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Democracy Dies in Darkness

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War's path puts Zelensky in a bind

Russian advances, stalled U.S. aid leave Ukraine with few good options

BY ISABELLE KHURSHUDYAN

KYIV — As Russia steps up airstrikes and once again advances on the battlefield in Ukraine more than two years into its bloody invasion, there is no end to the fighting in sight. And President Volodymyr Zelensky's options for what to do next — much less how to win the war — range from bad to worse.

Zelensky has said Ukraine will accept nothing less than the return of all its territory, including land that Russia has controlled since 2014. But with the battle lines changing little in the last year, militarily retaking the swaths of east and south Ukraine that Russia now occupies — about 20 percent of the country — appears increasingly unlikely.

Negotiating with Russian President Vladimir Putin to end the war — something Zelensky has rejected as long as Russian troops remain on Ukrainian land — is politically toxic. The Ukrainian public is hugely opposed to surrendering territory, and Putin has shown no willingness to accept anything short of Ukraine's capitulation to his demands.

The status quo is awful. With the fight now a grinding stalemate, Ukrainians are dying on the battlefield daily. But a ceasefire is also a nonstarter, Ukrainians say, because it would just give the Russians time to replenish

SEE UKRAINE ON A20



HEIDI LEVINE FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

Six months on, a land frozen in time

In Israel's south and north, enclaves remain front lines — and memorials to the horror of Oct. 7

BY SHIRA RUBIN AND WILLIAM BOOTH
ALONG ISRAEL'S BORDERS
WITH THE GAZA STRIP AND LEBANON

Six months after Oct. 7, Israelis are struggling to recover their bearings, their core, their belief that Jews are safe in Israel.

In Israel's south and north, more than 120,000 people have been evacuated, their neighborhoods transformed into front lines. The homes sit empty, toys still scattered in front yards.

In the southern kibbutzim, where 3,000 Hamas-led fighters launched a surprise assault on that indelible Saturday morn-

ing, the residents return not to live but to serve as guides for visitors from abroad. They give heart-rending tours, recounting how 1,200 people were slaughtered and 253 hostages were dragged into Gaza, according to Israeli government figures.

Evacuees fear that their communities are becoming places frozen in time and loss. They worry that if no solution is found for them — if security is not restored along the borders they share with their enemies — the rest of the country will remain exposed, in a permanent state of existential danger.

There is nationwide support for the military's punishing war against Hamas,

SEE ISRAEL ON A10

Visitors tour a memorial on the site of the Tribe of Nova music festival, where on Oct. 7, Hamas militants killed hundreds of people and dragged dozens of others to Gaza, according to Israeli authorities. Survivors of the attack here and elsewhere give heart-rending tours.

Weapons: Calls mount globally for the U.S. and Germany to stop arming Israel. **A11**

Pier project: Biden officials scramble to finalize plans amid complications. **A15**

Gaza going hungry: Starvation threatens to leave children with lifelong harm. **A17**

Fidelity to Israel snares Biden

GAZA CARNAGE TESTS 'ROCK-SOLID' BOND

A half-year after Oct. 7, policy options are few

BY KAREN DEYOUNG

Just after dawn on Oct. 7, President Biden watched live television images of rockets raining down on Israel from the Gaza Strip as top aides briefed him on the Hamas militants who were rampaging across southern Israeli towns and villages. Dead and mutilated bodies had been left strewn on the ground and hostages were being dragged across the border into the Palestinian enclave.

He had already spoken on the phone with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Biden said later that day in a forceful statement from the White House State Dining Room. "The United States stands with Israel . . . We will not ever fail to have their back," he declared, calling his administration's support for Israeli security "rock-solid and unwavering."

U.S. defense and intelligence officials had been ordered "to make sure Israel has what it needs" to defend itself against the Hamas terrorist attack, the president said. U.S.-made Israeli warplanes were already striking inside Gaza.

SEE GAZA ON A12

ELECTION 2024

Candidate says he lied to ranger about gunshot

GOP Senate hopeful says wound is from combat, not accident in park

BY LIZ GOODWIN

Tim Sheehy, a charismatic former Navy SEAL who is the Republican candidate in a U.S. Senate race in Montana that could determine control of the chamber, has cited a gunshot wound he received in combat that he said left a bullet in his right arm as evidence of his toughness.

"I got thick skin — though it's not thick enough. I have a bullet stuck in this arm still from Afghanistan," Sheehy said in a video of a December campaign event posted on social media, pointing to his right forearm.

It was one of several inconsistent accounts Sheehy has shared

about being shot while deployed. And in October 2015, more than a year after he left active duty, he told a different story.

After a family visit to Montana's Glacier National Park, he told a National Park Service ranger that he accidentally shot himself in the right arm that day when his Colt .45 revolver fell and discharged while he was loading his vehicle in the park, according to a record of the episode filed in U.S. District Court for the District of Montana.

The self-inflicted gunshot left a bullet lodged in Sheehy's right forearm, according to the written description accompanying the federal citation that the ranger, a federal law enforcement officer, gave Sheehy for illegally discharging his weapon in a national park. The citation said the description was based on Sheehy's telling of events.

Asked this past week about the

SEE CANDIDATE ON A6

After a denied abortion, two people are now bound by a child.

Would a reunion with her 1-year-old offer the healing a Texas woman needed?

BY AMBER FERGUSON
IN HOUSTON

It had been nearly a year since Evelyn had seen Olivia in person, and she had grown nervous about a planned reunion.

When she finally arrived at the three-story townhouse where a party for the baby she placed for adoption was being held, she was greeted by Carolyn Whiteman, the 44-year-old woman Evelyn had chosen to raise her child. Whiteman held bright-eyed Olivia in the doorway.

"I can't believe she's gotten so big. She's so cute," Evelyn, 25, said, beaming with tears in her eyes.

For hours, Evelyn's and Whiteman's families marveled at Olivia's eight teeth and how she crawled and grabbed their pant legs to pull herself up on her feet.

"It's so crazy being here and looking at Olivia," Evelyn's dad told Whiteman. "She crawls just the way Evelyn did when she was

SEE ADOPTION ON A18



CALLAGHAN O'HARE FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

Evelyn, 25, holds a stuffed bear that is the same weight as her daughter, Olivia, was at birth. Evelyn gave the baby up for adoption to Carolyn Whiteman, a human resources executive.

BUSINESS

As child labor violations spike, states are divided on rewriting laws.

THE NATION

Radar gaps leave millions of Americans vulnerable to severe weather. **A8**

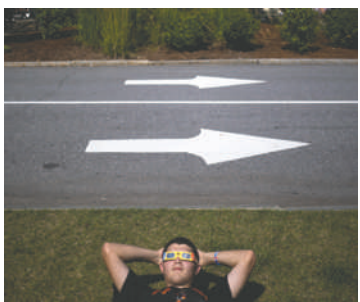


BOOK WORLD

G A debut novel asks: How many husbands does one woman need?

ARTS & STYLE

In his first period piece, Michael Douglas makes "Franklin" his own.



TRAVEL

G Eclipse tourism has small towns fretting about port-a-potties and traffic.

METRO

What to expect in D.C. during the eclipse, and how best to view it. **C2**

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