



ELECTION 2024

# Trump notches decisive win in Iowa



JABIN BOTSFORD/THE WASHINGTON POST

Former president Donald Trump arrives for his caucus night watch party in Des Moines. With 96 percent of the vote tallied, Trump led with 51 percent — more than his next two rivals combined, but behind his own boasts of finishing 60 points ahead of the field.

## THE TAKE

## Pressure is on to stop front-runner's march

BY DAN BALZ

DES MOINES — Iowa was never destined to surprise. The caucuses were always Donald Trump's to win, and he did that easily Monday night, beginning what could be a quick march to the Republican presidential nomination and a likely rematch against President Biden in the November general election.

Trump vanquished his principal challengers, former U.N. ambassador and South Carolina governor Nikki Haley and Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis, who battled until late in the evening, when DeSantis was projected to finish ahead of her. If there are to

be obstacles in Trump's path, they will have to come soon — in next Tuesday's New Hampshire primary.

Even an unexpected loss next week wouldn't necessarily be enough to stop Trump, unless someone — Haley or DeSantis — can quickly assemble a coalition capable of wresting the nomination away from the former president. Neither of them can claim that at this point, though historically the dynamics of races have changed quickly.

Does anyone really expect an upset considering Trump's lead in the polls has been both strong and stable for many months?

SEE THE TAKE ON A9



RICKY CARIOTI/THE WASHINGTON POST

A precinct captain for Trump collects ballots at an elementary school in Waukee, Iowa, on Monday during the caucuses.

Election images: The candidates' final push to woo Iowa voters. A8

Turnout: Lowest attendance in a decade, but many still braved cold. A10

## U.S. forces recover Iranian warheads

Arms probably bound for Yemen; search goes on for two SEALs lost at sea

BY ALEX HORTON

American military personnel recovered Iranian-made missile warheads and related components during a ship-boarding mission near Somalia last week that disrupted the weapons' suspected transit to militants in Yemen but left two elite Navy SEALs lost at sea, U.S. officials said Monday.

A massive search-and-rescue operation is ongoing in the Gulf of Aden, where the incident occurred Thursday. The SEALs moved to board the vessel, described by one official as a dhow lacking proper identification, amid suspicions that there were arms on board.

As The Washington Post and other media previously reported, Thursday's operation took place in rough seas. When one of the SEALs slipped from a ladder while attempting to climb aboard the dhow, the second, having witnessed their comrade fall into the water, dove in to help, officials have said. Both were swept away by the powerful swells. Neither has been publicly identified.

As rescue operations began, other troops carried out a search of the boat, which had a crew of about a dozen, the official said. They were taken into custody, along with the weapons components, and the boat was sunk, the official said. This person, like others, spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss a sensitive military mission.

The Associated Press first reported those and other details of last week's weapons seizure.

The episode has underscored a persistent challenge facing the Biden administration and its international partners as they vow to hold Yemen's Houthis — and the militant group's chief backer, Iran — accountable for a steep rise in attacks that have significantly disrupted commercial shipping in the region. U.S. and

SEE SEALs ON A5

Houthi strike: A missile damaged a U.S.-owned container ship. A12

## Longtime friendships fracture after Oct. 7 attack

Jewish business owner and Palestinian employees built a close relationship that may not last

BY CLAIRE PARKER  
IN EFRAAT, WEST BANK

It's been three months since Palestinian workers were allowed in this Jewish settlement, part of a ban imposed by the Israeli government after the Hamas attacks on Oct. 7.

Tens of thousands of Palestinians in the West Bank are now without a source of income; hundreds of Israeli employers have been deprived of the labor that keeps their businesses running.

For Pinchas Houminer, who runs a laundromat in Efrat, it has also come at a personal cost.

For decades, a pair of Palestinian brothers — Abdelsalem Mughrabi, 51, and his brother Mohamed, 56 — were the backbone of his laundromat's operations. Houminer provided them a reliable source of income as they grew their families and sought to build better lives.

In the fraught and unequal context of occupation, marred by violence, discrimination and mutual

SEE WEST BANK ON A14



SALWAN GEORGES/THE WASHINGTON POST

Abdelsalem Mughrabi, left, and his brother Mohamed Mughrabi at their home in the al-Arroub refugee camp in the West Bank. The two spent decades working for a Jewish laundromat owner.

## Tale of Michigan voter fraud had everything, except proof

Gateway Pundit website propels false 2020 claims even as others retreat

BY SARAH ELLISON

The story had all the elements of a blockbuster crime saga: burner phones, semiautomatic weapons, silencers and bags of prepaid cash cards. "NOW WE HAVE PROOF!" blared the headline on the right-wing website Gateway Pundit. "Massive 2020 Voter Fraud Uncovered in Michigan."

The story referenced "thousands of fraudulent ballots" caught by Muskegon City Clerk Ann Meisch. Grateful readers deluged her office with hundreds of calls, hailing her as a hero.

But Meisch knew it wasn't true. According to police reports, the Michigan attorney general's office and an interview with Meisch, an employee of a voter registration drive company had submitted to

the Muskegon city clerk thousands of voter registration applications weeks before the 2020 election, some with faked signatures and faulty addresses.

Meisch's staff spent hundreds of hours weeding out the bad applications. The guns the police found were legally registered to a landlord who had nothing to do with the registration drive. The prepaid phones and cash cards were given to temporary employees to contact new voter prospects.

"There were no fraudulent ballots," Meisch said in an interview, "not a single one that anyone in my office was aware of."

But for Gateway Pundit, which is run out of its founder's home and whose small staff produces stories that help set the agenda for Donald Trump's most ardent followers, the August story provided weeks of headlines that radiated across right-wing media and were repeatedly amplified by pro-Trump influencers. That's despite the fact that it was published near-

SEE GATEWAY PUNDIT ON A20

## IN THE NEWS

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**NFL playoffs** Josh Allen delivers four touchdowns as the Bills wait out the snow and beat the Steelers. In the late game, the Bucs dominate Jalen Hurts and the Eagles. D1

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**Disparities endure** for young Black adults and Latino children in the D.C. region, a new report found. B1

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