



Partly sunny, windy 65/48 • Tomorrow: Partly sunny 78/60 B6

Democracy Dies in Darkness

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Scrutiny extends beyond shooters

Amid relentless school rampages, lawsuits ask who should be held liable

BY LAURA MECKLER,
HANNAH NATANSON
AND JUSTIN JOUVENAL

On Tuesday, parents in Michigan were sentenced to prison for what they did — and didn't do — before their son's high school rampage. The same day in Virginia, court records showed what are thought to be the first criminal charges against a school leader for missed warnings, in her case before a 6-year-old shot his teacher.

Meanwhile, in Uvalde, Tex., civil suits seeking to hold city officials and others responsible for a 2022 massacre at Robb Elementary School continue to make their way through the courts.

In a country where mass killings occur at a relentless pace, it's not just the shooters who are being held responsible, as the blood and death haunting classrooms and playgrounds alters society's collective sense of accountability.

Gun manufacturers, gun stores and public officials have all faced civil suits. Parents are being scrutinized over how their children got access to firearms used in school shootings. And experts say the criminal charges against a Virginia school official are particularly striking and could inspire more prosecutors to look deeply at the conduct of teachers or administrators in the wake of classroom massacres.

Americans are frustrated by the political impasse over proposals to regulate guns. **SEE GUNS ON A13**

U.S. clings to cease-fire talks with no backup plan

Officials face increasing pressure as negotiations show little progress

BY KAREN DEYOUNG

Virtually all of the Biden administration's hopes and plans to end the war in Gaza — and move toward a two-state solution for Israel and the Palestinian territories — depend on first reaching a deal for a temporary cease-fire and the release of Israeli hostages. But after months of negotiations and sporadic assurances of progress, signs of optimism this week that an agreement was near have begun to fade.

A vague statement released by Hamas on Thursday in response to a new U.S.-backed Israeli proposal again left unclear to U.S., Qatari and Egyptian mediators how seriously to take anything that doesn't come from Yehiya Sinwar, the group's military chief who's said to be hiding underground in southern Gaza.

The U.S. strategy all along has just been to get the fighting to stop, however briefly, with the hope that one cease-fire could lead to another, with more hostilities. **SEE GAZA ON A9**

Security alert: U.S. Embassy in Israel restricts workers' travel. **A9**

As the U.S. competes with Russia and China for dominance in the Arctic, its elite forces prepare for conflict in some of the most dangerous surroundings on Earth



PHOTOS BY SALWAN GEORGES/THE WASHINGTON POST

'The mountains are ... trying to kill you'

BY ALEX HORTON

ABOARD A U.S. MILITARY AIRCRAFT OVER KODIAK ISLAND, ALASKA — To the uninitiated, this felt like madness. From an altitude of 8,000 feet, six Navy SEALs were about to parachute into Marmot Bay, where the water temperature was just barely above freezing.

Their inflatable boat went first, rumbling down the ramp of this MC-130 transport plane before snapping out the back. These stout, nondescript airframes were engineered specifically to enable the "low visibility" operations that are a hallmark of the U.S. military's clandestine forces. As one of the SEALs roused from a nap, the plane leveled off. Go time.

One by one, they approached the exit, turned their backs to the vivid blue-green vista below and out they went, hurtling toward an icy splashdown.

America's Special Operations forces are in the midst of a major transformation. As the powerful militaries commanded by Russia and China compete with the United States for dominance in the resource-rich Arctic, the

SEE ARCTIC ON A10



TOP: Soldiers move through the woods to call in fire for HIMARS artillery during training at Fort Wainwright in Alaska. **ABOVE:** Navy SEALs jump from an MC-130 transport plane near Kodiak.

The horse wars of Stormy Daniels

Adult-film actress linked to Trump also stars in a legal drama in the world of English riding



DESIREE RIOS FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

Ellen Doughty, above, of Rockwall Hills Equestrian Center, near Dallas, where Stormy Daniels kept horses, is suing for defamation, saying she spread lies about her business.

BY PETER JAMISON

ROCKWALL, TEX. — Stormy Daniels had decided to go public with her accusations.

"I'm taking a stand for those who don't have a voice," she announced in a long Facebook post. "My only regret is that I waited so long."

It was December 2016 — more than a year before Daniels would break her silence about an alleged sexual encounter with Donald Trump. Her target was not a national political figure, but a Dallas-area horse trainer, Ellen Doughty, who Daniels claimed had mistreated her animals.

Doughty forcefully denied the allegations, which Daniels also published on a popular equestrian website. It was the opening salvo in a feud that has grown into a multimillion-dollar court battle and ensnared some of the top officials in the rarefied world of competitive English riding. Along the way, there have been four dead horses — one of which did not stay buried — and a trail of recriminations that can seem as endless as the plains of Texas. **SEE DANIELS ON A6**

In 2024, a sharp clash on drilling

CANDIDATES OFFER DIVERGING VISIONS

Biden raises some costs; Trump courts oil firms

BY MAXINE JOSELOW
AND JOSH DAWSEY

President Biden and Donald Trump this week outlined clashing visions for the future of fossil fuel production across the country, underscoring how the nation's energy policies hinge on the outcome of the 2024 election.

The Biden administration on Friday finalized a landmark rule that will require oil companies to pay at least 10 times more to drill on federal lands. The rule from the Interior Department's Bureau of Land Management represents the first comprehensive update to the federal oil and gas leasing program in more than 30 years, and is intended to generate more money for taxpayers.

On Thursday, Trump held a private dinner at his Mar-a-Lago Club and resort with about 20 oil executives from some of the country's biggest firms, including Chevron, ExxonMobil, Continental Resources, Chesapeake Energy and Occidental Petroleum, according to a guest list reviewed by The Washington Post. The effort was largely organized by Harold Hamm, an oil billionaire and Trump donor who runs Continental Resources and has helped recruit other donors to the Trump campaign.

In recent months, Trump has also talked with energy executives. **SEE DRILLING ON A14**

ROBERT MACNEIL
1931-2024

Cool, urbane 'NewsHour' anchor gave it to us straight

BY HARRISON SMITH

Robert MacNeil, a Canadian-born broadcast journalist who built what is now "PBS NewsHour" and served for two decades as its urbane, evenhanded co-anchor, died April 12 at a hospital in Manhattan. He was 93.

His daughter Alison MacNeil confirmed the death but did not cite a cause.

Mr. MacNeil, known as Robin, and Jim Lehrer, a former Texas newspaperman, formed one of television journalism's most successful and enduring partnerships in 1975, when they launched what became "PBS NewsHour." As the news world transformed around them with the arrival of 24-hour cable news and combative political talk shows, they maintained a reputation for sober, straightforward reporting and analysis.

The duo met in 1973 while anchoring public television's gavel-to-gavel coverage of the Senate Watergate hearings. Teaming up again two years later, they anchored "MacNeil/Lehrer NewsHour." **SEE MACNEIL ON A14**



MacNeil

IN THE NEWS

Vote of support Donald Trump appeared at a news conference with embattled House Speaker Mike Johnson, who faces an effort to remove him from his position. **A5**

Hard choices after IVF Many people face wrenching decisions about what to do with embryos left over from the process. **A3**

THE NATION

The White House canceled another \$7.4 billion in student loans via existing programs. **A2**
Leonard Leo, a judicial activist, rejected a Senate subpoena probing gifts to justices. **A2**

THE WORLD

Russian troops advanced on a key town in Ukraine's east as Kyiv runs low on defenses. **A8**
Soldiers from Russia arrived in Niger as U.S. ties with the West African nation worsen. **A9**

THE ECONOMY

As the April 15 deadline approaches, bad tax advice is booming on TikTok, exposing unwitting taxpayers to potential fines if they try to carry it out. **A12**
The efficiency of electric vehicles could double by 2050, a new report concluded. **A13**

THE REGION

D.C. officials called off a plan for a 2.7-mile bike lane that had drawn concerns from business owners. **B1**
A program will give low-income mothers in D.C. \$500 a month to study whether extra income can improve families' lives. **B1**

STYLE

At D.C.'s Red Bear Brewing Co., a search for answers amid a scandal involving a bar trivia contest. **C1**

RELIGION

U.S. Catholics are more polarized than ever in how they view Pope Francis, a survey found. **B2**

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