



Mullah Osman Jawhari in Nuristan Province, Afghanistan. The Taliban commander led one of the deadliest attacks on U.S. forces since Vietnam in the remote valley. BRYAN DENTON FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Trump’s Pick as Mideast Adviser Isn’t Tycoon He’s Reputed to Be

This article is by **Ruth Maclean, Justin Scheck, Charles Homans and Oladeinde Olawoyin.**

President-elect Donald J. Trump’s incoming Middle East adviser, Massad Boulos, has enjoyed a reputation as a billionaire mogul at the helm of a business that bears his family name.

Mr. Boulos has been profiled as a tycoon by the world’s media, telling a reporter in October that his company is worth billions. Mr. Trump called him a “highly respected leader in the business world, with extensive experience



NICK HAGEN FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES
Massad Boulos is also the father-in-law of Tiffany Trump.

on the international scene.” The president-elect even lavished what may be his highest praise: a “dealmaker.”

In fact, records show that Mr. Boulos has spent the past two decades selling trucks and heavy machinery in Nigeria for a company his father-in-law controls. The company, SCOA Nigeria PLC, made a profit of less than \$66,000 last year, corporate filings show.

There is no indication in corporate documents that Mr. Boulos, a Lebanese-American whose son is married to Mr. Trump’s daughter Tiffany, is a man of significant wealth as a result of his businesses. The truck dealership is valued at about \$865,000 at its current share price. Mr. Boulos’s stake, according to securities filings, is worth \$1.53.

As for Boulos Enterprises, the company that has been called his family business in The Financial Times and elsewhere, a company officer there said it is owned by an unrelated Boulos family.

Mr. Boulos will advise on one of the world’s most complicated and conflict-racked regions — a region that Mr. Boulos said this week that he has not visited in years. The advisory position does *Continued on Page A9*

Suspect Became Disillusioned With Society, Then Vanished

This article is by **Mike Baker, Nicholas Bogel-Burroughs, Shawn Hubler and Jacey Fortin.**

ALTOONA, Pa. — After a drizzly hike through one of Japan’s lush mountain ranges earlier this year, Luigi Mangione, a computer engineer in his mid-20s who had set off on a long solo trip to Asia, paused to record a voice message to a friend he had met while traveling abroad.

Making his way that day along a river gorge in the Nara region, Mr. Mangione had fled his day-to-day life in Hawaii to soak in hot springs, meditate, catch up on books and do some writing of his

own. “I want some time to Zen out,” Mr. Mangione said in the recorded message on April 27, his voice quiet and contemplative.

It would be one of his last communications before he abruptly cut ties with a wide range of friends and family, who eventually set out on a desperate hunt to track him down. Seven months later, Mr. Mangione emerged from his isolation as the suspect in the brazen assassination of Brian Thompson, the chief executive of UnitedHealthcare, on a sidewalk in Manhattan.

Police investigators have been *Continued on Page A22*

In Afghan Valley, U.S. Turned Allies Into Foes

By **AZAM AHMED**

WAYGAL, Afghanistan — The Taliban war hero scans the crowd, searching. From the back, he snatches a man with a flop of dusty hair and a face marred by shrapnel.

The man’s head is bowed, and he is missing an arm and an eye. Something has happened to him, something awful.

“This,” the Taliban commander says, shaking the man a bit too hard, “was the last ally of the Americans here.”

In this remote province, the commander carried out one of the deadliest attacks on U.S. forces in Afghanistan, a pitched battle that sounded an early warning of a conflict terribly off course and altered the history of the war.

Now, years after the Americans abandoned this valley, and Afghanistan altogether, the commander jerks the man from the crowd to explain how the United States lost both.

Taliban Capitalized on American Strikes on Its Benefactors

Clutching the empty arm of his jacket, the commander spins him around like a marionette. The man’s sheared limb and ragged scars tell only half the story: His family was killed next to him, massacred as they fled the Taliban.

“This man was my sworn enemy,” said the Taliban commander, Mullah Osman Jawhari. “But do you know who did this to him?” the commander asks, a garish smile spreading over his face. “It was his friends, the Americans.” *Continued on Page A12*

In a Ravaged City, Refugees Return to Jubilation and Uncertainty

By **RAJA ABDULRAHIM**

ALEPPO, Syria — The many monuments of the Assad regime that once dotted the Syrian city of Aleppo have been toppled, torn or burned.

The large statue on which President Bashar al-Assad’s late brother was featured riding a horse has been mostly destroyed. All that remains is the rearing animal, with boys and young men clamoring to get on top of it as they flash victory signs.

Across Aleppo on Wednesday there was celebration as exiled residents returned home more than a week after Syrian rebels captured the city in a lightning-fast offensive that ended with Mr. al-Assad’s ouster.

They came back to their city from across the border with Turkey or from elsewhere — somewhere safer — if not permanently, then at least to assess what remained and where they might live. They set out to visit old neighborhoods and homes, some of which no longer existed.

Amar Sabir, 23, fled the city *Continued on Page A8*



IVOR PRICKETT FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES
Syrians on a statue in Aleppo this week that originally depicted an Assad brother riding the horse.

IN SWEEPING ACT, BIDEN COMMUTES 1,500 SENTENCES

A RECORD FOR ONE DAY

Most Had Been Placed in Home Confinement During Pandemic

By **ZOLAN KANNO-YOUNGS**

WASHINGTON — President Biden said on Thursday that he is commuting the sentences of nearly 1,500 people and pardoning 39 people convicted of nonviolent crimes in a sweeping act of clemency during his final weeks in office.

The commutations — the largest number by a president in a single day, the White House said — affect those who had been released from prison and placed in home confinement during the coronavirus pandemic. The pardons went to people convicted of nonviolent crimes, including drug offenses.

“America was built on the promise of possibility and second chances,” Mr. Biden said in a statement. He said the clemency represented his commitment to “help reunite families, strengthen communities and reintegrate individuals back into society.”

A pardon wipes out a conviction, while a commutation leaves the guilty verdict intact but reduces some or all of the punishment.

Mr. Biden’s action was one of the biggest grants of clemency in modern American history. President Jimmy Carter, on his first full day in office in 1977, issued a pardon that affected more people, for men who evaded the Vietnam War draft. But that was what is known as a categorical pardon; Mr. Biden’s commutations are for individual cases.

The announcement came two weeks after Mr. Biden issued a pardon for his son Hunter, who had been convicted of gun possession and pleaded guilty to income tax evasion. That decision was harshly criticized by both Republicans and Democrats because the president had long ruled out clemency for his son.

Mr. Biden has come under increasing pressure to use his clemency powers before he hands over power to President-elect Donald J. Trump. As a senator, Mr. Biden had championed a 1994 crime bill *Continued on Page A19*

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Argentines in Economic Agony

A year after becoming president, Javier Milei has earned praise for wrangling inflation, but his policies have pushed five million people into poverty. *PAGE A4*

Militants in Gaza’s Schools

Records seized by Israel and shared with The Times reveal at least 24 fighters worked in U.N.-run schools. *PAGE A10*

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Mentalist and 1970s TV Star

The Amazing Kreskin’s display of mysterious mind-reading powers made him a pop culture phenomenon. He was 89.



BUSINESS B1-6

‘Tax Prom’ in Washington

Republican control and a tax bill next year have corporate America excited, but still a bit wary. *PAGE B1*

Exxon Enters Power Business

The oil company is designing a natural-gas fueled plant to meet the voracious demand of tech firms. *PAGE B1*

NATIONAL A16-23

Mass Deportations Not So Easy

Immigration experts say the Trump administration would need cooperation from local law enforcement to find and detain millions of people. *PAGE A16*

F.B.I. Didn’t Incite Jan. 6 Mob

A report acknowledged that the bureau had informants at the Capitol, but they weren’t told to foment violence, contrary to conspiracy theories. *PAGE A20*

New Jersey Calls In Bharara

The state’s attorney general has chosen Preet Bharara, a former U.S. attorney, to investigate a steep dip in ticketing by the state police. *PAGE A23*

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The Year’s Best Art Books

Our critics select their favorite books of 2024, from the biography of a “famously unknown” artist to an ode to the Louvre from 100 poets. *PAGE C10*



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Coach Goes Back to School

The reason Bill Belichick accepted the coaching job at North Carolina may just boil down to one thing: control. *PAGE B7*

F.B.I. Investigating Break-Ins

The agency believes “South American Theft Groups” could be responsible for burglaries at athletes’ homes. *PAGE B10*

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