

The Washington Post

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Mostly sunny 82/65 • Tomorrow: Morning shower 79/50 B6

Democracy Dies in Darkness

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 31, 2024 • \$3

Excessive harm in Gaza tied to U.S. arms

Law violations deemed likely within backlog of reports to White House

BY ABIGAIL HAUSLOHNER AND MICHAEL BIRNBAUM

The Biden administration has received nearly 500 reports alleging that Israel used U.S.-supplied weapons for attacks that caused unnecessary harm to civilians in the Gaza Strip, but it has failed to comply with its own policies requiring swift investigations of such claims, according to people familiar with the matter.

At least some of these cases presented to the State Department over the past year probably amount to violations of U.S. and international law, these people said, speaking on the condition of anonymity because they are not authorized to discuss internal deliberations.

The reports are received from across the U.S. government, international aid organizations, nonprofits, media reports and other eyewitnesses. Dozens include photo documentation of U.S.-made bomb fragments at sites where scores of children were killed, according to human rights advocates briefed on the process.

Yet despite the State Department's internal Civilian Harm Incident Response Guidance, which directs officials to complete an investigation and recommend action within two months of launching an inquiry, no single case has reached the "action" stage, cur-

SEE ISRAEL ON A11

Gazan families: Some fear being permanently separated by war. A10

Election's effects: How the result could reshape Mideast conflict. A12

Intense flooding unleashes chaos in Spain



DAVID RAMOS/GETTY IMAGES

Vehicles and debris are piled in a street in Valencia on Wednesday after flooding in southeastern Spain. At least 95 people were killed when as much as a foot of rain fell in a matter of hours late Tuesday, turning roads into rivers. Story, A13

ELECTION 2024

Biden's 'garbage' remark has Harris seeking distance

DISAVOWS CRITICISM OF PEOPLE OVER VOTES

VP points to speech on Ellipse as her unifying pledge

BY TYLER PAGER AND YASMEEN ABUTALEB

Vice President Kamala Harris on Wednesday sought to distance herself from President Joe Biden's use of the word "garbage," which the president deployed Tuesday when discussing Donald Trump's supporters and the racist rhetoric at a weekend rally.

"I strongly disagree with any criticism of people based on who they vote for," Harris said to reporters before boarding Air Force Two for a campaign swing on Wednesday morning, noting that Biden had quickly clarified his comments to emphasize that he was referring to hateful rhetoric and not to Trump supporters in general.

"You heard my speech last night," Harris said, referring to an appearance on the Ellipse where she emphasized the need for unity among Americans.

"Throughout my career, I believe that the work that I do is about representing all the people, whether they support me or not. And as president of the United States, I will be a president for all Americans, whether you vote for me or not."

The most recent uproar began when Biden, in a Zoom call with Latino voters on Tuesday evening, brought up a racist insult toward Puerto Rico by a speaker at a Trump rally Sunday in New York. Comedian Tony Hinchcliffe had called the U.S. territory a "floating island of garbage" SEE CAMPAIGN ON A7

The Fix: Dispute over Biden's trash talk hinges on an apostrophe. A2

Virginia can cut 1,600 from voter rolls, justices rule

BY ANN E. MARIMOW, JUSTIN JOUVENAL AND GREGORY S. SCHNEIDER

A divided Supreme Court cleared the way Wednesday for Virginia officials to remove about 1,600 people from the state's voter registration rolls less than one week before the presidential election.

Gov. Glenn Youngkin (R) asked the justices to intervene after two lower courts blocked his efforts to cancel the registrations of voters who could be noncitizens — an issue Republican officials have seized on nationally even though noncitizen voting is extremely rare.

Youngkin signed an order in August to expedite the removal of registered voters whose driver's license applications indicated or suggested that they were not U.S. citizens. The effort was opposed by the Justice Department and civil rights groups, which said many being kicked off the rolls were actually eligible and were targeted because of outdated or erroneous information.

As is typical in emergency situations, the Supreme Court's brief order did not explain the majority's reasoning. The three liberal justices — Sonia Sotomayor, Ele-

SEE VIRGINIA ON A8

Gaffe machine: Incident shows why Biden was driven from race. A7

In Bezos's empire, a rising engagement with D.C.

BY ISAAC STANLEY-BECKER, AARON C. DAVIS, JOSH DAWSEY AND CHRISTIAN DAVENPORT

As president, Donald Trump spent years insulting and threatening Amazon, the e-commerce giant founded by Jeff Bezos. Amazon sometimes hit back, claiming once that the company had been unfairly blocked from a lucrative

Federal government is now contracting billions to AWS and Blue Origin

government contract simply because Trump was angry at Bezos over coverage in the newspaper he owns, The Washington Post.

But in August, weeks after Trump formally secured the GOP nomination, Amazon CEO Andy Jassy, who succeeded Bezos in 2021, sought to establish a friendlier rapport with the former president, introducing himself in a phone call and outlining the company's plans for the future.

The call concluded with Trump suggesting the company cut a large check for his presidential

efforts, according to two people familiar with the conversation who spoke on the condition of anonymity to recount the private discussion. Trump told Jassy that he was going to win the election and that Amazon should help him because it would be in the company's best interests.

Jassy did not agree to make the contribution. But the call itself SEE BEZOS ON A16

The women backing abortion referendums — and Trump

BY CAROLINE KITCHENER

When her mail-in ballot arrived earlier this month, Emily Jones couldn't wait to vote to enshrine abortion rights in Arizona's state constitution — and to fight back against the Supreme Court decision that overturned *Roe v. Wade*.

To the 27-year-old mother from Arizona's San Tan Valley, the issue was personal: An abortion probably saved her life after she was diagnosed a few years ago with an ectopic pregnancy, she said. The

2022 abortion ruling terrified her, she said, taking women "10 steps back."

An independent with a history of voting for mostly Republican candidates, Jones said she knew Vice President Kamala Harris has been trying to use the abortion issue to win over women like her in the presidential election. But while she had seen dozens of Harris's abortion-related ads, they hadn't swayed her.

So on the same ballot where she SEE TRUMP ON A8

Buying a house can drive you batty. In this case, it was literal.

BY LEILA BARGHOUTY

WHIDBEY ISLAND, WASH. — The first time Tom Riecken caught a big brown bat, there was screaming. Riecken and his wife, Mackenzie Powell, were pulling down walls in the attic of their new house after discovering it was home to thousands of bats. There was dust in the air — a mixture of decimated drywall and years of decaying bat skeletons and guano. There were smells.

They had prepared themselves for a dirty renovation job — they couldn't afford to hire professionals. It was December, and they thought their nocturnal roommates were gone for the winter. They didn't expect to come face to face with one.



ALYSE YOUNG FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

The house on Whidbey Island, Washington, that first-time buyers Tom Riecken and Mackenzie Powell discovered was filled with bats.

They named him Edward. The family was well aware of its bat problem even before capturing Edward, but that wasn't the case when they bought the house. The bats had been occupying the attic of the home on Whidbey Island for what Riecken now estimates to be decades, based on months of cleaning up layers of compacted bat skeletons and waste from the walls. The bats, like the humans, needed a place to live as their surrounding environment became less habitable.

After the state's deadliest heat wave and two consecutive years of triple-digit summer heat advisories in the Seattle area, Riecken and Powell were eager to raise their 5-month-old son, Robby, SEE BATS ON A22



RICKY CARIOTI/THE WASHINGTON POST

GOP presidential nominee Donald Trump, seen last week in North Carolina, has claimed credit for the overturning of *Roe v. Wade*.

IN THE NEWS

Corporate insider Tony West, brother-in-law to Kamala Harris, is on leave from his job as Uber's chief legal officer to play a key role in the Democrat's campaign. A17

Troubling bird flu discovery The H5N1 virus has been found in swine for the first time in the United States, federal officials said. A2

THE NATION Some Desis will merge their Diwali and Halloween festivities as the holidays overlap. A3
Moths are underappreciated, but collecting and studying them is easy and rewarding. A9

THE WORLD Russia is killing surrendering Ukrainian soldiers in growing numbers, Kyiv says. A13
Europe's largest economies are confronting sluggish growth and soaring debt. A14

THE ECONOMY Companies are preparing price increases to offset the global tariff plans promised by Donald Trump. A15
The U.S. economy grew at a 2.8 percent rate in the third quarter, slowing slightly from the previous quarter but remaining strong. A15

THE REGION A federal appeals court upheld D.C.'s high-capacity-magazine ban following Supreme Court rulings that bolstered gun rights. B1
The D.C. Council voted to use funds from the sale of buses to help Circulator workers who are losing their jobs. B1

STYLE As Election Day nears, no one knows what could tip the scales — cat ladies? yard signs? — and anxiety is through the roof. C1

LOCAL LIVING Silly skeleton figurines have become hot collectibles during this spooky season.

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