

“All the News
That’s Fit to Print”

The New York Times

THE WEATHER
Today, partly sunny, a mild afternoon, high 52. **Tonight**, cloudy, low 44. **Tomorrow**, cloudy, drizzle in the morning then rain in the afternoon, high 54. Weather map, Page B5.

VOL. CLXXIII . . . No. 60,004 © 2023 The New York Times Company SATURDAY, DECEMBER 16, 2023 Prices in Canada may be higher \$4.00

Assault Suits Roil Big Firm In Real Estate

Women Cite Claims of Predatory Behavior

By DEBRA KAMIN
The closing night party at the annual conference of eXp Realty was — in the company’s own words — “epic.”
The \$2 billion company is one of the fastest growing brokerages in the world, with nearly 90,000 agents. And on this night in October, eXp was showing off.
Inside the Omnia nightclub at Caesar’s Palace in Las Vegas, more than 5,000 real estate agents packed into the dark alongside an open bar. A chandelier that looked like a spaceship flashed its kinetic lights as the crowd gyrated until the early hours, confetti falling from the ceiling.
It was a declaration of eXp’s culture: Work hard, play harder — and build wealth in the process. But in more than 30 interviews with current and former eXp agents, women said the culture has an underbelly. The company’s highest earners are granted star status, and allegations of misconduct are ignored.
In two lawsuits, the first filed in February and the second on Thursday, five women described a yearslong pattern of predatory behavior by two marquee agents. The women said the agents drugged them during alcohol-soaked eXp events, and four of the women said they were then sexually assaulted. Executives ignored complaints about the men for years, acting only after the first lawsuit was filed, agents said.
In addition, current and former agents said the company ignored allegations about other sexual misconduct, and the company has not changed its culture.
eXp Realty has a unique structure — agents are recruited by other agents who then take a cut of their earnings, so everyone is funneling money to people above them. That means there is little incentive to root out high earners even when they are accused of assault, women said.
“Everyone is just a recruiter. They’re not there to sell homes and represent the client,” said Tricia Turner, 53, a Houston broker who left eXp in August. “The ones that grow their teams the fastest are the center of attention for the company and the cheerleaders for the company. And unfortunately, it’s like they can do no wrong.”
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MARK ABRAMSON FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

U.S. Military Returns to Jungle
As conflicts in the Pacific heat up, the Army is instructing troops on the skills needed for a potential clash with China. Page A4.

Galvanized by Fear, Israelis Arm Themselves

By AARON BOXERMAN and TALYA MINSBERG
JERUSALEM — Two weeks ago, Zvika Arran reluctantly drew a gun at an Israeli state-run shooting class for those seeking firearms licenses, part of a massive spike in applications since the Hamas-led attacks on Oct. 7.
Mr. Arran said he was repelled by the idea of owning the pistol that now sits in a safe in his house. But his sense of security, like that of so many Israelis, was shattered when Hamas fighters overran communities near the Gaza Strip, killing an estimated 1,200 people and abducting more than 240 hostages, according to Israeli officials.
“God forbid, if something similar happens here, I want to know that I have a firearm,” said Mr. Arran, 48, who lives in Eliav, a small town that borders the Israeli-occupied West Bank. “The problem is the side effects” of proliferating

Gun Ownership Spikes in Aftermath of the Oct. 7 Attacks
guns, he added, which he called “a disaster for years to come.”
“It shows that the state has simply given up on protecting us,” he added. “And it will be a disaster in encouraging violence on the roads, domestic violence and gunfire accidents.”
In Israel, a nation of 9 million people, roughly 150,000 held private gun licenses in 2021, a figure that had dropped by about 20 percent over the previous decade, according to the National Security Ministry. The overwhelming majority of such licenses are for handguns.
But in the aftermath of Oct. 7, Israelis have submitted at least 256,000 applications for gun licenses, including many who had never before considered owning a weapon. Israel’s current far-right national security minister, Itamar Ben-Gvir, has long pushed for an expansion of gun ownership, and in mid-October, lawmakers signed off on eased gun ownership regulations promulgated by his office.
Young adults with assault rifles slung over their shoulders are a common sight in Israel, where hundreds of thousands are soldiers on active duty or reservists with weapons stashed at home. But despite decades of insecurity, private gun ownership never approached the levels seen in the United States, where surveys show about one-third of adults own firearms.
“Until Oct. 7, the private weapons policy in Israel was fairly well-balanced,” said Tomer Lotan, a former director-general of the National Security Ministry. “Then, the authentic fears of many Israelis

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Giuliani Finds Price of Lying Is \$148 Million

By EILEEN SULLIVAN
WASHINGTON — A jury on Friday ordered Rudolph W. Giuliani to pay \$148 million to two former Georgia election workers who said he had destroyed their reputations with lies that they tried to steal the 2020 election from Donald J. Trump.
Judge Beryl A. Howell of the Federal District Court in Washington had already ruled that Mr. Giuliani had defamed the two workers, Ruby Freeman and her daughter, Shaye Moss. The jury had been asked to decide only on the amount of the damages.
The jury awarded Ms. Freeman and Ms. Moss a combined \$75 million in punitive damages. It also ordered Mr. Giuliani to pay compensatory damages of \$16.2 million to Ms. Freeman and \$16.9 million to Ms. Moss, as well as \$20 million to each of them for emotional suffering.
“Today’s a good day,” Ms. Freeman told reporters after the jury delivered its determination. But she added that no amount of money would give her and her

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Outspoken About Middle East, One Santa Claus Lost His Job

By ANDREW KEH
In the months since the beginning of the Israel-Hamas war, disputes over the boundaries of political expression have cost prominent people their jobs in fields like show business, publishing and academia.
Last week, these clashes left another famous figure suddenly out of work: Santa Claus.
This very 2023 Christmas tale took place in Sag Harbor, a village on Long Island, where a longtime resident named Ken Dorph had been hired as a volunteer to wear the iconic red costume at an event hosted by the local chamber of commerce.
The plan was for Santa to ride majestically atop a fire truck to the village’s picturesque windmill, where the spreading of joy would commence. Mr. Dorph, 70, had previously played Santa at a gathering last year at the town’s cinema, and even given an interview in character to a local paper. In other words, he took the Santa stuff very seriously.
“I normally have a professionally trimmed beard, but I was

Past Comments Upset Pro-Israel Neighbors

growing it out,” he said. “I looked like Santa.”
But on Dec. 6, three days before the jamboree, Mr. Dorph received an email from the president of the chamber of commerce, telling him he had been relieved of his duties. She offered no explanation, he said, beyond saying he was too outspoken for the gig.
The truth was, when word got out that he would be Santa this year, a group of people from a local synagogue, Temple Adas Israel, sent a flurry of emails to the event organizers objecting to his selection.
Mr. Dorph, they said, had made people uncomfortable during a Nov. 30 talk at the synagogue about the Israel-Hamas crisis, sharply criticizing a pair of speakers from the American Jewish Committee, a nonprofit advocacy group that supports Jewish people

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LINDSAY MORRIS FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Ken Dorph, a longtime resident of Sag Harbor on Long Island, said he got “hot under the collar” during a talk at a synagogue.

‘Passing Paisan’ Wows N.F.L., And Thrills Old Neighborhood

By COREY KILGANNON and MARK BONAMO
At Natoli’s Italian Deli in Secaucus, N.J., in the shadow of MetLife Stadium, one can now order the Tommy DeVito hero — chicken parm a la vodka — just the way the breakout Giants quarterback likes it.
In the past month, Mr. DeVito, raised across the Hackensack River in Cedar Grove, has rocketed from third-string obscurity to star on the often-dismal New York Giants, keeping their long-shot playoff chances alive and becoming an icon of the greater Meadowlands metro area.
Mr. DeVito, 25, grew up loving the Giants and his mother’s chicken sandwiches and watching his father, a plumber, fix boilers. Now he is known as “Tommy Cut-

lets,” a nickname he scribbled on fans’ white tank tops during an event at Primo Hoagies in nearby Wayne. He posed for selfies pursuing his fingers Italian-style in his signature touchdown celebration.
A hometown N.F.L. hero might seem like an anomaly in an era of free agents, multimillion-dollar contracts and teams without local roots. But when Mr. DeVito materialized in the Meadowlands, he drove home the truth that a “New York” team has actually played one state over for nearly half a century. That state is now staking an ownership claim.
Tommy Cutlets has become the toast — or maybe the bruschetta — of the towns that lie in the shadow

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When building their own streaming companies, studios ended lucrative deals. But they miss the money. PAGE B1

College Essays About Money
Four teenagers were asked to share their thoughts, which were often tied to finding their way to adulthood. PAGE B6

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Five months into her tenure as the director of the embattled C.D.C., Dr. Mandy K. Cohen is trying to put a human face on public health. PAGE A11
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An ousted speaker and internal divisions characterized the first year of the Republican majority. PAGE A14

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The ruling was a major victory for the royal in his campaign against media intrusion into his life. PAGE A9

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Madonna’s “Celebration Tour,” postponed after her hospitalization in June, thematically explores her past. PAGE C1



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The Celebration Bowl, which spotlights H.B.C.U. football’s best, was a bold and controversial idea that would not have become a reality without one person’s vision and determination. PAGE B8
An American in England
With his athleticism and drive down the left, Antonee Robinson is scaling new heights at Fulham. That should help the U.S. men’s national team in next year’s Copa America. PAGE B10

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