


The Washington Post

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RE V1 V2 V3 V4

 **Rain 61/49** • Tomorrow: Rain 53/42 **B6** *Democracy Dies in Darkness* SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 10, 2024 • **\$3**

2-year-old in Md. dies in crossfire of shootout

Mother, also struck, looks on helplessly; two suspects in custody

BY JASMINE HILTON
AND SALVADOR RIZZO

A group of armed and masked men descended on a grassy area in the middle of an apartment complex in Maryland's Langley Park area, shattering the calm of what had been an after-school ballgame. As the sound of rapid gunfire echoed through the apartment complex, terrified parents raced to bring their children inside, while others peered out their windows onto a gruesome scene.

A 2-year-old boy had been fatally wounded. His mother, also shot, wailed as a plainclothes police officer tried desperately to resuscitate her son. On Friday, police announced that they had arrested two suspects in the case, saying two groups had been firing at each other when stray bullets struck the mother and her son.

"That's where he died," a resident named Julia, whom The Post is identifying only by first name because she feared she would be targeted by gang members, said as she pointed out from her window Friday. "I shook. I screamed. I cried. I wanted to have power and save the baby. Lots of things. My boy was crying and ... [saying] 'Mom, I feel like I'm dead!'"

Even in an apartment complex that residents say has more than its share of crime, the brazen, SEE SHOOTING ON A2

Alleged Medicare fraud cost \$2 billion

U.S. investigates what experts say is a scheme with little precedence

BY DAN DIAMOND,
LAUREN WEBER
AND DAN KEATING

The first angry calls to the Pretty in Pink Boutique began last August, confusing staff at the Franklin, Tenn., provider of wigs, mastectomy bras and other accessories for cancer patients. Medicare recipients from around the country claimed that a company called Pretty in Pink had charged their health insurance companies thousands of dollars for urinary catheters that they never ordered or received.

Flooded by dozens of complaints, the boutique launched a webpage in September to explain that its leaders were dumbfounded, too.

"We have reported the calls we are receiving to Medicare, and we have been working with callers to try to figure out exactly who is filing these claims," Pretty in Pink's website reads, asserting that another company by the same name was submitting the claims, and offering instructions on how to report the fraud to federal officials and insurance companies.

"FRAUDULENT CLAIMS ARE BAD FOR ALL OF US, AND WE ARE ON YOUR

SEE MEDICARE ON A5

 **ELECTION 2024**



TOM BRENNER FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

President Biden speaks at a news conference in the Diplomatic Reception Room on Thursday. Biden pushed back on a special counsel report released earlier that day that had questioned his memory, but he also repeatedly mischaracterized the findings in the report.

THE TAKE

One 12-hour period defines election's core questions

BY DAN BALZ

A single day rarely encapsulates the fundamental issues of a presidential campaign, but the events of Thursday came close. Over a period of 12 hours, Election 2024 was vividly displayed as a choice between one candidate accused of criminal misconduct and the subversion of democracy, and another battling public concerns about his age and mental acuity.

These are among the reasons most Americans tell pollsters they are unhappy with the likely prospect of former president Donald Trump and President Biden as the two nominees. Both are elderly and given to verbal gaffes. Both are disliked

by most Americans. Both seem to represent the past more than the future. Yet they are hurtling toward a rerun of the 2020 election, and by November, unless something changes, voters will have to choose.

With Trump cruising toward the Republican nomination and the Biden campaign eager to shift the focus to November's choices, it has been clear for many weeks that the 2024 general election would be the longest in history. After Thursday's events, it was also clear, as if it weren't before, that this campaign will be fought almost entirely on negative turf, a dispiriting prospect for an already sour electorate.

Negativity is always Trump's

way — a campaign of invective, grievance, victimhood and insult. But there is a growing chorus among Democrats that Biden's best hope of retaining office must go beyond accentuating accomplishments. Instead, he will be urged to attack, to draw contrasts with Trump as sharply and relentlessly as possible, while projecting an aura of fitness and competence to counter deep concerns about his age and acuity.

Thursday might have turned out as a day when the Biden campaign gained some political high ground. It began at the Supreme Court, where the justices heard oral arguments about whether Trump should be disqualified from the ballot in

Colorado. The larger question looming over the proceedings was whether the former president was an insurrectionist.

It is extraordinary that someone who did what Trump did in the aftermath of the 2020 election — who did what he did ahead of the Jan. 6, 2021, attack on the Capitol, who still claims falsely that the election was stolen and who speaks of a second term as retribution — is in what now seems to be a toss-up race against Biden. In fact, many recent polls show Trump with a narrow edge.

Hours after the justices concluded their questioning of the lawyers for Trump and the state of Colorado, a second shoe

SEE TAKE ON A4

After Oct. 7, assailed over five short words

Palestinian Israeli singer says her life has been turned upside down by a post made in good faith



KOBI WOLF FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

Dalal Abu Amneh, a neuroscientist and renowned folk singer, at her home in Afula, Israel, where protesters often gather outside. She was held by Israeli police for days, and has received death threats.

Rafah refugees: After directing civilians to the city, Israel plans to move them and attack Hamas. A7

BY STEVE HENDRIX
AND JUDITH SUDILOVSKY

AFULA, ISRAEL — Dalal Abu Amneh insists she didn't mean to take sides with her Facebook message on Oct. 7: "The only victor is God."

The Palestinian citizen of northern Israel — a neuroscientist and a folk singer renowned in the Arab world — was starting a silent retreat at a Christian monastery in Jerusalem when word of the Hamas massacre began to spread.

She immediately checked in on Jewish friends in southern Israel, she said. At the request of her social media team in Cairo, she looked for words to convey what she was feeling — that nothing good would come from the Hamas attacks or from the war in Gaza that was sure to follow.

"The only victor is God" seemed safe, she said. It reflected her beliefs as a pacifist and an adherent of Sufism, a mystical branch of Islam. Her team posted it in Arabic: "La gha-leb il-la lah." Without telling her, she said, they also added a Palestinian flag to the message, as they usually did to posts about her music.

SEE ISRAEL ON A7

At Meta, a debate over if 'Zionist' is hate speech

BY NAOMI NIX
AND ELIZABETH DWOSKIN

Meta is debating whether to more aggressively remove some social media posts containing the word "Zionist" to counter a surge of antisemitism online, setting up a potential clash over censorship during the Israel-Gaza war, according to people familiar with the private deliberations and internal guidance seen by The Washington Post.

The social media giant has told some civil society groups that it's considering expanding how it enforces its ban against hate speech to include more uses of the term, especially when it might appear as a hateful substitute for "Jews" or "Israelis," said the people, who spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss internal matters.

"Whether the culprit is a hardened antizionist or a white nationalist, the term 'Zionist' often is used as an ugly synonym for 'Jew,'" said Jonathan Greenblatt,

SEE META ON A10

IN THE NEWS

A historical tirade Vladimir Putin turned an interview with commentator Tucker Carlson into a long-winded monologue about the founding myths of Russia and Ukraine. A8

Hogan launches U.S. Senate bid The former Maryland governor is hoping to help the GOP recapture control of the chamber. B1

THE NATION A defendant said prosecutors in the Georgia case involving Trump lied about when their relationship started. A2
Forecasters predicted that the El Niño weather pattern will fade. A3

THE WORLD A town in Thailand has become a haven for Chinese citizens trying to escape repression. A6
A jailed opposition leader's party did surprisingly well in Pakistan's elections. A7

THE ECONOMY AI makes it easy for employees to perfect their headshots, but the technology still has a few technical and ethical issues. A9
Fueled by encouraging economic data, the S&P 500 finished the day above 5,000 for the first time. A9

THE REGION The lion dance at Sunday's Lunar New Year parade will draw Chinese Americans back to D.C.'s Chinatown. B1
The Montgomery County council criticized school officials' handling of reports of a middle school principal's misconduct. B1

STYLE Graffiti covering dozens of floors of an abandoned building complex in downtown L.A. has been making a mark on the world. C1

SPORTS Christian McCaffrey's versatility has made him indispensable for the San Francisco 49ers. D1

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