

Trump Calls Zelensky ‘Dictator’ as Feud Grows



President Volodymyr Zelensky of Ukraine responded firmly on Wednesday to President Trump’s remarks about the war with Russia.

FLOOD OF FALSE CLAIMS

Ukraine Leader Attacked  
for Criticizing a ‘Web  
of Disinformation’

This article is by **Andrew E. Kramer, Constant Méheut and Anton Troianovski.**

KYIV, Ukraine — The simmering feud between President Volodymyr Zelensky of Ukraine and President Trump escalated on Wednesday when Mr. Trump mocked his counterpart in a post filled with falsehoods, calling him a “dictator without elections.” His comments came hours after Mr. Zelensky said the American leader had been “caught in a web of disinformation” from Russia over the war in Ukraine.

The pointed exchange was set off by a meeting of American and Russian officials to open talks on ending the war in Ukraine that excluded the Ukrainian government. After that meeting in Saudi Arabia on Tuesday, Mr. Trump suggested that Ukraine had started the war, a comment that brought a strong rebuttal from Mr. Zelensky on Wednesday morning. “I would like to have more truth with the Trump team,” Mr. Zelensky said in some of the most overt criticism yet of Mr. Trump and his view of the war in Ukraine.

Mr. Zelensky, summoning reporters to his presidential office in Kyiv, a building still fortified with sandbags, said that the U.S. president was living in a “web of disinformation.”

In a post on his Truth Social account, Mr. Trump responded with a scathing attack on Mr. Zelensky. “Think of it, a modestly successful comedian, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, talked the United States of America into spending \$350 Billion Dollars, to go into a War that couldn’t be won, that never had to start, but a War that he, without the U.S. and ‘TRUMP,’ will never be able to settle,” Mr. Trump wrote.

As he did in making his assertions a day earlier, he misrepresented verifiable facts. The United States, for instance, has allocated \$119 billion for aid to Ukraine, according to a research organization in Germany, the Kiel Institute, not \$350 billion. Mr. Trump also suggested that future security of Ukraine would not be an American problem. “This War is far more important to Europe than it is to us,” he wrote. “We have a big, beautiful Ocean as

Continued on Page A7

NEWS ANALYSIS

A Hero to Biden Is a Villain to His Successor

By **PETER BAKER**

WASHINGTON — When Russian forces crashed over the borders into Ukraine in 2022 determined to wipe it off the map as an independent state, the United States rushed to aid the beleaguered nation and cast its president, Volodymyr Zelensky, as a hero of resistance.

Three years almost to the day later, President Trump is rewriting the history of Russia’s invasion of its smaller neighbor. Ukraine, in this version, is not a victim but a villain. And Mr. Zelensky is not a latter-day Win-

Revisionism Sets Stage  
for Abrupt Reversal  
of U.S. Alliances

ston Churchill, but a “dictator without elections” who somehow started the war himself and conned America into helping. Mr. Trump’s revisionism sets the stage for a geopolitical about-face unlike any in generations as the president embarks on negotiations with Russia that Ukraine fears could come at its own expense. By vilifying Mr. Zelensky

and shifting blame for the war from Moscow to Kyiv, Mr. Trump seems to be laying a predicate for withdrawing support for an ally under attack.

The sharp exchange of words between Mr. Trump and Mr. Zelensky this week signaled how much has changed with the inauguration of a new president in Washington. Even for Mr. Trump, who has never been a fan of Ukraine and has long expressed admiration of President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia, the vitriol expressed toward Mr. Zelensky drew gasps of surprise on both sides of the Atlantic.

Continued on Page A7



PHOTOGRAPHS BY EMILY RHYNE/THE NEW YORK TIMES

Clockwise from top left: Victoria Alston, John Alvarado, Dr. Ken Green and Anna Kolanowski all had a personal reason that pushed them to purchase a gun, but also a common thread of fear.

Moment They Knew It Was Time to Own a Gun

This article is by **Jenna Russell, Emily Rhyne and Noah Throop.**

Ken Green’s tipping point came as he watched an angry mob storm the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021.

John Alvarado’s came during the pandemic, as he evolved from a self-described “bleeding-heart liberal” to a deeply religious conservative.

Rising Fears Alter Look  
of Who’s Armed

A spike in anti-Asian violence in that same period is what motivated John Tsien.

For Victoria Alston, it was living on her own again after separating from her husband.

And for Anna Kolanowski, the tipping point came as she walked to a bar one night to meet friends.

Ms. Kolanowski, a 28-year-old epidemiologist in Iowa, had once believed that no one needed to own a gun.

But when she came out as transgender in 2021, and began transitioning from male to female, she had a realization: “I’m a minority now, in a world that is

Continued on Page A10

TRUMP AIMS TO END  
CONGESTION PLAN,  
SETTING UP A FIGHT

New York Challenges President’s Order,  
and Experts Question Its Legality

This article is by **Ana Ley, Stefanos Chen, Winnie Hu and Benjamin Oreskes.**

President Trump intends to revoke federal approval of New York City’s congestion pricing program, fulfilling a campaign promise to reverse the policy that tolls drivers who enter Manhattan’s busiest streets to help finance repairs to mass transit.

In a letter to Gov. Kathy Hochul on Wednesday, the president’s transportation secretary outlined Mr. Trump’s objections to the program, the first of its kind in the nation, and said that federal officials would contact the state to “discuss the orderly cessation of toll operations.”

The letter, from Sean Duffy, the transportation secretary, cited the cost to working-class motorists, the use of revenue from the tolls for transit upgrades rather than roads, and the reach of the program compared with the plan approved by federal legislation as reasons for the decision.

Mr. Duffy did not indicate a specific date by which the federal government intended to end the program.

Mr. Trump wrote in a post on his social media platform, Truth Social, that New York was “saved” as a result of this news.

“CONGESTION PRICING IS DEAD. Manhattan, and all of New York, is SAVED,” he wrote. “LONG LIVE THE KING!”

Ms. Hochul defended the congestion pricing program on Wednesday and vowed to fight the president’s move.

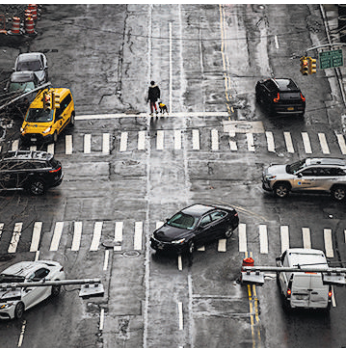
“We are a nation of laws, not ruled by a king,” she said in a written statement. “We’ll see you in court.”

Even before the governor’s statement, the Metropolitan Transportation Authority, which manages the tolls, filed a lawsuit

challenging the federal order.

The program had already had positive effects on the region, including reduced traffic and faster travel times, Janno Lieber, the authority’s chair and chief executive, said in a statement. Mr. Lieber added that the tolling would “continue notwithstanding this baseless effort to snatch those benefits away.”

There was no precedent for federal officials to revoke approval for a major transportation project



KARSTEN MORAN FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

President Trump vowed in his campaign to end the toll policy.

in New York, especially one that was working, said Michael Gerard, a Columbia Law School professor who supports congestion pricing. He said he did not believe the federal government had the legal authority to halt the tolling program.

“It is certainly not dead by any means,” he said. “Secretary Duffy has issued an order of questionable legality.”

Congestion pricing started on Jan. 5 and charges most drivers \$9 to enter Manhattan below 60th Street, an area that includes some of the city’s most famous destinations like Times Square and the Empire State Building.

Continued on Page A15

Filings in Court  
Create Window  
Into Musk Team

By **ZACH MONTAGUE**

WASHINGTON — When President Trump signed an order imbuing the so-called Department of Government Efficiency with even more power over the federal work force, Elon Musk was there, championing the work as an exercise in transparency.

“All of our actions are maximally transparent,” Mr. Musk said last week, standing in the Oval Office. “In fact, I don’t think there’s been — I don’t know of a case where an organization has been more transparent than the DOGE organization.”

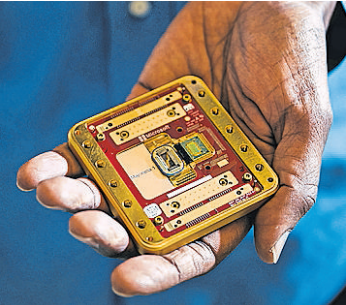
But in case after case, federal judges have begged to differ.

The work of Mr. Musk, who Mr. Trump has said is the leader of the operation tasked with making “large scale” reductions across every department, has been largely shrouded in secrecy. Team members have spent weeks burrowing into multiple federal agencies, demanding access to data for undisclosed purposes.

Anxious career employees have received little direct information, leaving them reliant on office rumors and news reports for updates. The identities of the mem-

Continued on Page A13

**PERSONAL DATA** Elon Musk’s team seeks access to vast amounts of information. PAGE B1



GRANT HINDSLEY FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Microsoft created a new kind of quantum computing chip.

Something New  
May Join Solid,  
Liquid and Gas

By **CADE METZ**

REDMOND, Wash. — Anyone who has sat through a third-grade science class knows there are three primary states of matter: solid, liquid and gas.

Microsoft now says it has created a new state of matter in its quest to make a powerful machine, called a quantum computer, that could accelerate the development of everything from batteries to medicines to A.I.

On Wednesday, Microsoft’s scientists said they had built what is known as a “topological qubit” based on this new phase of physical existence, which could be harnessed to solve mathematical, scientific and technological problems.

Continued on Page A11



INTERNATIONAL A4-8

End of Amends in Vietnam

Fifty years after the war, the gutting of aid halts U.S. efforts to address a toxic legacy and build an alliance. PAGE A4

Pondering the Fate of Gaza

Since President Trump suggested depopulating Gaza, Arab officials are positing other ideas to rebuild. PAGE A5

NATIONAL A9-17, 20

Secretive Mission to Cuba

The administration has said little about the Venezuelans transferred from Texas to Guantánamo Bay. PAGE A14

Fast-Tracking Energy Permits

The Army Corps of Engineers cites the president’s claim of an energy emergency to allow new projects. PAGE A12

SPORTS B6-9, 12

A 7-Footer at New Heights

After nine seasons with Minnesota, Karl-Anthony Towns is bolstering the Knicks’ championship aspirations. And his best years may lie ahead. PAGE B6



ARTS C1-6

Funding the Kennedy Center

The institution’s perennial challenge is to raise revenue beyond the portion obtained from the government. PAGE C1

Rapper Acquitted in Shooting

ASAP Rocky had faced felony counts of assault with a firearm in connection with a 2021 altercation. PAGE C2

BUSINESS B1-5

Original Decluttering Guru

Before Marie Kondo stormed into the global consciousness and brought us the desire to “spark joy,” there was another Japanese guru teaching the art of creating tidier spaces. PAGE B1

Porsche Toppled in China

Chinese drivers are buying affordable electric vehicles loaded with new technology, a trend that is redefining high-end vehicles and hurting German automakers. PAGE B1

OPINION A18-19

Farah Stockman

PAGE A18



STYLES D1-8

Rose Garden Highlights

We look back at key moments at the White House’s signature outdoor setting amid reports that it may be turned into a Mar-a-Lago-like patio. PAGE D1

