

# Errant ship wasn't seen as threat to Key Bridge

Officials say they feared terrorism and wear of time, not a cargo vessel

BY MICHAEL LARIS AND PETER HERMANN

They worked for decades to keep the Francis Scott Key Bridge from falling into the water. After the World Trade Center's twin towers were destroyed by hijacked airplanes, Maryland transportation officials worried that the Baltimore span — known to those testing its durability as Bridge No. BCZ472 — could be taken down by terrorists. Transportation police bought boats to patrol around bridge piers in the state.

After a bridge carrying Interstate 35 motorists over the Mississippi River collapsed in Minneapolis in 2007, Maryland inspectors rushed to examine the Key Bridge, hunting for similar design errors and other weaknesses that could lead to catastrophe.

Then, this week, a ship hit it. For 47 years, Maryland inspectors and safety officials had spent many thousands of hours and millions of dollars inspecting, prodding and protecting the 9,090-foot-long bridge, trying to keep it strong amid the onslaught of time, weather and vehicles. But state officials worried about terrorism had focused on bombs and bad guys in small boats, not an errant 95,000-gross-ton container ship, according to a former official with the Maryland Transportation Authority, the independent agency that runs the Key Bridge and the state's other tolled bridges, highways and tunnels, and a former senior state transportation official.

"The assumption was a truck bomb or something like that," the former senior transportation official said.

SEE BRIDGE ON A6

**Cleanup:** Massive crane arrives at scene to clear debris. **A6**

**In limbo:** Port workers worry over impact of harbor closure. **B1**

Anticipating a conflict with China, the U.S. and its Pacific allies are retooling warfare



SARAH L. VOISIN/THE WASHINGTON POST

# 'We train joint. We fight joint.'



AARON FAVILA/AP

**TOP:** Members of the 3rd Marine Littoral Regiment train on an antitank missile range in Hawaii on Jan. 25. **ABOVE:** A Chinese airstrip on Mischief Reef in the South China Sea. The Marines seek to adapt to a maritime fight that may play out along thousands of miles of Asian islands and coastline.

BY ELLEN NAKASHIMA  
IN POHAKULOA TRAINING RANGE, HAWAII

The Marine gunner knelt on the rocky red soil of a 6,000-foot-high volcanic plain. He positioned the rocket launcher on his shoulder, focused the sights on his target, a rusted armored vehicle 400 yards away, and fired.

Two seconds later, a BANG.

"Perfect hit," said his platoon commander.

The gunner, 23-year-old Lance Cpl. Caden Ehrhardt, is a member of the 3rd Marine Littoral Regiment, a new formation that reflects the military's latest concept for fighting adversaries like China from remote, strategic islands in the western Pacific. These units are designed to be smaller, lighter, more mobile — and, their leaders argue, more lethal. Coming out of 20 years of land combat in the Middle East, the Marines are striving to adapt to a maritime fight that could play out across thousands of miles of islands and coastline in Asia.

Instead of launching traditional amphibious assaults, these nimble groups are in-

SEE MARINES ON A10

# Biden signs off on arms transfers

NO CONDITIONS ON SUPPLY TO ISRAEL

One-ton bombs linked to massive casualties

BY JOHN HUDSON

The Biden administration in recent days quietly authorized the transfer of billions of dollars in bombs and fighter jets to Israel despite Washington's concerns about an anticipated military offensive in southern Gaza that could threaten the lives of hundreds of thousands of Palestinian civilians.

The new arms packages include more than 1,800 MK84 2,000-pound bombs and 500 MK82 500-pound bombs, according to Pentagon and State Department officials familiar with the matter. The 2,000-pound bombs have been linked to previous mass-casualty events throughout Israel's military campaign in Gaza. These officials, like some others, spoke to The Washington Post on the condition of anonymity because recent authorizations have not been disclosed publicly.

The development underscores that while rifts have emerged between the United States and Israel over the war's conduct, the Biden administration views weapons transfers as off-limits when considering how to influence the actions of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

"We have continued to support Israel's right to defend itself," said a White House official. "Condi-

SEE ISRAEL ON A9

**Federal Insider:** Insights into one senator's Middle East views. **A2**

**Military draft:** For Netanyahu, a crisis over the ultra-Orthodox. **A9**

 **ELECTION 2024**

# Big-money GOP cavalry riding back to Trump's side

BY JOSH DAWSEY, JEFF STEIN, MICHAEL SCHERER AND ELIZABETH DWOSKIN

The day after a pro-Trump mob stormed the Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021, billionaire and GOP megadonor Nelson Peltz called the insurrection a "disgrace" and expressed remorse for voting for Donald Trump. "I'm sorry I did that," Peltz said of supporting Trump in 2020.

But earlier this month, Peltz had breakfast with Trump and other billionaires — including hotelier Steve Wynn, Tesla and X CEO Elon Musk and former Marvel chairman Isaac Perlmutter — at Peltz's luxurious oceanfront mansion in Palm Beach, Fla., according to people with knowledge of the meeting, who spoke on the condition of anonymity to describe the private gathering.

Peltz, a renowned activist investor currently in a battle over Disney, then told the Financial Times that he would "probably" vote for the GOP front-runner in 2024. The New York Times first reported that Trump dined with

SEE TRUMP ON A4

LOUIS GOSSETT JR. 1936-2024

# Commanding the screen, pushing against boundaries

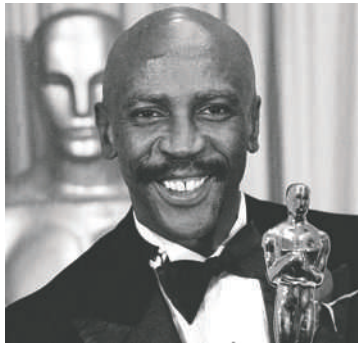
BY ADAM BERNSTEIN

Louis Gossett Jr., an actor who brought authority to hundreds of screen roles, winning an Oscar as a Marine drill instructor in "An Officer and a Gentleman" and an Emmy Award as a wise, older guide to the enslaved Kunta Kinte in the groundbreaking miniseries "Roots," died March 29 at a rehabilitation center in Santa Monica, Calif. He was 87.

His first cousin Neal L. Gossett confirmed the death but said he did not know the immediate cause. In recent years, Louis Gossett Jr. battled prostate cancer and respiratory illness caused by toxic mold in his former home in Malibu, Calif.

In a career spanning nearly seven decades, Mr. Gossett became one of the most recognizable actors of his generation. With his gleaming shaved skull and the sinewy 6-foot-3 physique of a former college basketball player, he brimmed with magnetism.

In his drive to shatter boundaries as an African American per-



AMY SUSSMAN/AP

**Louis Gossett Jr. won the best supporting actor Oscar in 1983 for his role as a drill sergeant in "An Officer and a Gentleman."**

former, he worked on Broadway and other stages starting in the 1950s and appeared in dramas such as Lorraine Hansberry's landmark "A Raisin in the Sun," Jean Genet's anti-colonialism play "The Blacks" and Conor Cruise O'Brien's "Murderous Angels," in the last as the ill-fated

SEE GOSSETT ON A5

**Appreciation:** When "Cousin Lou" inspired a young man to act. **C1**

# Chinese students fear test at U.S. border

Recent searches have some wondering if studying abroad is worth it

BY LILY KUO AND CATE CADELL

Stay calm. Answer their questions but don't volunteer more than asked. Have a lawyer's number ready. Pack clothing from Western brands, and don't carry any emblems of the Chinese Communist Party.

These kinds of tips on how to make it through U.S. border control have filled online discussion forums as frustrated Chinese students describe being questioned, sometimes for hours, and having their belongings searched at U.S. airports while on their way to American universities.

Others recount the heartbreak and confusion of being turned away at the border, their visas canceled without a clear explanation.

Chinese scholars, officials and students say they are being unfairly targeted by U.S. border officials, adding to growing doubt and disillusionment among Chinese students — a key source of tuition fees and talent for American universities — about whether coming to the United States is

SEE STUDENTS ON A12



JANE WU

**Ashley Chen, a graduate of Tsinghua University, is applying for U.S. doctoral programs despite reports of visa woes.**

## IN THE NEWS

**Diesel crackdown** The EPA, aiming to hasten electric-vehicle adoption, finalized a climate change rule requiring makers of trucks, buses and delivery vans to slash emissions. **A14**

**Youngkin says no** Virginia's governor vetoed bills that aimed to create a legal marijuana marketplace and raise the minimum wage. **B1**

**THE NATION** **A broader gag order** may be sought against Donald Trump in his hush money trial. **A2**

**The White House** is delaying until after the election rules outlining trans athletes' rights. **A3**

**THE WORLD** **Aid deliveries** by sea or air are a long way from meeting Gaza's basic requirements. **A8**

**Russian strikes** hit three Ukrainian energy stations, leaving many without power. **A12**

**THE ECONOMY** **Russian titanium** still flows to the West two years after the Ukraine invasion, despite pledges to break economic ties with Moscow. **A13**

**Rent hikes** would be capped in some federal-subsidized housing, in an expected Biden administration move. **A14**

**THE REGION** **The finger-pointing** has begun over the demise of an Alexandria arena for the Wizards and Capitals. **B1**

**A lawsuit alleges** age discrimination by the Washington Nationals over a discount the team offered to fans ages 21 to 39. **B1**

**STYLE** **The ties between** a conservative publisher and George Soros have triggered a backlash. **C1**

**SPORTS** **Dan Hurley**, the pugna-cious, soulful, brilliant coach eyeing a repeat title at U-Conn., has built an old-fashioned basketball behemoth. **D1**

BUSINESS NEWS.....A13  
COMICS.....C4  
OPINION PAGES.....A15  
OBITUARIES.....B4  
TELEVISION.....C3  
WORLD NEWS.....A8

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