

Chicago Tribune



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FRIDAY, DECEMBER 15, 2023

BREAKING NEWS AT CHICAGOTRIBUNE.COM

Burke's defense rips into FBI mole

During closing argument, his attorney asks why prosecutors didn't call Solis

By Jason Meisner, Ray Long and Megan Crepeau
Chicago Tribune

Lawyers for ex-Ald. Edward Burke on Thursday sought to portray the once-mighty Democratic machine politician as an honest broker of city business who respected the guardrails between

public and private life but fell victim to an unscrupulous FBI mole out to save himself. Yes, there was a scheme, Burke's attorney Joseph Duffy told jurors in closing arguments at his corruption trial, but Burke was its target, not its mastermind. He never took any official action in exchange for anything of value, Duffy said. In

fact, the evidence showed he never got a dime. Instead, the case is a product of overzealous government agents and their puppet, alderman-turned-FBI cooperator Daniel Solis, according to Duffy, who noted with indignation that it was the defense side that put Solis on the witness stand, not prosecutors. "The fact alone that they didn't call Danny Solis in their case creates a reasonable doubt," Duffy said. "Why did we have to bring

Danny Solis in here? "That should give you pause, the fact that they ran an investigation on Mr. Burke for 30 months with a star witness, Danny Solis undercover, and they didn't have the decency to bring him here." Duffy's argument has been nearly five years in the making, ever since Solis, the former 25th Ward alderman and Zoning Committee chairman, was outed as the undercover federal cooperator who secretly recorded hundreds of

phone calls and meetings that form the backbone of the racketeering charges against Burke. With his voice alternately rising to a shout and slipping into sarcasm, Duffy branded Solis over and over as a liar and manipulator, a corrupt politician who did everything he could to harass Burke, dangling the idea that the developers of the \$600 million Old Post Office would hire Burke's law firm

Turn to Trial, Page 4



Maria Silva, 22, a migrant from Venezuela, center, carries her belongings on Wednesday to a bus outside the Gresham District (6th) police station before being taken to a shelter with other migrants who'd been staying at the station. ARMANDO L. SANCHEZ/CHICAGO TRIBUNE

Some migrant families separated in transfers

Incidents occur as police stations are being cleared, volunteers and migrants say

By Nell Salzman
Chicago Tribune

Abela Silva had walked thousands of miles alongside her niece Maria to escape the poverty of Venezuela. They thought they were finally safe when they arrived in Chicago. The women, along with Maria's husband, had been staying at the Gresham District (6th) police station for a month when they were told they might be separated by city officials who are

working to move migrants into city shelters. They've been hiding from city workers ever since. "We hid from them so we could stay here, so we could be together," Abela Silva, 52, said in Spanish, as she sat in a circle on suitcases with other migrants, looking worried. For months, migrants who have crossed the southern border and made their way to Chicago have been camping out on the floors of police stations and in

nearby parks across the city as officials have scrambled to open shelters to house them. Facing mounting pressure with the onset of winter, city officials have rapidly begun "decompression" efforts, moving thousands of overflow migrants into 27 vacant buildings around the city as shelter beds become available. As of Thursday morning, only one police station still had migrants, with 89 staying there, while an additional 232 migrants were at O'Hare and

Midway airports, according to city records, down from a peak of about 3,800 combined earlier this fall. But volunteers and migrants report that the haste to clear police stations ahead of winter has sometimes caused anxiety and led to family separations between men and women or parents with children above the age of 19. Shelters can accommodate different configurations of

Turn to Migrants, Page 4

US urges Israel to alter tactics in Gaza

Pushes for transition to precise missions with small units of elite troops

By Adam Entous
The New York Times

WASHINGTON — President Joe Biden's national security adviser advised Israel on Thursday to end its large-scale ground campaign in the Gaza Strip and transition to a more targeted phase in its war against Hamas, American officials said. Jake Sullivan, the national security adviser, did not specify a timetable during his meetings with top Israeli officials Thursday. But four American officials said Biden wants Israel to switch to more precise tactics within three weeks or soon thereafter. The officials asked for anonymity to discuss the president's thinking. The new phase that the Americans envision would involve smaller groups of elite forces that would move in and out of population centers in Gaza, carrying out more precise missions to find and kill Hamas leaders, rescue hostages and destroy tunnels, the officials said. The call for a change in tactics comes as differences between the United States and Israel have widened as the conditions in Gaza turn catastrophic. Biden said this week that Israel was beginning to lose international support because of the "indiscriminate bombing" of Gaza, a much harsher assessment than his earlier public statements urging greater care to protect civilians. Sullivan, who was in Israel on Thursday, spoke about a possible transition "in the near future, but I don't want to put a time stamp on it," said John Kirby, a White House spokesperson. Shortly after The New York Times reported on the discussions, Prime Minister Benjamin

Turn to Israel, Page 7

'HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS'

Court vacates convictions for cousins in 1981 double homicide, state's longest-serving exonerees

By Madeline Buckley
Chicago Tribune

Just 8 years old when her brother was incarcerated following a double slaying in a South-west Side park, Pilar More, now 50, watched her older sibling grow up behind bars. Her brother, James Soto, and his cousin, David Ayala, were convicted of murder and other felonies in the shooting deaths of 16-year-old Julie Limas and Hector Valeriano, 18, a U.S. Marine on leave, on Aug.

16, 1981. They were sentenced to natural life in prison. After a multi-decade fight during which the cousins maintained their innocence, a judge on Thursday vacated their convictions and Cook County prosecutors dropped all charges, making Soto and Ayala, now in their 60s, the longest-serving exonerees in Illinois history. The men were expected to be released later in the day. "I just look forward to a time where we get to know him, and he

gets to know all of us," More said, wiping away tears after the hearing at the Leighton Criminal Court Building. In petitions for post-conviction relief, Soto and Ayala alleged broad misconduct and a serious conflict of interest on behalf of the attorney who represented Ayala. The cousins alleged that they were convicted on witness testimony that was coerced. All witnesses but one — who defense attorneys say was a perpetrator — later recanted their testimony. "They both have suffered so much since they've been inside. Turn to Vacate, Page 6



James Soto, left, is hugged by his girlfriend Diana Guana after his release from Stateville Correctional Center on Dec. 14. VINCENT ALBAN/FOR TRIBUNE

Class of the Big Ten

Ohio State's Marvin Harrison Jr. is the 2023 winner of the Chicago Tribune Silver Football as the Big Ten's best player. **Chicago Sports**



Regulators reject rate hikes

The Illinois Commerce Commission rejected ComEd's four-year grid improvement plan and slashed its proposed rate increase. **Business**

Paradigm shift for city schools

The Chicago Board of Education voted on Thursday to shift priorities from school choice to neighborhood schools. **Chicagoland, Page 2**

TODAY'S WEATHER



High 51 Low 38

Complete Chicagoland forecast on Page 14

\$4.00 city and suburbs and elsewhere
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