: not with a military victory, but through an

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**MILITARY OVERHAUL** Ukraine’s top general has been removed in a major shake-up. PAGE A9

In Biden’s Exoneration, Political Hazard Emerges

By MICHAEL D. SHEAR

WASHINGTON — The decision on Thursday not to file criminal charges against President Biden for mishandling classified documents should have been an unequivocal legal exoneration.

Instead, it was a political disaster.

The investigation into Mr. Biden’s handling of the documents after being vice president concluded that he was a “well-meaning, elderly man with a poor memory” and had “diminished faculties in advancing age” — such startling assertions that

Prosecutor’s Report on  
Records Case Cites  
Memory Lapses

they prompted a fiery and emotional attempt at political damage control from the president within hours.

Speaking to the cameras from the Diplomatic Reception Room at the White House, Mr. Biden on Thursday evening blasted the report by Robert K. Hur, the special counsel, accusing the report’s authors of “extraneous commentary” about his age and

mental capacity.

“They don’t know what they’re talking about,” the president said flatly.

Mr. Biden appeared to take special exception to the report’s assertion that during interviews with F.B.I. investigators, he could not recall what year his son Beau died.

“How the hell dare he raise that,” the president said, appearing to choke back tears. “Every Memorial Day we hold a service remembering him attended by friends and family and the people who loved him. I don’t need anyone, I don’t need anyone to remind me when he passed

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MADELEINE HORDINSKI FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

A school photo of Randy Sellers, shortly before he vanished.

Her Son Disappeared in 1980.  
She Won’t Stop Seeking Truth.

By SHAILA DEWAN

VISALIA, Ky. — At first, Wanda Cotton searched the water.

She crossed the railroad tracks and scrambled down the banks of the Licking River, calling out the name of her teenage son, Randy, who went to the county fair one night and never came home.

Mrs. Cotton, two inches shy of five feet tall and unable to swim, would return covered in mud and scratches. It got so when the neighbors saw her coming, they

went inside.

Randy Sellers was missing for weeks, then years, then decades. For Mrs. Cotton, the steep slopes of the river running past her home in Kenton County, Ky., were replaced by even more treacherous terrain: unresolved grief, and unanswered questions about two police officers who were with Randy that night.

He vanished in 1980, the year

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Forget Football:  
TV’s Ad Champ  
Is Kansas City

By SANTUL NERKAR

The Kansas City Chiefs enter Sunday’s Super Bowl having already won — when it comes to commercials.

Over the last year, the star players Patrick Mahomes and Travis Kelce, along with Coach Andy Reid, have been inescapable to TV viewers. Flipping channels, you might find Mr. Kelce baring his arm for a Pfizer Covid-19 shot, Mr. Mahomes hollering in support of a State Farm promotion or Mr. Reid coveting some chicken “nuggies.”

During this National Football League season, companies featured Mr. Mahomes in 19 ad spots, Mr. Kelce in 10 and Mr. Reid in four. The estimated amount spent to air the ads on television was \$178 million for Mr. Mahomes, \$120 million for Mr. Kelce and \$69 million for Mr. Reid, according to iSpot.tv, an ad measurement company. Those are the highest numbers for any sports figures. Because there were several commercials in which at least two of the three appeared, the dollar totals have some overlap.

“Brands invested to make the Chiefs-themed ads hard to miss,” said Cassandra Arora, the chief marketing officer of iSpot, which estimates the spend of an ad based on the market rate for how much companies have to pay to

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Supreme Court Appears  
Set to Rule That States  
Can’t Disqualify Trump

Justices Focus on Constitution, Not Jan. 6

By ADAM LIPTAK

WASHINGTON — The Supreme Court seemed poised on Thursday to issue a lopsided decision rejecting a challenge to former President Donald J. Trump’s eligibility to hold office again.

Justices across the ideological spectrum expressed skepticism about several aspects of a ruling from the Colorado Supreme Court that Mr. Trump’s conduct in trying to subvert the 2020 race made him ineligible to hold office under a constitutional provision that bars people who have sworn to support the Constitution and then engaged in insurrection.

Not since Bush v. Gore, the 2000 decision that handed the presidency to George W. Bush, has the Supreme Court assumed such a direct role in a presidential contest. This time, though, it seemed the justices were not prepared to determine the outcome of the election.

The ruling is likely to resolve not only whether Mr. Trump may appear on the Colorado primary ballot but also whether he is eligible to run in the general election. Indeed, the decision in the Colorado case will almost certainly apply to any other state where Mr. Trump’s eligibility to run has been challenged, including Maine, where the state’s top elections official ruled he should be excluded from the ballot.

There was very little discussion of the Jan. 6 assault on the Capitol or of Mr. Trump’s role in it. But a majority of the justices indicated

that they were prepared to rule that individual states may not disqualify candidates in a national election unless Congress first enacts legislation allowing them to do so.

Some justices also seemed open to two other arguments: that the post-Civil War prohibition at issue, Section 3 of the 14th Amendment, bars candidates from holding office, as opposed to running for it, and that the president is not among the officials to whom the provision applies.

Chief Justice John G. Roberts Jr. asked a series of questions reflecting what seemed to be an emerging consensus: that the 14th Amendment was not meant to permit individual states to determine whether a candidate was ineligible.

“The whole point of the 14th Amendment was to restrict state power, right?” he asked, adding that the challengers’ contrary argument was “a position that is at war with the whole thrust of the 14th Amendment.”

Chief Justice Roberts noted that the challengers’ position would have empowered the former Confederate states to determine whether candidates were disqualified from holding federal office. The 14th Amendment was adopted to constrain states’ rights and empower the federal government, the chief justice said, and it would be “the last place that you’d

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KENNY HOLSTON/THE NEW YORK TIMES

Arguments on Thursday addressed a ruling by Colorado justices.

Bolsonaro and His Allies Plotted  
Coup to Defy Election, Police Say

By JACK NICAS

RIO DE JANEIRO — Former President Jair Bolsonaro of Brazil oversaw a broad conspiracy to hold on to power regardless of the results of the 2022 election, including personally editing a proposed order to arrest a Supreme Court justice, according to accusations unveiled on Thursday by the Brazilian federal police.

Mr. Bolsonaro and dozens of top aides, ministers and military leaders worked together to undermine the Brazilian public’s faith in the election and set the stage for a potential coup, the federal police said.

Their efforts included spreading disinformation about voter fraud, drafting legal arguments for new elections, recruiting military personnel to support a coup, surveilling judges and encouraging and guiding protesters who eventually raided government buildings, the police said.

The explosive allegations were contained in a 134-page court or-

der that authorized a sweeping federal police operation on Thursday that targeted Mr. Bolsonaro and about two dozen of his political allies, including Brazil’s former defense minister, former national security adviser, former justice minister and former head of the Navy.

The operation involved search warrants and arrest warrants for four people, including two Army officers and two of Mr. Bolsonaro’s former top aides.

Mr. Bolsonaro was ordered to hand over his passport, to remain in the country, and to have no contact with any other people under investigation.

Mr. Bolsonaro said on Thursday that he was the innocent victim of a politically motivated operation.

“I left the government more than a year ago and I continue to suffer relentless persecution,” the former president told Folha de

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INTERNATIONAL A4-11

Constantine Towers Over Rome

A replica statue of the fourth-century emperor shows how modern technology can help recreate the past. PAGE A4

Pakistan Vote Results Trickle In

The influence of the country’s powerful military was on display in an election seen as neither free nor fair. PAGE A11

NATIONAL A12-20, 24

100, Plus a Sweet 16

The nation’s oldest person has outlived her loved ones. So when she has a birthday, an entire California community makes sure to celebrate. PAGE A12

Risking Nevada’s Latino Vote

G.O.P. candidates bypassed the state because of a complicated, noncompetitive primary process. They may have deterred a crucial voting bloc. PAGE A13

New York’s Housing Crunch

Fewer than 1.5 percent of the city’s apartments were available to rent in 2023, according to new data, the lowest number in over 50 years. PAGE A18

BUSINESS B1-8

Zip Has Gone Out of the F-150

Some buyers say the electric Lightning pickup did not meet expectations, and Ford has slashed its production plans because sales are lagging. PAGE B1

China Threat, Funded by U.S.

American investors powered China’s semiconductor industry, which the U.S. sees as a security risk. PAGE B1

OBITUARIES A21

Rabble-Rousing Radio Host

Mojo Nixon was a singer and songwriter known for satirical hits like “Elvis Is Everywhere.” He was 66.



SPORTS B9-12

Glory, and Slice of Eiffel Tower

Medalists at the Paris Olympics will be taking home a tiny piece of the French capital’s iconic landmark. PAGE B12

Purdy as a Latter-Day Brees

The 49ers’ quarterback Brock Purdy resembles Drew Brees physically, and in other ways, too. PAGE B9

WEEKEND ARTS C1-12

Making Room for ‘Giants’

The Brooklyn Museum is exhibiting artworks collected by the musicians Swizz Beatz and Alicia Keys. PAGE C10

Against the Grain in Tokyo

In “Perfect Days,” an Oscar-nominated Japanese film about a man who cleans toilets, trees take on a big role. PAGE C1

OPINION A22-23

David Brooks

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