

Report cites failures before massacre

Sheriff's office should have taken guns, detained reservist, Maine panel says

By Nick Stoico and John Hilliard
GLOBE STAFF
and Daniel Kool
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A state commission investigating the mass shooting in Lewiston issued a searing indictment of the Sagadahoc County Sheriff's Office Friday, saying it had probable cause to place Robert R. Card in protective custody and remove

his firearms in the month before he killed 18 people on Oct. 25.

A 30-page interim report cited multiple failures by officers in both the sheriff's department and at the US Army Reserve unit, where Card's erratic and threatening behavior so alarmed his superiors they had him evaluated at a psychiatric facility in the summer of 2023.

In one episode the commission noted that a Sagadahoc deputy's decision to instead have Card's relatives try to remove his guns, despite knowing he was suffering from mental illness and had threatened to commit mass shootings, was an "abdication of law enforcement's responsibility."

The commission, convened by Governor Janet Mills in November to investigate the shooting, was unanimous in its finding the Sagadahoc Sheriff's Office could have taken Card into custody under Maine's "yellow flag" law, which



'There were several opportunities that, if taken, may have changed the course of events.'

COMMISSION REPORT, citing the office of Sheriff Joel Merry (left)

is designed to temporarily remove firearms from those in mental health crisis who pose a risk to themselves or others, the report said.
"Robert Card Jr, is solely responsible

for his own conduct, and he may have committed a mass shooting even if the guns he possessed in September 2023 were removed from his house," the commission said.
LEWISTON, Page A7



Content creator and entrepreneur Britney Branch produces videos for multiple digital platforms, often from her Revere home.

The power of the pitch

By Esha Walia
GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

Britney Branch, dressed in a white turtleneck and leather snake print boots, is ready.

She's picked a spot with perfect lighting this February morning: a common area in her Revere apartment building with bright, beachside windows. Her white water bottle, coffee, rose gold MacBook, and planner sit, carefully arranged, on a small table. Phone on. Tripod positioned. A pile of fancy boxes by her side, waiting to be opened. She hits record.

"So I just got this package in the mail," Branch, 31, tells the camera, her pink-manicured hand displaying a small teal box. "It's from IT Cosmetics. I really love this brand. I've been using it for years, and it is their 'confidence in a gel' cream."

Though her days filming companies' free product packages make her career as an "in-

Inside the lives and finances of Boston-area influencers (it's not just about getting all that free stuff in the mail, though that's pretty cool)

fluencer" look easy, Branch has worked hard to build her brand as a beauty and wellness expert and to get to a point where she was able to quit her corporate marketing job. She is one of thousands of influencers in the Boston area who make up a new class of internet celebrities promoting products. Influencing has only become a viable career in recent years, with some local influencers telling the Globe they made at least \$100,000 last year.

Branch earned more than \$60,000 from brand deals on social media alone last year, she said, and additionally earns commissions when people buy products after clicking links she shares. For a recent \$2,500 campaign with Star Market, Branch perused grocery aisles and, in her kitchen, cooked salmon and broccoli as her voiceover explained the importance of a varied diet, or "eating the rainbow."

This is the world of influencer marketing.
INFLUENCERS, Page A6

Ga. judge: Trump case can proceed

McAfee forces resignation of special prosecutor, criticizes DA's judgment

By Richard Fausset and Danny Hakim
NEW YORK TIMES

ATLANTA — An Atlanta judge ruled Friday that Fani Willis, the Fulton County district attorney, could continue leading the election interference prosecution of former president Trump and his allies in Georgia, but only if her former romantic partner, Nathan Wade, withdrew from the case.

The highly anticipated ruling by Judge Scott McAfee of Fulton Superior Court cut a middle path between removing Willis for a conflict of interest, which defense lawyers had sought, and her full vindication. The judge sharply criticized Willis for dating Wade, whom she hired as a special prosecutor on the case, calling it a "tremendous lapse in judgment."

Hours after the ruling, Willis said that Wade had offered his resignation, and that she had accepted it.

McAfee had rejected a defense claim that the relationship had raised an actual conflict of interest by giving Willis a financial stake in the case. But he found that it had raised "a significant appearance of impropriety" that needed to be addressed.

Disqualifying Willis and her office from the case was not necessary, the judge said, when "a less drastic and sufficiently remedial option is available."
GEORGIA, Page A7



District Attorney Fani Willis showed a "tremendous lapse in judgment," said Judge Scott McAfee.

Report of rape at shelter stirs safety worries

Immigrant supporters fear case will spark crackdown

By Samantha J. Gross, Matt Stout, Sean Cotter, and Esmey Jimenez
GLOBE STAFF

The news of the alleged rape of a teenage girl by a 26-year-old man at a Rockland hotel sheltering migrant families rippled through the political world in Massachusetts, intensifying debate over the state's policy of housing migrant families in hotels and motels, and bringing into question safety measures to protect them.

The suspect, Cory B. Alvarez, is being held without bail after pleading not guilty to a charge of child rape Thursday in Hingham District Court. The US Immigration and Customs Enforcement placed an immigration detainer against him with the Plymouth County sheriff's office, said a spokesman for the federal agency, James Covington. The procedure is used against noncitizens accused of a crime whom ICE wants to take into custody if they are released by local authorities.

The charges were greeted with a sense of dread by immigration advocates and shelter providers whose efforts to provide temporary housing for the large number of migrants have been met by resistance in some communities.

Aaron Reichlin-Melnick, policy director at the American Immigration Council, feared that "people will use this in the same way that they have used horrific incidents caused by other minority populations as an excuse to crack down on a minority population."

RAPE, Page A10



A NEIGHBORHOOD DEVASTATED — Kelly Plum walked with her children amid debris after a tornado struck Lakeview, Ohio. A parade of storms battered towns across the Midwest late Thursday and Friday. **A2.**

VOL. 305, NO. 76
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Suggested retail price
\$3.50



A wee bit of rays

Saturday: A sun, cloud mix. High 51-56, low 40-45.

Sunday: A few sprinkles. High 54-59, low 33-38.

Weather and comics, **D4-5.**
Obituaries, **C9.**

Ruling could spell trouble for Nantucket home rentals

Case strikes at heart of homeowner rights, economic well-being

By Dana Gerber
GLOBE STAFF
and Esha Walia
GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

A court ruling this week could force Nantucket to restrict short-term rentals, the latest wrinkle in the exclusive island's multiyear battle over the right of homeowners to lease out their properties in this notoriously housing-starved town.

The decision Thursday by Massachusetts Land Court Judge Michael D. Vhay casts uncertainty over the fate of the many island properties that are regularly rented out during the summer season. Vhay ruled in favor of a Nantucket homeowner who sued her neighbors and the town in 2022, finding that her neighbors' "principal use"

of their property for short-term rentals violated the zoning rules for that neighborhood.

The ruling could compel Nantucket to take a firmer stand on regulating short-term rentals than it typically has in the past, and local leaders say it could have major implications across the island, where short-term rentals figure prominently in the economy.

"A lot of people have been lulled to sleep, not realizing that the court was going to step in and tell them how to run their tourist industry. That has now happened and, may I say, it's a disaster," said Robert E. McLaughlin, a lawyer for Peter and Linda Grape, the defendants in the lawsuit.

The Grapes charge as much as \$8,000 per week for their four-bedroom home in summer, according to court documents.

The case now heads back to the Nantucket Zoning Board of Appeals, which has 45 days to start deliberating.

NANTUCKET, Page A6