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Democracy Dies in Darkness

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 1, 2024 • \$5

Trump says he'll tap Patel to lead FBI

Loyalist eyed to replace Wray, who would have to resign or be fired

BY MARK BERMAN

President-elect Donald Trump said Saturday that he planned to replace FBI Director Christopher A. Wray with Kash Patel, a move that would install a staunch loyalist atop an agency Trump has repeatedly criticized.

This pick — which cannot happen unless Trump fires Wray or the FBI director steps down before the end of his 10-year term — comes as the president-elect has rolled out appointments and proposed nominations that appear aimed at putting his political allies in key positions where officials and agencies had contradicted or angered him in the past.

The FBI has long been a target of Trump's anger. While in office and afterward, Trump derided the country's premier law enforcement agency as "badly broken" and said it "lost the confidence of America." Trump has also singled out Wray, whom he picked to be the FBI director during his first term, for criticism over the years.

FBI directors typically have 10-year tenures, unique among appointments in the executive branch. That span, which extends beyond two consecutive presidential terms, was imposed in 1976 as a post-Watergate government reform effort.

The position also requires Senate confirmation, though it's unclear whether there will be strong

SEE FBI ON A2

Russian view: How commentators feel about Trump's Cabinet. **A16**



OMAR HAJ KADOUR/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Rebels ride through Aleppo on Saturday, a day after breaching Syria's largest city. The group Hayat Tahrir al-Sham is leading the offensive.

For Iran, Hezbollah cease-fire is chance to regroup

BY SUSANNAH GEORGE, SUZAN HAIDAMOUS AND MUSTAFA SALIM

DUBAI — The cease-fire last week between Israel and Hezbollah in Lebanon has relieved some of the pressure, at least temporarily, that was building on the militant group's key patron, Iran.

Iranian officials have publicly framed the halt in fighting as a victory for their ally. But behind the scenes, they worked quietly for a cease-fire, diplomats said, a tacit admission of the damage Israel inflicted on an organization essential to Tehran's strategy of deterrence.

For more than a year, Iran has navigated soaring tensions unleashed by the war in Gaza, where Israel is battling Hamas, another ally of Tehran. It has at times engaged with Israel directly, including in tit-for-tat strikes, although it has generally stayed out of the fray, allowing allied militias to go on the attack.

But once the low-simmering conflict between Israel and Hezbollah exploded into war, and Israel decimated the group's senior leadership, pressure on Iran escalated exponentially. One of its commanders was killed in the September strike targeting long-time Hezbollah leader Hasan

Nasrallah.

Then in October, Israel carried out multiple airstrikes targeting Iran's air defense systems and missile production facilities — an operation that compelled Iranian leaders to push for a cease-fire, according to Western and regional diplomats briefed on the talks who, like others quoted in this report, spoke on the condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to discuss sensitive communications.

"We now know that those attacks were quite severe," one Western diplomat said of the Israeli strikes in Iran, referring to a damage assessment conducted by

the diplomat's government. "They were feeling the heat," the diplomat said of Iranian leaders.

But any respite could be brief: Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, in an address to the nation, said he supported the cease-fire in Lebanon so that Israel could "focus on the Iranian threat."

"I am determined to do anything needed to prevent Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon," he said Tuesday.

Iranian officials have for months suggested the country

SEE IRAN ON A14

Hezbollah stronghold: Photos from a Beirut suburb in ruins. **A12**

Trump looms over Biden's final acts

BY KAREN DEYOUNG

President-elect Donald Trump's threat Monday to impose a 25 percent tariff on imports from Canada and Mexico — one of a barrage of shots fired daily from Mar-a-Lago since his election victory — landed like a bombshell in Ottawa.

On Friday, after days of angst and an emergency "Team Canada" meeting with all 10 provincial premiers, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau jumped on a plane and flew to Palm Beach, Florida. He spent three hours at Trump's Mar-a-Lago residence and golf club, one of 11 others crowded around Trump at a table in the middle of the busy members dining room.

David McCormick, the Republican senator-elect from Pennsylvania, posted a photo of the dinner on X, writing how "honored" he was to be there, and declaring they were ready to "shake things up" in Washington. He made no mention of Trudeau's presence among them.

In a Truth Social post Saturday, Trump called the meeting "very productive." He said Trudeau had made a commitment to "work with us" on the border, trade and

SEE TRANSITION ON A10

Oreshnik missile: Threat to NATO security at critical moment. **A15**



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In the NFL, it's hut, hut, write

Players are putting their thoughts to rest by recording them in journals

BY ADAM KILGORE

Buffalo Bills wide receiver Khalil Shakir considers himself an overthinker, and midway through last season he sensed his mind whirring to a degree that affected his sleep. Shakir sought a way to improve his mental health, and he still doesn't know where the impulse came from. He decided he would write out those onrushing thoughts before he climbed into bed at night.

"I was like, 'Screw it; I'll just put it down on paper,'" Shakir said. "And it worked."

Shakir had joined the ranks of a large if hidden population: National Football League players who journal. In locker rooms across the league, more than a dozen players recently

shared their conviction in the benefits of journaling, a habit they use to confront the stress inherent to a profession that invites scrutiny while suppressing sensitivity.

It's impossible to place a precise number on NFL players who journal, but "it's definitely more than it seems," Bills backup quarterback Shane Buechele said. Many players who said they do not keep a journal knew teammates who did, and some expressed either previous or current interest in starting one.

Mental health awareness has grown more entrenched in sports and society, but players said they still sometimes feel more comfortable working through struggles and hopes with the

SEE JOURNALS ON A8

What a run: Derrick Henry and Saquon Barkley return NFL running backs to the spotlight. **D1**

Noem builds reputation over southern border

How Trump's homeland security pick became so invested in a crisis 1,500 miles from her state

BY ISAAC STANLEY-BECKER AND PETER JAMISON

Gov. Kristi L. Noem was about to seize the spotlight, and she wanted to make the most of it.

In June 2021, the South Dakota Republican was preparing to announce that her state would be the first to send National Guard troops to the U.S.-Mexico border in response to an appeal from Texas. What's more, she was mobilizing the state's forces in a highly unusual way — bankrolled by an out-of-state billionaire.

After a last-minute conversation with the governor, Noem's chief of staff changed her quote in a news release drawn up for the announcement — "to represent more accurately her stance on this issue," as her top adviser wrote in an internal email. No longer would Noem praise border-state governors. Instead, she would declare bluntly: "The border is a national security crisis."

The edits are included in hundreds of pages of emails and other documents released by the National Guard in response to a Freedom of Information Act request by the watchdog group Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington. The documents show how the governor and her team positioned her as a hard-liner on immigration despite the 1,500 miles separating South Dakota from the southern border.



Gov. Kristi L. Noem of South Dakota called for multiple deployments of National Guard troops to help Texas.

The efforts, beginning with the deployment of about 50 members of the National Guard in the summer of 2021, intensified over the next three years. Noem ordered two additional deployments, paid for by state taxpayers. And she steadily escalated her rhetoric.

In an address before a joint session of her state's legislature earlier this year, the governor declared: "South Dakota is directly affected by this invasion. We are affected by cartel presence on our tribal reservations; by the spread of drugs and human trafficking throughout our communities; and by the drain on our resources at the local, state and federal level."

Politically, the work paid off. President-elect Donald Trump last month picked Noem to lead the Department of Homeland Security, a sprawling agency of more than 260,000 people charged with border enforcement, disaster response and other law enforcement responsibilities.

"Kristi has been very strong on Border Security," Trump said in

SEE NOEM ON A6

METRO
Virginia, four centuries in, may be on track for its first female governor.

SPORTS
Jayden Daniels faces his next big test in today's game: cold weather.



ARTS & STYLE
Artists helped America cope under Trump. How will they do it again?

BUSINESS
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Angela Merkel defends her 16 years leading Germany in "Freedom."

TRAVEL
In Wisconsin, cheese reigns supreme. And its palace is in Kenosha.

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