



Mostly cloudy 71/46 • Tomorrow: Partly sunny 58/44 B6

Democracy Dies in Darkness

SATURDAY, APRIL 20, 2024 • \$3

Foreign aid bills move forward in House

Rare bipartisan coalition helps speaker push along Ukraine, Israel funding

BY LEIGH ANN CALDWELL AND MARIANNA SOTOMAYOR

A bipartisan coalition in the House, led by Speaker Mike Johnson (R-La.), has overcome a key procedural hurdle to advance a \$95 billion foreign aid bill, despite objections from far-right lawmakers.

The vote puts the legislation to fund Ukraine, Israel and Taiwan on track to pass the House as soon as Saturday. It comes after Israel carried out a strike on Iran early Friday in retaliation for a barrage of missiles and drones launched by Iran last weekend, an Israeli official said.

The latest news from the Middle East did not appear to change the likelihood that the House would pass more aid to Israel, even though some Democrats are bluntly critical of the mounting civilian casualties in Gaza. Most Republicans are expected to back it. Plus, it includes humanitarian aid for Gaza, which Democrats want.

A rare coalition of Democrats and Republicans — 316 — voted overwhelmingly to pass the procedural measure, known as a rule, to advance the four-part legislation Friday morning. In a sign of how tenuous this move is for Republicans, more Democrats — 165

SEE AID ON A10

NATO vow: Alliance tells Ukraine it's rounding up air defenses. **A10**

Russian arms: Factories are in overdrive to outgun Ukraine. **A14**



ABEDIN TAHERKENAREH/EPA-EFE/SHUTTERSTOCK

Demonstrators hold portraits and wave Iranian and Palestinian flags during an anti-Israel rally in Tehran on Friday after an overnight Israeli strike in the vicinity of a military facility and nuclear labs in central Iran produced no damage, according to Iranian authorities.

After Israeli strike in Iran, a step back

BY STEVE HENDRIX, SHANE HARRIS, SUSANNAH GEORGE AND MICHAEL BIRNBAUM

JERUSALEM — Israel and Iran appeared Friday to back away from full-blown war after weeks of escalation, as a limited Israeli military strike received a muted response from Tehran.

The nighttime operation, in the vicinity of a military facility and nuclear labs located in central Iran, seemed designed to send a message to Tehran without

Escalation fears abate as move causes no damage, draws quiet response

triggering an immediate backlash, dampening an increasingly volatile tit-for-tat spate of attacks in recent weeks. Iranian authorities said almost immediately that no damage was caused by the Israeli strike in the central province of Isfahan and that reported

explosions were just antiaircraft measures.

An Israeli official, who confirmed the strike on the condition of anonymity to discuss the government's thinking, said it was intended only to convey to Iran that Israel has the ability to hit targets inside the country. U.S. officials also were unusually silent, a tactic, some of them said, that was intended to encourage all parties to move on without further violence.

While both sides appeared to downplay the incident and the

prospect of further escalation seemed to be easing, analysts said each side had mismeasured the other in recent weeks, and that it was too early to declare that a regional war that could pull in the United States and other world powers had been averted.

A person familiar with official discussions about the attack, who also spoke on the condition of anonymity as they were not authorized to discuss it publicly, said the strike was “carefully calibrated.”

SEE IRAN ON A9

Uneasy calm: Iranians in one city describe the mood after the strike. **A9**

Columbia University: Tensions simmer a day after students' arrests. **A6**

U.S. agrees to withdraw its troops from Niger

Deal is struck with junta that seized power and called presence ‘illegal’

BY JOHN HUDSON

NAPLES, Italy — The United States informed the government of Niger on Friday that it agreed to its request to withdraw U.S. troops from the West African country, said three U.S. officials, a move the Biden administration had resisted and one that will transform Washington's counterterrorism posture in the region.

The agreement will spell the end of a U.S. troop presence that totaled more than 1,000 and throw into question the status of a \$110 million U.S. air base that is only six years old. It is the culmination of a military coup last year that ousted the country's democratically elected government and installed a junta that declared America's military presence there “illegal.”

“The prime minister has asked us to withdraw U.S. troops, and we have agreed to do that,” a senior State Department official told The Washington Post in an interview. This official, like others, spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss the sensitive situation.

The decision was sealed in a meeting earlier Friday between Deputy Secretary of State Kurt Campbell and Niger's prime minister, Ali Lamine Zeine.

“We've agreed to begin conversations within days about how to develop a plan” to withdraw troops, said the senior State Department official. “They've agreed that we do it in an orderly and responsible way. And we will need to probably dispatch folks to Niamey to sit down and hash it out. And that of course will be a Defense Department project.”

A Pentagon spokesman did not immediately offer comment.

The United States had paused its security cooperation with Niger, limiting U.S. activities — including unarmed drone flights. But U.S. service members have remained in the country, unable to fulfill their responsibilities and feeling left in the dark by leadership at the U.S. Embassy as negotiations continued, according to a recent whistleblower complaint.

The Sahel region, including neighboring Mali and Burkina Faso, has become a global hot spot for Islamist extremism in recent years, and Niger saw such attacks spike dramatically following the coup. For U.S. officials who viewed the base as an important counterterrorism asset, the withdrawal agreement is a significant setback. “I think it's undeniable that it was a platform in a unique part of African geography,” the State Department official said.

For years, the Pentagon has deployed a mix of mostly Air Force and Army personnel to Niger to support a mission scrutinizing militant groups in the region. Until the coup last year, the

SEE NIGER ON A14



SALWAN GEORGES/THE WASHINGTON POST

Richard Gee and his wife, Mary, walk on their property in Charles Town, W.Va., in January with daughters Isabella, 14, and Maria, 16, near lines that carry electricity from coal-powered plants.

Va. data centers offer coal a reprieve

A helicopter hovers over the Gee family farm, the noisy rattle echoing inside their home in this rural part of West Virginia. It's holding surveyors who are eyeing space for yet another power line next to the property — a line that will take electricity generated from coal plants in the state to address a drain on power driven by the world's internet hub in Northern Virginia 35 miles away.

There, massive data centers with computers processing nearly 70 percent of global digital traffic are gobbling up electricity

Rural residents resist influx of lines bringing power from aging plants in nearby states to global internet hub

BY ANTONIO OLIVO IN CHARLES TOWN, W.VA.

at a rate officials overseeing the power grid say is unsustainable unless two things happen: Several hundred miles of new transmission lines must be built, slicing through neighborhoods and farms in Virginia and three neighboring states. And antiquated coal-powered electricity plants that had been scheduled to go offline will need to keep running to fuel the increasing need for more power, undermining clean energy goals.

“It's not right,” said Mary Gee, SEE POWER LINES ON A12

DEI on defense as foes hype bias ruling

BY JULIAN MARK

The Supreme Court's unanimous decision this week in favor of a St. Louis police sergeant was almost universally cast as a win for workers, who now have a lower bar for proving discrimination claims. But it's also being held up by conservative activists intent on dismantling diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives, who say it will give them added firepower to quash workplace programs reserved for minorities, women and other underrepresented groups.

America First Legal, which has filed more than a dozen complaints over DEI policies at such companies as McDonald's, Morgan Stanley and the National Football League, is already factoring the ruling into its strategy, according to general counsel Gene Hamilton. The nonprofit, founded by a former White House adviser to Donald Trump, will be “citing this decision in cases as we continue to dismantle so-called DEI programs, which almost always overtly discriminate against American citizens based on their race and sex,” he said.

But civil rights groups such as American Civil Liberties Union dismissed such interpretations as fearmongering with no grounding in law. “These scare-tactics

SEE DISCRIMINATION ON A5

IN THE NEWS

Forever chemicals The EPA for the first time designated two types of PFAS as hazardous substances, which might force polluters to pay for cleanup. **A5**

Close call Two flights at Reagan National Airport were involved in a near miss incident being investigated by the FAA. **B1**

THE NATION **StopAntisemitism** has flagged critics of Israel's actions in Gaza, leading some to lose jobs. **A3** **With jurors seated,** opening statements are set for Monday in Donald Trump's trial. **A4**

THE WORLD **Flaunting her** trademark yellow attire and “RuPaul” fame,” drag queen Nymphia Wind has become an ambassador for Taiwan and its inclusive culture. **A8**

THE ECONOMY **The Biden** administration announced two decisions that aim to safeguard Alaska's last wild places from development. **A11** **Republicans** in the House tucked a TikTok crackdown into foreign-aid legislation in efforts to force a sale or ban. **A14**

THE REGION **Virginia Gov.** Glenn Youngkin (R) and Democratic leaders are heading into the unknown territory of a state budget do-over. **B1** **Five people** were shot and injured at a Prince George's park where students had gathered for “senior skip day.” **B1**

STYLE **Anna Sawai**, who stars as an interpreter at the heart of the TV series “Shogun,” effortlessly straddles two cultures. **C1**

SPORTS **A Virginia couple** met cute over sharp objects. Now they're vying for world titles in ax throwing. **D1**

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