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The aftermath of the Airport fire in Lake Elsinore, Calif. The fire has burned several homes in Orange and Riverside Counties.

DeSantis Digs In Against Abortion Referendum

By MICHAEL WINES

Less than eight weeks before Floridians will vote on an abortion-rights amendment to the state Constitution, a bitter standoff is escalating between Gov. Ron DeSantis and the amendment's backers over whether a string of state actions directed at the measure amount to a taxpayer-funded effort to defeat it at the polls.

The debate first erupted last week after the state Agency for Health Care Administration posted a 30-second video on social media that casts current Florida law — which bans almost all abortions after six weeks of pregnancy — as proof that “Florida cares about women and families.” The post links to an agency website that claims that the abortion rights measure, known as Amendment 4, “threatens women’s safety.” It adds: “Don’t let the fear-

Critics Call Florida Ads Opposing a Ballot Measure Illegal

mongers lie to you.”

At the same time, state criminal investigators were revealed to be belatedly examining whether some of nearly 911,000 signatures collected to place the measure on the November ballot might be fraudulent. State officials certified the signatures in February, and the deadline for challenging them has passed.

This week, the state health care agency has begun airing its social-media video as a commercial on Florida television, although the extent and cost of the ad campaign remains unclear. The agency’s media office did not address

questions about the campaign, referring instead to a statement by a DeSantis official about the value of public-service announcements.

On Tuesday, the American Civil Liberties Union of Florida, said it was preparing to file a lawsuit in state court on behalf of Floridians Protecting Freedom, which is campaigning for the amendment. The A.C.L.U. said the suit would allege that the agency is illegally spending taxpayer dollars on a political campaign against the measure.

“The government is trying every dirty trick they can to distract Floridians,” Lauren Brenzel, the campaign director at Floridians Protecting Freedom, said on Tuesday.

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OVERTURNED A ruling by a judge in North Dakota restores a woman’s right to an abortion. PAGE A11

FORECAST EASING FOR FIRES IN WEST

7 Million Acres Burned, the Most Since 2018

By VIK JOLLY and SOUMYA KARLAMANGLA

LAKE ELSINORE, Calif. — Joe McLean has lived in a two-bedroom home in a rural hillside neighborhood in Southern California for his entire life, and in that time he has seen plenty of fires. Every time, they blew by. Someone else’s house was taken.

This time was different.

A fire driven by searing heat and powerful winds roared across the Santa Ana Mountains and devoured his house in the community of El Cariso Village, leaving the structure a charred and mangled mess. His Ford Explorer, parked nearby, was reduced to a hunk of metal — tires blown, rims melted, windows shattered.

“My dad bought the place back in ’72 and I was born in ’81 and lived up there my whole life,” said Mr. McLean, who works as a carpenter. “Never thought it would happen. They’ve always taken care of us, you know. We have a very good Fire Department.”

The 23,000-acre fire, known as the Airport fire, was one of three major wildfires in Southern California that erupted during a severe heat wave and continued to swell on Thursday. The fires have collectively displaced tens of thousands of people, charred more than 100,000 acres and strained the state’s firefighting resources.

The California fires were among more than 65 large fires

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Peruvian Leader Imprisoned for Rights Abuses

By SEWELL CHAN

Alberto Fujimori, the former president of Peru who in his decade in office rebuilt the nation’s economy and quelled two deadly leftist insurgencies, but who was forced out by a corruption scandal and later imprisoned for human rights abuses, died on Wednesday in Lima, the capital. He was 86.

He died of cancer at his daughter Keiko Fujimori’s home, Ms. Fujimori confirmed in a post on X. He had also been treated for arrhythmia and other ailments.

A son of Japanese immigrants, Mr. Fujimori was an obscure agricultural engineer and political novice when he ran for the presidency in 1990, famously campaigning aboard a tractor. He stunned the nation by placing a close second in a crowded field and then defeating the establishment favorite, the novelist Mario Vargas Llosa, in a runoff.

In office, Mr. Fujimori tamed hyperinflation, unemployment and mismanagement; lifted economic growth and standards of living; and cracked down on drug trafficking. But he also showed little regard for Peru’s laws and institutions. He temporarily shut down Congress, governing by fiat for months. He was lauded for subduing the two insurgencies,

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President Alberto Fujimori celebrating his 1995 re-election in Lima. He was the most divisive leader in Peru’s modern history.

Biden Is Poised To Clear Strikes Deep in Russia

Consent for Kyiv Would Exclude U.S. Arms

This article is by David E. Sanger, Helene Cooper and Eric Schmitt.

WASHINGTON — President Biden appears on the verge of clearing the way for Ukraine to launch long-range Western weapons deep inside Russian territory, as long as it doesn’t use arms provided by the United States, European officials said.

The issue, which has long been debated in the administration, was expected to come to a head on Friday with the first official visit to the White House by Britain’s new prime minister, Keir Starmer.

Britain has already signaled to the United States that it is eager to let Ukraine use its “Storm Shadow” long-range missiles to strike at Russian military targets far from the Ukrainian border. But it wants explicit permission from Mr. Biden in order to demonstrate a coordinated strategy with the United States and France, which makes a similar missile. American officials say Mr. Biden has not made a decision, but will hear from Mr. Starmer on Friday.

If the president approves, the move could help Ukraine hold the line after it seizes Russian territory, as it did during its surprise incursion into Russia’s Kursk region. But Mr. Biden has hesitated to allow Ukraine to use American weapons in the same way, particularly after warnings from American intelligence agencies that Russia could respond by aiding Iran in targeting American forces in the Middle East.

On Thursday, White House officials insisted there was no imminent decision on the use of the American-made surface-to-surface Army Tactical Missile Systems — known as ATACMS. But Mr. Biden himself has signaled that a loosening of restrictions is coming. He was asked on Tuesday whether he was ready to grant the increasingly insistent requests from President Volodymyr Zelensky of Ukraine.

“We are working that out right now,” he said.

If Mr. Biden permits the British and French to go ahead, and if he

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N.Y.P.D. BOSS OUT AS INQUIRIES ROIL ALLIES OF ADAMS

CABAN’S PHONE SEIZED

Commissioner Not Focus, Lawyers Say, but the Target Is Unclear

This article is by Maria Cramer, William K. Rashbaum and Chelsia Rose Marcus.

Edward A. Caban, the New York City police commissioner, resigned on Thursday at the request of City Hall, which had asked him to step aside after federal agents seized his phone last week as part of a criminal investigation.

In an email to members of the Police Department, Commissioner Caban, 57, said that the news reports about the investigations had “created a distraction for the department.”

“The N.Y.P.D. deserves someone who can solely focus on protecting and serving New York City, which is why — for the good of this city and this department — I have made the difficult decision to resign as police commissioner,” he wrote in a memo that went out to the department late Thursday morning.

The announcement of his departure, which will be effective at the end of Friday, came little more than a year after Mayor Eric Adams had appointed him in July 2023. It abruptly ended Commissioner Caban’s career at the department and underscored the chaos swirling around the mayor’s administration.

City Hall has been buffeted by four federal investigations, which have resulted in searches and seizures targeting high-ranking officials. But an inquiry involving the city’s top law enforcement official is rare, and it cast doubt on Commissioner Caban’s ability to supervise the department and make disciplinary decisions about his own force of 36,000 officers.

The administration had sought the resignation, according to two people with knowledge of the matter.

Mayor Adams, who addressed New Yorkers virtually on Thursday

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A Private Stroll Through the Stars
Polaris Dawn astronauts, including the billionaire Jared Isaacman, took the first commercial spacewalk Thursday. Page A18.

A China Stopover Turned Into a Life Sentence

American Says She Was Unwitting Drug Mule

By MARA HVISTENDAHL

Dawn Michelle Hunt loved sweepstakes. A 42-year-old temp worker in Chicago, she entered almost every contest she encountered. So when she got an email from someone who described himself as a British lawyer saying she had won a trip to Australia, she was elated.

“I hit it big,” she told her father after the plane ticket arrived.

The trip took her through China to pick up the prize documents,

along with handbags that she was instructed to carry on to Australia. The British lawyer had promised in an email to meet her there. “My dear Dawn,” he called her.

But sewn into the lining of the bags was more than two kilos, or 4.5 pounds, of methamphetamine, Chinese authorities say.

Instead of a resort in Australia, Ms. Hunt landed in a Chinese prison, sentenced to death, with a two-year reprieve. Ms. Hunt’s sentence, handed down in 2017, was later commuted to life.

Ms. Hunt and her family say that she was an unwitting victim of an elaborate drug trafficking scheme, versions of which have ensnared people around the world, including a number of older Americans.

Courts in some cases have

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New Indictment for Weinstein

At a hearing, Manhattan prosecutors said Harvey Weinstein is facing more allegations of sexual assault. PAGE A11

From Gym Floor to a Home

Margarita Solito and her family fled violence in El Salvador, hoping to build a better life in San Francisco. PAGE A12



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Outrage Over Israeli Strike

Condemnation mounted for an attack on a school turned shelter in central Gaza, but Israel said the site was a command post for militants. PAGE A5

Polio Case in Islamabad

Geographic and cultural factors magnify Pakistan’s challenge as it deals with a disease’s resurgence. PAGE A6

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R&B Hitmaker for 50 Years

Frankie Beverly, frontman of the soul group Maze who had announced he would be retiring, was 77. PAGE A21

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Want Any Coffee With That?

Regional upstart coffee chains are challenging giants like Starbucks and Dunkin’ to a sugary battle for the craziest, most calorie-laden drink. (Actual coffee is optional.) PAGE B1

The Conspiracy Theory Killer

After a short conversation with the DebunkBot, a chatbot designed to persuade users with facts, many people doubted or abandoned false beliefs, according to a study. PAGE B1

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David Brooks

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Together Under One Roof

Mia Farrow and Patti LuPone mesh memorably in “The Roommate” on Broadway, Jesse Green writes. PAGE C1

What Comes After Fame

An exhibition focuses on the photographer Robert Frank’s work in the decades after his early acclaim. PAGE C1



SPORTS B7-10

Stars Who Stayed Put

If Arizona is to reach the refashioned College Football Playoff, the decision by Noah Fifita and Tetairoa McMillan to return after their coach left will be a principal reason. PAGE B7

Team U.S.A.’s Oldest Rookie

Lauren Coughlin, 31, spent years grinding just to stick on the LPGA Tour. Now she’s a two-time winner and making her Solheim Cup debut. PAGE B9

