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Deal for Gaza Still Regarded As a Long Shot

Cease-Fire in Lebanon Easier, Analysts Say

By PATRICK KINGSLEY

JERUSALEM — Buoyant after helping to forge a cease-fire in Lebanon, President Biden has declared that the deal could build momentum toward a similar breakthrough in Gaza.

That assessment is premature, analysts said on Wednesday, because Israel and Hamas are much further from a deal in Gaza than Israel and Hezbollah were in Lebanon.

The truce in Lebanon was possible in part because Hezbollah — weakened by months of assassinations and battlefield losses — had lost its leverage at the negotiating table. On the Israeli side, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu could afford to compromise because a deal in Lebanon would not significantly weaken his grip on power at home.

A breakthrough in Gaza is harder to achieve because Hamas still holds roughly 100 hostages, a significant trump card that allows the group's top negotiator, Khalil Al-Hayya, to maintain a hard-line negotiating position. In Israel, Mr. Netanyahu cannot compromise with Hamas because doing so might collapse his governing coalition, forcing early elections.

Mr. Netanyahu's far-right coalition allies, many of whom hope to settle Gaza with Jewish civilians after the war, have threatened to abandon his alliance if the conflict there ends without Hamas's complete defeat. When it came to Lebanon, Mr. Netanyahu was under less domestic pressure to deliver a knockout blow to Hezbollah, even if many Israelis — including much of his base — remained deeply concerned about the long-term threat posed by the group.

"The Lebanon deal happened because Netanyahu wanted it and Hezbollah needed it — and because it wasn't a deal breaker for Netanyahu's coalition," said Aaron David Miller, an American analyst who was a negotiator in previous Mideast peace talks. "The

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Leaving Beirut on Wednesday after a nascent stand-down in Lebanon that President Biden hoped would rekindle Gaza peace talks.

DANIEL BEREHULAK/THE NEW YORK TIMES

JUDGE DECLARES CITY IN CONTEMPT OVER RIKERS ILLS

U.S. TAKEOVER IS LIKELY

Ruling in a Decade-Long Case Cites Dangers to Inmates and Staff

By HURUBIE MEKO
and JAN RANSOM

A federal judge overseeing New York City's Rikers Island jail complex on Wednesday found the city in contempt for failing to stem violence and excessive force at the facility, and said she was leaning toward taking control of the city's jails.

The judge, Laura Taylor Swain, said in a 65-page opinion that the city and its Department of Correction had violated the constitutional rights of prisoners and staff members alike by exposing them to danger, and had intentionally ignored her orders.

The judge wrote that she was "inclined" to impose an outside authority, known as a receiver, which she said would be a "remedy that will make the management of the use of force and safety aspects of the Rikers Island jails ultimately answerable directly to the court." She ordered the city and lawyers representing prisoners to devise a plan for a receivership by Jan. 14.

"This is a historic decision," said the Legal Aid Society and one of the private firms that filed the class-action lawsuit. "The culture of brutality on Rikers Island has resisted judicial and political reform efforts for years."

The city has spent huge sums on its Correction Department, which now holds more than 6,000 detainees, many of whom are awaiting trials. New York has spent more than \$400,000 a year per inmate — more than six times the average in other large U.S. cities — but Rikers has broken down in fundamental ways, with some detainees wandering around unsupervised outside of their cells and others going without food or basic medical care.

The situation has continued to devolve no matter who the mayor or the Correction Department commissioner is, with reform efforts turned aside by politics and a powerful correction officers' union. A judge could grant a receiver the power to dissolve or alter labor contracts like the one that provides officers with protections like unlimited sick leave, which critics have said hinders improvement in the jails. In recent years, as many as one in three jailers have failed to show up for work each day.

Judge Swain's ruling on Wednesday came nearly a decade

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China Sharpens Weapon for Possible Trade War

By ALEXANDRA STEVENSON
and PAUL MOZUR

HONG KONG — In the world of cheap drones, Skydio was the great American hope. Its autonomous flying machines gave the U.S. defense and police agencies an alternative to Chinese manufacturers, free from the security concerns tied to dependence on Chinese supply chains.

But Skydio's vulnerabilities came into sharp focus days before the U.S. presidential election, when the Chinese authorities imposed sanctions and severed the company's access to essential battery supplies.

Overnight, the San Mateo, Calif.-based Skydio, the largest American maker of drones, scrambled to find new suppliers.

Countering Tariffs With Supply Chain Bans on U.S. Companies

The move slowed Skydio's deliveries to its customers, which include the U.S. military.

"This is an attack on Skydio, but it's also an attack on you," Adam Bry, the chief executive, told customers.

Behind the move was a message from China's leaders to Donald J. Trump, who would go on to win the election with a promise of new China sanctions and tariffs: Hit us and we'll strike back harder.

From the campaign trail to his cabinet appointments, Mr. Trump

has made it clear that he believes a confrontation with China over trade and technology is inevitable. In the first Trump administration, the Chinese government took mostly symbolic and equivalent measures after U.S. tariffs and trade restrictions. This time, China is poised to escalate its responses, experts say, and could aim aggressive and targeted countermeasures at American companies.

"During Trade War 1.0, Beijing was fairly careful to meet the tariffs that the U.S. put in place," said Jude Blanchette, a China scholar at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington. "Now they are signaling their tolerance for accepting and dishing out pain," he said. "It's clear for political reasons that Beijing is not

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Influencers Aid Industry's Fight To Save Plastic

By HIROKO TABUCHI

Paid influencers on TikTok. An infomercial hosted by Dennis Quaid. Pushback against the Olympics' single-use plastic ban.

A trove of documents leaked from an influential industry group shows how some of the world's largest petrochemical and plastics companies have been waging a campaign to push back against a "tide of anti-plastic sentiment" — especially among young people concerned about the environment.

The industry group, the National Association for PET Container Resources, or NAPCOR, worked to deliberately obscure its connection to the campaign and make its content "authentic and from the creators' viewpoints," the documents show.

PET stands for polyethylene terephthalate, the plastic used to make single-use soda bottles and clamshell containers.

The corporate strategizing laid out in the documents provides a behind-the-scenes look at a battle being waged over the future of plastic. Nations are gathering in Busan, South Korea this week to hammer out details of a global

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The world's largest six-pack towers over La Crosse, Wis.



Big Tom, the world's largest turkey, roosts in Frazee, Minn.



Strawberry Point, Iowa, boasts the world's largest strawberry.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY GRAHAM DICKIE/THE NEW YORK TIMES

China Releases 3 U.S. Inmates In an Exchange

This article is by Adam Goldman, Mara Hvistendahl, Edward Wong and Zolan Kanno-Youngs.

WASHINGTON — Three Americans who were detained in China have been released in a prisoner swap with Beijing, the Biden administration said on Wednesday. One of the men had been an F.B.I. informant, according to senior U.S. officials.

John Leung, Kai Li and Mark Swidan were heading to the United States on Wednesday after months of diplomatic maneuvering to free them. Mr. Leung and Mr. Li had been held for three years and eight years. Mr. Swidan was held for more than a decade.

"Soon they will return and be reunited with their families for the first time in many years," said Sean Savett, a National Security Council spokesman. He said no other Americans are "wrongfully detained" in China, a designation that indicates that the U.S. government sees a person as the equivalent of a political hostage or that the charges are fabricated.

In return, the United States released Xu Yanjun, a Chinese intelligence officer serving a 20-year sentence after he was arrested in Brussels in 2018 and extradited to the United States in a dramatic F.B.I. operation, according to two

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Among Roadside Giants, a Tom Struts Supreme

By MITCH SMITH

FRAZEE, Minn. — The most celebrated resident of Frazee, Minn., is 22 feet tall and is known to his friends simply as Big Tom. He lives alone just off Highway 10, past the metal barns but before the railroad tracks, where admirers show up seeking photos at all hours of the day.

Big Tom is a turkey — the world's largest, locals will tell you — and his fiberglass feathers are more than just a conversation starter. He pays homage to the region's poultry industry, a cornerstone of the rural Minnesota econ-

22-Footer of Fiberglass and Midwest Pride

omy, and to the annual Turkey Days festival in Frazee, a town of 1,300 people about 200 miles northwest of Minneapolis.

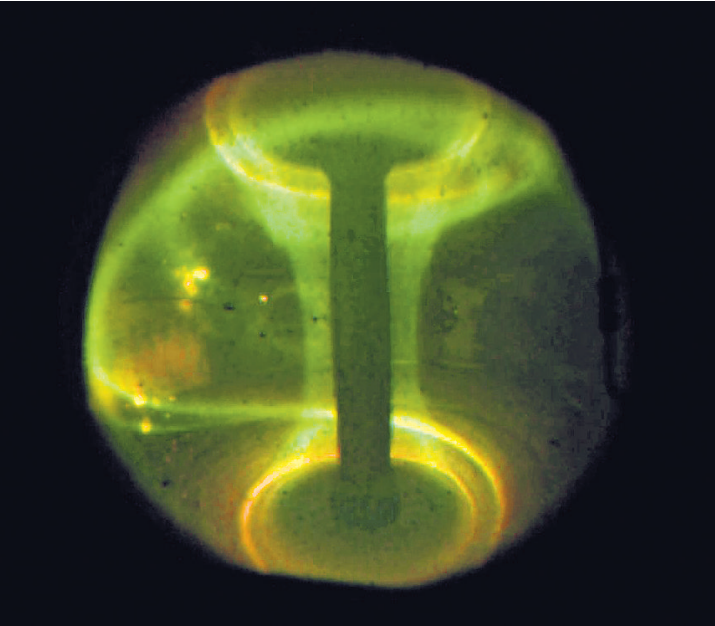
While no sculpture is quite like Big Tom, who was roosting over Frazee before Thanksgiving with icicles clinging to his chest, snow on his tail feathers and a stoic expression above his wattle, it does not take long while wandering the Midwestern countryside to see

more supersize statuary.

Minnesota alone is home to a giant loon in Vergas; a giant otter in Fergus Falls; a giant prairie chicken in Rothsay; a giant sugar beet in Halstad; a giant crow in Belgrade; a giant pelican in, of course, Pelican Rapids; and giant Paul Bunyans in Akeley, Bemidji and Brainerd.

For small places that will never have the tallest building or grandest stadium, having one of the world's largest of something — truly, anything — can be a way to forge an identity, pull in visitors and, perhaps most of all, share a

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PRINCETON PLASMA PHYSICS LABORATORY

The Quest to Build a Star on Earth

Start-ups say we're closer than ever to limitless, zero-carbon energy from fusion. When will we get there? Page A6.

INTERNATIONAL A4-11

Debate Over Assisted Dying

As lawmakers prepare to vote on legalizing assisted suicide for the terminally ill in England and Wales, an intense public discussion has unfolded. PAGE A4

Two Presidents, Two Policies

Even as President Biden brokers a cease-fire in Lebanon, President-elect Donald J. Trump is running his own foreign policy. PAGE A8

The Others Accused in France

The last group of the 50 men also accused in the Dominique Pelicot rape case has been cross-examined in a trial that has shaken the country. PAGE A7



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Holiday Offerings Onstage

"Elf the Musical," inventive spins on "A Christmas Carol," and, of course, the Rockettes, above, all beckon. PAGE C2

An Actress Breaking Through

After a strong performance in "Till," Danielle Deadwyler stands out once again in "The Piano Lesson." PAGE C1

BUSINESS B1-5

Macy's One-Day TV Deal

The Thanksgiving Day Parade has been the most-watched entertainment program in the United States for the past three years. PAGE B1

A Bruising Price War

A shakeout in China's electric vehicle industry is starting to take shape as companies burn through cash. PAGE B1

SPORTS B6-8

Just the Stats, Man

Mike Eayrs was "the Lone Ranger," credited with popularizing data science in the N.F.L. in the 1980s. PAGE B6

NATIONAL A12-19

Absurdist Inflation

Lost in the debate over a piece of conceptual art that sold for \$5.2 million is the fruit vendor who first sold the banana outside of Sotheby's for 35 cents. PAGE A16

What's a Rich Democrat to Do?

The donor class is wrestling with Donald Trump's win, worried about retribution and liberal sluggishness. PAGE A13

OPINION A22-23

Michelle Goldberg

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Dressing for the Emerald City

To create costumes for the film adaptation of the Broadway musical "Wicked," the filmmakers turned to the Tony Award winner Paul Tazewell, who already knew his way around Oz. PAGE D5

I Haul, Therefore I Am

Amazon Haul promises "affordable fashion, home, lifestyle, electronics and other products with ultralow prices." Sounds good, but Vanessa Friedman has some reservations. PAGE D1

