

Bid by Johnson  
To Lead Again  
Faces Defiance

Trump Backs Speaker,  
but a Rift Persists

By CATIE EDMONDSON  
WASHINGTON — Speaker Mike Johnson’s bid to be re-elected to his post remained precarious on Thursday, as he continued to try to tamp down resistance from the most conservative lawmakers in his ranks a day ahead of the vote on the House floor.  
Mr. Johnson received the endorsement of President-elect Donald J. Trump for another term on Monday, and no other Republican has thrown a hat into the ring to challenge him. But several G.O.P. lawmakers have vented dissatisfaction with his performance in the top job and suggested that they want a new leader.  
The problem for Mr. Johnson is that in order to win re-election, he will need nearly unanimous support from his fractious House Republican Conference. Given the party’s exceedingly slim margin of control — Republicans hold 219 seats and Democrats 215 — Mr. Johnson will be able to lose only a single G.O.P. vote if every lawmaker is present and voting and Democrats support one of their own. One Republican, Representative Thomas Massie of Kentucky, has already declared that he will oppose him.  
Other hard-right Republicans have stayed mum about how they plan to vote on Friday, saying publicly that they are undecided.  
“I think we get it done on the first round,” Mr. Johnson said on Thursday afternoon on Fox Business. “Certainly hopeful for that, because, as we noted, we’ve got to stick together. We’ll be operating with the smallest margin in U.S. history, for much of the first 100 days of the Congress, and perhaps longer into the year. So it necessitates that every single Republican, as diverse as our caucus is, can put aside their personal preferences every day and work together for the team”  
In a separate interview on “Fox and Friends,” Mr. Johnson said he had been calling “every single” House Republican over the holidays. “I think the reason they’re all going to vote yes is this: We’re shifting into a brand-new paradigm. We have unified government that begins tomorrow.”  
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Bourbon Street in New Orleans reopened to tourists by Thursday afternoon, although an armed patrol signaled heightened security.

War Drives Myanmar’s Rise as a Crucible for International Crime

By HANNAH BEECH  
SHAN STATE, Myanmar — The flower fields stretch out from the mountain village along most every road — fluttering patchworks of white and pink and purple.  
The beauty in this corner of Shan State, in northeastern Myanmar, might seem a respite from the country’s brutal civil war. Instead the blooms are a symptom: It is all opium poppy in these fields, and Myanmar again ranks as the world’s biggest exporter of the raw material to make heroin and other opiates. And that’s just the beginning.  
Since descending into a full-blown civil conflict nearly four years ago, after the military overthrew the elected government, Myanmar has cemented its status as a hotbed of transnational crime. It is a playground for warlords, arms dealers, human traffickers, poachers, drug syndicates and generals wanted by interna-

tional courts. Myanmar is now the biggest nexus of organized crime on the planet, according to the Global Organized Crime Index.  
The criminality flourishing in Myanmar’s fertile soil carries disastrous consequences for its 55 million people. It is also spreading the fruits of transgression across the globe. With more than half of the country battle-struck following the military coup in February 2021, which unseated the civilian authority of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, Myanmar is racking up dubious superlatives.  
It is now the world’s largest

Junta and Rebels Both  
Deal in Drugs, Scams  
and Illicit Minerals

producer of opium and one of the world’s largest manufacturers of synthetic drugs, including methamphetamine, ketamine and fentanyl. Concocted with precursor chemicals from neighboring China and India, tablets made in Myanmar feed habits as far away as Australia. With factories in

overdrive and international law enforcement overwhelmed, street prices of these drugs are alarmingly cheap.  
Myanmar is not just a narco-state. It is also thought to be the world’s largest exporter of certain heavy rare earth elements that power clean energy worldwide. In battlefields turned toxic wastelands, workers dig in illegal mines, then dispatch the rare earths to China along old smuggling routes. The Southeast Asian nation is also home to the best jade and ruby on the planet, much  
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An opium poppy farm in Shan State, Myanmar. The biggest buyers are the military and its allies.

TikTok Natural Brings Humor  
To Chronicling Terminal Illness

By CAITLIN MOSCATELLO  
Brooke Eby did not intend to be back here at 36, living with her parents in the suburban home where she grew up — a traditional-style house in Potomac, Md., with ceramic plates on the wall and the family cat yowling from the kitchen. But by last summer, it became clear that living alone was no longer safe. Getting in and out of bed had become challenging. One day, after a fall, she was stuck on the bathroom floor  
until her dog walker arrived. Eby’s arms had a new heaviness to them, too — the same sensation she’d felt in her legs before losing the ability to walk.  
On TikTok and Instagram, she asked her more than 350,000 followers if any of them had moved back in with their parents, and for a pep talk. “I need reinforcement,” she said, and then, in a higher, playful pitch, “Help me.”  
For most of her life, Eby kept a low profile online, once deleting Instagram from her phone entirely because she didn’t want the distraction. But since being diagnosed with A.L.S., or amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, in 2022, Eby has joined a niche group of content creators with terminal illnesses documenting the progression of their diseases on social media. She considers herself more video diarist than influencer: Rather than Eby hawking vitamins or skin creams, most of her posts take viewers along as she shares health updates and otherwise shows the reality of living in a body that no longer functions as it  
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Brooke Eby was diagnosed with A.L.S. in 2022.

Seductive Image of Naples Belies the Reality of a Struggling City

By EMMA BUBOLA  
NAPLES, Italy — As tourists followed the smell of fried pizza, posed by white and blue murals of Diego Maradona on streets lined with dangling laundry, and marveled at the decadent beauty of Naples, an 18-year-old boy and 26-year-old twin sisters were killed when the makeshift fireworks factory where they worked blew up.  
Their burned, mutilated bodies were found among the explosives and the cans of detergent they also bottled for a living in a house amid olive trees and orange groves near the ancient Roman citadel Herculaneum, outside Naples.  
The deaths in November of the three young Neapolitans, who took the risky jobs for about 25 euros, or \$26, a day because they could not find better ones, highlighted how, despite Naples’s recent hype and tourism boom, it remains a merciless city for many of its own young people.  
“Naples is like a tomb,” Adamo Dumbia, 38, said after he shoveled dirt on the grave of Samuel Tafciu, his stepdaughter’s fiancé, who died in the blast. “It’s pretty from

A Tourist Favorite Has  
Gun Crime and Few  
Jobs for Youth  
the outside, but you don’t want to see what is inside.”  
Since the pandemic, Naples has become an Instagram sensation. Tourism has surged, especially among foreigners. Many of them were introduced to the city through the novels of Elena Ferrante. Hollywood actors have

stopped there. The model Emily Ratajkowski posed for photos with a Napoli soccer jersey. Countless Instagram posts showcase older Neapolitans with leathery tans, tattooed chests, heavy makeup and crucifixes under the summer’s scorching sun. Charli XCX sang about such images in the song “Everything Is Romantic.” It all has contributed to building a seductive image of Naples that has attracted flocks of millennials.  
But if Naples’s gaudy decadence is hot on social media, the  
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F.B.I. IS CONFIDENT  
DRIVER IN ATTACK  
DIDN’T HAVE HELP

NEW ORLEANS REOPENS

Investigators See No Link  
to Cybertruck Blast in  
Las Vegas

This article is by Nicholas Bogel-Burroughs, Isabelle Taft and Michael Levenson.  
A Texas man who expressed support for the Islamic State before he drove into a crowd in New Orleans on New Year’s Day, killing 14 people, appears to have acted alone, an F.B.I. official said on Thursday, as the city reopened Bourbon Street after the attack and hosted thousands of fans for the Sugar Bowl.  
Investigators have found “no definitive link” between the attack and the explosion of a Tesla Cybertruck hours later that injured at least seven people outside a Trump hotel in Las Vegas, according to the F.B.I. official, Christopher Raia, the deputy assistant director of the bureau’s counterterrorism division.  
The driver of the Cybertruck was identified on Thursday as an Army master sergeant from Colorado who had been on leave from active duty and had shot himself in the head just before the explosion. Mr. Raia cautioned that investigators were early in their inquiry and had not ruled anything out.  
Mr. Raia said that based on hundreds of interviews and reviews of phone calls, social media accounts and electronic devices linked to the Texas man who carried out the attack in New Orleans, investigators no longer believed, as they said on Wednesday, that he had co-conspirators.  
“We’re confident, at this point, that there are no accomplices,” Mr. Raia said at a news conference in New Orleans. Investigators have identified the man, who was killed in a shootout with the police, as Shamsud-Din Bahar Jabbar, 42, an American citizen from Texas.  
Mr. Jabbar, who served eight years in the U.S. Army and deployed to Afghanistan, had an Islamic State flag affixed to the rented Ford pickup truck that he used in the attack and was “100 percent inspired by ISIS,” Mr. Raia said.  
Mr. Raia said that Mr. Jabbar picked up the truck in Houston on Dec. 30 and drove to New Orleans on the evening of Dec. 31.  
Mr. Jabbar then posted five videos on Facebook in which he explained that he “originally planned to harm his family and friends, but was concerned that news headlines would not focus” on what he called the “war between the believers and the disbelievers,” Mr. Raia said.  
“Additionally, he stated that he  
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VICTIMS A future nurse and an ex-Princeton football player were among those killed. PAGE A12

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Search of Ex-N.Y.P.D. Official  
Federal agents executed a warrant on the home of a former chief of department who was accused by a lieutenant of coercing her into sex. PAGE A14

White House Honors Cheney  
Former Representative Liz Cheney of Wyoming is among 20 people to receive the Presidential Citizens Medal from President Biden. PAGE A11

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A string of attacks has riders devising their own strategies to stay safe, even after years of efforts to make New York’s subway system secure. PAGE A9

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Enforcement of a ban on the U.N. relief agency UNRWA could intensify a humanitarian disaster. PAGE A5

Putting Wet Money to Work  
Coins tourists toss into Trevi Fountain in Rome are collected, examined and cleaned, and go to a good cause. PAGE A4



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After nearly two decades, the battle over regulations that treat broadband internet providers like utilities came to an end with a court ruling. PAGE B1

Concern Over China and Ports  
The president-elect inaccurately said that Chinese soldiers operate the Panama Canal. But China’s positions in shipping do worry U.S. officials. PAGE B1

Rivals Gain on Tesla  
Sales slipped for the first time at the electric-car company led by Elon Musk. Competitors are introducing dozens of models, giving buyers a choice. PAGE B1

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Riding the N.I.L. Wave  
Seventeen-year-old A.J. Dybantsa isn’t just the best player in high school basketball. He is also the face of the name, image and likeness revolution in American amateur sports. PAGE B5

‘Robin’ on the Rise  
The Minnesota Vikings were looking for a second receiver to complement their star, Justin Jefferson. Instead Jordan Addison is proving to be a dangerous target in his own right. PAGE B8

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Still a Wonderful Time of Year  
Shailene Woodley is starring in the Broadway hit “Cult of Love,” about a dysfunctional family over the holidays. So she isn’t done caroling yet. PAGE C1

