



Ruins in Malibu, Calif., on Friday. Wildfires in the state have consumed tens of thousands of acres and have threatened more areas.

Say Anything: Remaking Meta For Trump Era

This article is by **Mike Isaac**, **Sheera Frenkel** and **Kate Conger**.

SAN FRANCISCO — Mark Zuckerberg kept the circle of people who knew his thinking small. Last month, Mr. Zuckerberg, the chief executive of Meta, tapped a handful of top policy and communications executives and others to discuss the company’s approach to online speech. He had decided to make sweeping changes after visiting President-elect Donald J. Trump at Mar-a-Lago over Thanksgiving. Now he needed his employees to turn those changes into policy.

Over the next few weeks, Mr. Zuckerberg and his handpicked team discussed how to do that in Zoom meetings, conference calls and late-night group chats. Some subordinates stole away from family dinners and holiday gatherings to work, while Mr. Zuckerberg weighed in between trips to his homes in the San Francisco Bay Area and the island of Kauai.

By New Year’s Day, Mr. Zuckerberg was ready to go public with the changes, according to four current and former Meta employees and advisers with knowledge of the events, who were not authorized to speak publicly about the confidential discussions.

The entire process was highly unusual. Meta typically alters policies that govern its apps — which include Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp and Threads — by inviting employees, civic leaders and others to weigh in. Any shifts generally take months. But Mr. Zuckerberg turned this latest effort into a closely held six-week sprint, blindsiding even employees on his policy and integrity teams.

On Tuesday, most of Meta’s 72,000 employees learned of Mr. Zuckerberg’s plans along with the rest of the world. The Silicon Valley giant said it was overhauling speech on its apps by loosening restrictions on how people can talk about contentious social issues such as immigration, gender and sexuality. It killed its fact-checking program that had been aimed at curbing misinformation and said it would instead rely on users to police falsehoods. And it said it would insert more political content into people’s feeds after previously de-emphasizing that very material.

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In Moldova Wine Cellars, a Chill Toward Putin

By **ANDREW HIGGINS**

CRICOVA, Moldova — Hermann Goering, Hitler’s right-hand man, survived the cut. His bottles of wine — part of a collection seized by the Soviet army as a trophy at the end of World War II and deposited in a labyrinthine underground cellar in Moldova — are still on display.

A gift of 460 bottles given in 2013 to then Secretary of State John Kerry when he visited the former Soviet republic is also there, kept in his name in a cubbyhole in the vast system of tunnels. (The State Department reported their value

as \$8,339.50, which might explain why Mr. Kerry chose to leave them behind.)

But President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia, who twice visited the cellars operated by the state-owned Cricova Winery, has been banished. His wine bottles, along with his photograph, have been removed from view in the vast complex of underground tunnels that twist and turn over 75 miles under vineyards north of the Moldovan capital, Chisinau.

After Mr. Putin began a full-scale invasion of Moldova’s neighbor, Ukraine, in 2022, the winery “got lots of questions that we

could not answer about why he was still here,” said Sorin Maslo, the director.

Mr. Putin’s wine collection, a gift to him from Moldova’s former communist president, has not been destroyed, Mr. Maslo said. The bottles, he added, had been moved to a dark, sealed-off corner of the cellar so that “nobody has to deal with him.”

For a country that takes viniculture seriously, the banishment of Mr. Putin’s bottles sent a blunt divorce message in a long-strained relationship that Moldova recently declared doomed by irrec-

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ANDREEA CAMPEANU FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Moldova’s Cricova Winery hosts world leaders, but one is being snubbed after invading a neighbor.

Erasing Tibetans’ Culture, One Child at a Time

By **CHRIS BUCKLEY**

Across China’s west, the Communist Party is placing children in boarding schools in a drive to assimilate a generation of Tibetans into the national mainstream and mold them into citizens loyal to the party.

Tibetan rights activists, as well as experts working for the United Nations, have said that the party is systematically separating Tibetan children from their families to erase Tibetan identity and to deepen China’s control of a people

who historically have resisted Beijing’s rule. The activists have estimated that around three-quarters of Tibetan students age 6 and older — and others even younger — are in residential schools that teach largely in Mandarin, replacing the Tibetan language, culture and Buddhist beliefs that the children once absorbed at home and in village schools.

When China’s top leader, Xi Jinping, visited one such school in the summer, he inspected a dormitory that appeared freshly painted and as neat as an army barracks. He walked into a classroom where Ti-

betan students, listening to a lecture on Communist Party thought, stood and applauded to welcome him.

Mr. Xi’s visit to the school in Qinghai Province in June amounted to a firm endorsement of the program, despite international criticism. Education, he said, must “implant a shared consciousness of Chinese nationhood in the souls of children from an early age.”

Chinese officials say the schools help Tibetan children to quickly

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Fires in Los Angeles Area Are Grim Look Into Future

Warming Will Make Disasters Worse, Experts Say

By **DAVID GELLES**
and **AUSTYN GAFFNEY**

As Los Angeles burned for days on end, horrifying the nation, scientists made an announcement on Friday that could help explain the deadly conflagration: 2024 was the hottest year in recorded history.

With temperatures rising around the globe and the oceans unusually warm, scientists are warning that the world has entered a dangerous new era of chaotic floods, storms and fires made worse by human-caused climate change.

The firestorms ravaging the country’s second-largest city, which have begun threatening more neighborhoods, are just the latest spasm of extreme weather that is growing more furious and unpredictable. Wildfires are highly unusual in Southern California in January, which is supposed to be the rainy season. The same is true for cyclones in Appalachia, where Hurricanes Helene and Milton shocked the country when they tore through mountain communities in the fall.

Wildfires are burning hotter and moving faster. Storms are growing bigger and carrying more moisture. And soaring temperatures worldwide are leading to heat waves and drought, which can be devastating on their own and leave communities vulnerable to dangers like mudslides when heavy rain returns.

Around the globe, extreme weather and searing heat killed thousands of people last year and displaced millions, with pilgrims dying as temperatures soared in Saudi Arabia. In Europe, extreme heat contributed to at least 47,000 deaths in 2023. In the United States, heat-related deaths have doubled in recent decades.

“We’re in a new era now,” said former Vice President Al Gore,

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Agencies’ Resources Were No Match for These Blazes

This article is by **Thomas Fuller**, **Alexandra Berzon**, **Kellen Brown-ing** and **Shawn Hubler**.

LOS ANGELES — The alert came in blaring, hot-pink, all-caps: Be prepared for a “LIFE THREATENING & DESTRUCTIVE WINDSTORM!!!”

The notice on Monday was one in a series of warnings issued by the National Weather Service about the powerful Santa Ana winds that were about to blow through Southern California, which hadn’t seen serious rain in months.

Officials in Los Angeles, a city that is accustomed to treacherous fire conditions, turned to a well-worn playbook. The city pre-deployed nine trucks in vulnerable areas and called in 90 extra firefighters. The county fire department moved 30 extra engines into the field and called up 100 off-duty firefighters. The U.S. Forest Service brought in trucks and support units, as well as bulldozers, helicopters and planes.

But by Tuesday afternoon, five hours after a fire ignited high in a canyon in the oceanside Pacific Palisades neighborhood, it was clear their preparations would not be enough.

As furious wind gusts approaching 100 miles per hour tore through the city and propelled showers of embers that ignited entire neighborhoods, Anthony Marrone, the chief of the Los Angeles County Fire Department, stood at a command post on the edge of the Pacific Ocean.

Blasted by dust and dirt kicked up by the relentless wind, he snapped a picture with his phone of smoke obscuring the sun and looked out at a panorama of flames, smoke and debris. The fire, he thought to himself, looked unstoppable. It was moving “like a funnel, like a speedway,” he said. “I knew that if we had one start,

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IRREPLACEABLE Artists in Southern California have seen their life’s work go up in flames, and they worry for their livelihoods. **PAGE 13**

TAKING REFUGE In hotel lobbies across Los Angeles, evacuees with children, pets and hastily packed bags share a resigned intimacy. **PAGE 16**

Trump’s Incoming Chief of Staff: A Cool Head in a Very Hot Seat

By **ELISABETH BUMILLER**

WEST PALM BEACH, Fla. — Susie Wiles, President-elect Donald J. Trump’s incoming White House chief of staff, begins her days at 7:30 a.m. in the West Palm Beach transition headquarters. But by 2 p.m. she has typically parked herself a few feet from Mr. Trump for a daily five-hour marathon in his office, the former Mar-a-Lago bridal suite.

“The president is a night owl and I’m an early bird, so the sweet spot is 2 to 7,” she said in a recent interview.

As Elon Musk and staff members file in and out, Ms. Wiles and the president-elect go over plans for Trump II: Executive orders for Day 1. Deportations. A massive border, energy and tax-cut bill. Upcoming congressional hearings for cabinet nominees. And more stacks of appointments. “It’s everything from who wants to be the ambassador to Portugal to what kind of deputy does Marco need?” Ms. Wiles said, referring to Senator Marco Rubio, Mr. Trump’s choice to be secretary of state.

Her goal is to have 2,000 out of 11,000 appointments done by the Jan. 20 inaugural. There were only



DOUG MILLS/THE NEW YORK TIMES

Susie Wiles, the incoming White House chief of staff, intends to stay all four years.

25 completed by the first Trump inaugural in 2017, when Ms. Wiles was not in the administration. Chaos reigned over four years in the West Wing.

“So I’ve heard,” said Ms. Wiles, whom the president-elect calls the Ice Maiden for her coolheaded nature. This time, she said, “I feel pretty comfortable that I can instill order at the staff level.”

The president-elect is another matter: Ms. Wiles, 67, the first woman to hold one of the most important and precarious jobs in Washington, will move in less

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INTERNATIONAL 4-12

Dueling Claims for Cossacks

Ukraine reveres a 19th-century painting of Cossack warriors that Russia deems part of its own cultural heritage. **PAGE 6**

Tension at Israel-Syria Border

Armed Israeli troops have taken over a demilitarized buffer zone, and Syrians fear a permanent presence. **PAGE 12**

NATIONAL 13-23

Proxy Voting for New Parents

A group of younger lawmakers is pressing to change House rules to allow members to vote remotely through a colleague who is in the Capitol. **PAGE 20**

SPORTS 28-31

Woe Canada

The Buffalo Bills and the Detroit Lions are Super Bowl contenders, and fans north of the border are nervously hopeful that a title drought may end. **PAGE 30**

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SUNDAY STYLES

Fashion Awaits a Revolution

It’s expected to be a big year for designers. Vanessa Friedman asks: What will change about the way we dress? **PAGE 1**

Country Living, Celebrity-Style

Bucks County, Pa., known for its rolling hills and covered bridges, is experiencing an influx of famous people. **PAGE 10**

METROPOLITAN

Paid to Watch Over His Art

Armia Khalil, an artist who works as a security guard at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, now has a sculpture in a major exhibition there. **PAGE 1**

SUNDAY BUSINESS

On the Sea and on the Run

The former executive Samuele Landi evaded justice for years by exploiting loopholes all over the world. **PAGE 4**

Hear Us Out, Economists Say

Flawed forecasts and arcane language have cost the professionals credibility. Can they regain their influence? **PAGE 1**



ARTS & LEISURE

Nicole Kidman, Still Exploring

The Oscar winner talks about her newest film, and about how she has come to understand a lot about women in unfulfilled lives. **PAGE 10**

