



Partly sunny 51/31 • Tomorrow: Windy 41/29 B6

Democracy Dies in Darkness

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## In White House, rift deepens on conflict

Biden’s handling of Israel-Gaza battle has divided his staffers

BY YASMEEN ABUTALEB AND JOHN HUDSON

Earlier this month, a group of about 20 distressed White House staffers requested a meeting with President Biden’s top advisers, as Israel’s war in Gaza entered its sixth week.

The diverse group of staffers had three main issues they wanted to discuss with White House Chief of Staff Jeff Zients, senior adviser Anita Dunn and deputy national security adviser Jon Finer: They wanted to know the administration’s strategy for curbing the number of civilian deaths, the message it plans to send on the conflict and its post-war vision for the region.

Zients, Dunn and Finer listened respectfully, but some participants felt they fell back on familiar talking points, said a White House official familiar with the meeting, who spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss a private exchange. The administration had to be careful not to criticize Israel in public so it could influence its leaders in private, the advisers said. U.S. officials were pushing Israel to minimize civilian casualties. And the president and his top aides were advocating for a two-state solution once the conflict was over.

The previously unreported meeting of officials underscores how Biden’s handling of what is arguably the biggest foreign policy crisis of his presidency is dividing a White House that has prided itself on running a disciplined and united operation. The Israel-Gaza war has roiled the administration more than any

SEE BIDEN ON A2



LEO CORREA/AP

## Family’s hopes realized with 4-year-old girl’s return home

BY MARIANA ALFARO, ABIGAIL HAUSLOHNER AND CHRISTIAN DAVENPORT

Last Friday, Abigail Edan turned 4. The little girl spent her birthday in captivity, held hostage by Hamas.

On Oct. 7, she watched her mother, Smadar, get shot and killed by Hamas militants who broke into their home. Her father was shielding her but was gunned down moments later. She crawled out from under his body and sought refuge at a neighbor’s house. But militants found her there and took her hostage along with the family of five living next door, her relatives said.

For 50 days, Abigail’s family did not give up hope that the child — whom they have described as a precocious toddler who “ran” her household —

would return home.

On Sunday, their hopes came true. Abigail, a dual citizen of Israel and the United States, was the first American hostage freed by Hamas as part of a deal struck with the Israeli military that the Biden administration helped broker amid the ongoing war. She was the youngest of the 10 Americans believed to be taken hostage after the Oct. 7 attack by Hamas on Israel.

“We hoped and prayed today would come,” Abigail’s cousin, Noa Naftali, and her great-aunt, Liz Hirsh Naftali, said in a statement Sunday after her release. “There are no words to express our relief and gratitude that Abigail is safe and coming home.”

On the day of the attack, Abigail’s family was in the home they shared on Kibbutz Kfar Azza,

SEE HOSTAGE ON A7



COURTESY OF LIZ HIRSH NAFTALI

**FROM TOP:** Residents watch as a helicopter carrying hostages who were released by Hamas lands in Israel on Sunday. Abigail Edan, left, a dual U.S.-Israeli citizen, was one of the hostages released on Sunday. Her parents, Roy and Smadar Edan, also pictured, were killed in Hamas’s cross-border attack Oct. 7.

**Vermont shooting:** Three Palestinian students left hospitalized. **A8**

**‘Strange alliance’:** Netanyahu, Hamas face possible end to power. **A9**



ANDREA DICENZO FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

A view from the luxury Shangri-La Dubai hotel. The UAE has gleaming cityscapes built by oil wealth.

## In UAE, sustainability comes with caveats

Host of COP28 is building solar projects even as it ramps up its oil capacity

BY CHICO HARLAN

ABU DHABI — Even before visitors leave the baggage claim here, they have a sense of the vision the United Arab Emirates wants to project: A billboard-sized image shows rows of solar panels extending across the desert. The country’s leaders tout a “groundbreaking” transition to a green economy. Even the UAE’s oil company frames itself as a climate-conscious pioneer, with a plan to be net

zero by 2045.

But in the nation hosting this year’s global climate talks, which start Thursday in Dubai, the definition of what it means to be green comes with some caveats.

That’s because this Persian Gulf state, in waters miles offshore, is ramping up its oil capacity like never before. It is building artificial islands, with subsidiaries dredging sand and hauling in rock, to

SEE UAE ON A11

### CHINA’S GLOBAL LEAP

## Beijing builds strategic port network

BY LIZ SLY AND JÚLIA LEDUR

A decade ago, Chinese President Xi Jinping launched the Maritime Silk Road, the oceanic component of his flagship Belt and Road Initiative aimed at improving China’s access to world markets by investing in transportation infrastructure. The initiative’s investments have since slowed as Chinese growth falters, the United States pushes back and countries question the indebtedness the projects brought.

But China has already secured a significant stake in a network of global ports that are central to world trade and freedom of navigation. Although the stated goal of the investments was commercial,

Investments over past decade have significant military implications

the United States and its allies have grown increasingly concerned about the potential military implications.

Xi has frequently talked of his ambition to turn China into a “maritime superpower.” The port network offers a glimpse into the reach of those ambitions.

China’s ambitious sea route runs south from the coast of China through the major transit route of the Indian Ocean and the busiest

maritime choke points of the Middle East, ending up in Europe.

When Xi announced his plan, China had stakes in 44 ports globally, providing a foundation for his strategy.

A decade later, China owns or operates ports and terminals at nearly 100 locations in over 50 countries, spanning every ocean and every continent. Many are located along some of the world’s most strategic waterways.

The majority of the investments have been made by companies owned by the Chinese government, effectively making Beijing and the Chinese Communist Party the biggest operator of the ports that lie at the heart of global supply

SEE PORTS ON A10

## She lost a dog to flood, then another by force

BY WILLIAM WAN

Teffney Worthy was trying to unlock the door to her apartment in Northeast Washington on Saturday afternoon when a man ran up, his face covered by a black ski mask.

“Give me your dog, or I’m going to kill you,” he yelled.

She said she could tell from his voice he was young — maybe a teenager — but he spoke the words menacingly. She saw in his

hand what appeared to be a Taser.

She looked down at her puppy, a 6-month-old French bulldog named Hendrix.

Worthy had just gotten Hendrix in September. He had eased Worthy’s grief after her first French bulldog was one of 10 dogs that had died in a flood at a D.C. doggy day care that summer. Some days, she’d sob at the thought of how her previous puppy had drowned. Hendrix,

with his soft white coat and brown spots, would lay his head on her lap and nuzzle her.

Worthy had heard about a rash of increasingly brazen dognappings in D.C., crimes that had particularly targeted valuable French bulldogs like hers: three taken in Southeast the week before, two stolen in Southwest in July, all at gunpoint. Last week, while walking Hendrix with a relative, they had even

SEE DOG ON A4

### IN THE NEWS

**End-of-life care** The death of Rosalynn Carter, and the survival of her husband, have drawn attention to an achingly difficult question: when to choose hospice. **A3**

**Gun violence** A year after an eighth-grader was fatally shot in his Maryland front yard, a community vows to keep seeking justice. **B1**

#### THE NATION

**A guide** to last week’s action in Donald Trump’s criminal and civil cases, as well as what lies ahead. **A4**  
**What’s behind** Trump’s improved approval ratings since 2021? **A4**

#### THE WORLD

**Women who** gave birth after being raped during Ethiopia’s civil war are struggling with a hidden agony as they try to rebuild their lives, often ostracized even by their own families. **A6**

#### THE ECONOMY

**The Help Desk** offers tips on how to prepare for, capture, edit and share a holiday photo you can be proud of. **A15**

#### THE REGION

**Jurisdictions** in Virginia sued drugmakers, alleging they conspired with benefits managers to hike insulin prices. **B1**

**About 1 in 4** state lawmakers in Maryland were not originally elected to their seats but were instead appointed, an analysis found. **B1**  
**A D.C. Council** proposal would establish pedestrian corridors starting in 2026, closing roads to cars for at least some hours weekly. **B1**

#### STYLE

**On a nostalgic concert** tour, “American Idol” stars Clay Aiken and Ruben Studdard reflect on the lasting prize of friendship. **C1**  
**Swifties** and Brazilian authorities are searching for accountability after a sweltering concert that left one woman dead. **C1**

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