



AMERICAN ICON A series examining the AR-15, a weapon with a singular hold on a divided nation

## As mass shootings soared, the horrific human cost was hidden

BY ISAAC STANLEY-BECKER

After a burst of gun violence claimed 13 lives at Columbine High School in 1999, a difficult question confronted a Colorado judge: whether to order the release of autopsies sought by local media under the state's public records law.

The judge, Jose D.L. Márquez, decided to keep the graphic reports hidden, ruling that the rampage was an "extraordinary event" that lawmakers could not have anticipated when they wrote the law. As evidence, he cited the "unique factor" of the community's trauma, illustrated by an outpouring of grief and a presidential visit.

A quarter-century after Columbine, then the deadliest mass shooting ever visited on a high school, the reactions highlighted



### A note to readers

Today The Washington Post is running "Terror on Repeat," a special section that includes photos and personal accounts that reveal the devastation caused by AR-15 shootings. The special section is extremely disturbing and may be too upsetting for some people.

**Including** a note from the editor on why The Post is publishing this story and reactions from readers when it was first published online.

Lawmakers behind the restrictions point to myriad reasons for cloaking crime scene evidence, above all sensitivity to survivors and the families of victims. There's also concern about interfering with law enforcement investigations or court proceedings and inspiring copycat killers. In the balancing act between privacy and public access, the rise of social media has weighed heavily against access, say people involved in the debates, because of the permanence of digital platforms and their possible manipulation by bad actors.

Even when gruesome images may be available, news organizations have often declined to seek or publish them out of deference to families and fear of public backlash. That approach differs from the media's handling of casualties

SEE SHOOTINGS ON A6

by the judge — including public memorials and visits from politicians — are no longer signs of an extraordinary event. They're routine grief rites.

But as gun violence has grown more common, state lawmakers have increasingly restricted access to government records docu-

menting its destructive impact, such as photos and videos showing mutilated bodies and audio recordings capturing children's cries.

Some states have crafted new exemptions to public records laws specifically shielding depictions of victims. In Connecticut and

Florida, bipartisan majorities curtailed access to government records after school shootings in Newtown in 2012 and Parkland in 2018, respectively. Other states, including Colorado, have wielded existing exemptions, for privacy or law enforcement activity, to withhold similar records.

## Oil giants vow plunge in methane emissions

Surprise COP28 pledge could significantly slow rate of global warming

BY TIMOTHY PUKO

Many of the world's biggest oil companies announced Saturday that they would slash methane emissions from their wells and drilling by more than 80 percent by 2030, an ambitious plan that could help curb runaway global warming.

The unexpected pledge, which could be one of the most consequential results from the United Nations Climate Change Conference, or COP28, underscores the fossil fuel industry's profound influence at this year's talks in Dubai. Sultan Al Jaber — the Emirati oil executive leading COP28 — had pushed for the international pact as a way to demonstrate how petrostates and oil and gas companies can speed the transition to cleaner energy.

The plan commits state-owned giants such as Saudi Aramco, along with corporate supermajors including ExxonMobil, to limit emissions of the climate superpollutant from their drilling and production work. It also includes international monitoring efforts intended to hold companies to their promises, and came out on the same day that U.S. officials announced new rules they say would limit methane emissions from the oil and gas industry by nearly 80 percent over the next 15 years.

Methane, which is 80 times as potent as carbon dioxide within 20 years after it is released, is one of the most powerful forces at trapping heat. It accounts for more than half of the human-caused warming happening now, though it makes up only a quarter of global emissions. Halving methane emissions by 2030 could slow the rate of global warming by more than 25 percent and start a path to prevent 0.5 degrees Celsius of warming by 2100, according to 2021 research by a team of scientists from the Environmental Defense Fund and several U.S. universities.

The energy sector ranks as the second-largest source of methane emissions from human activity, and most of that comes from oil and gas, according to the International Energy Agency. The oil and

SEE METHANE ON A10

**Graphite:** New limits on Chinese exports imperil U.S. green goals. **A8**

Donald Trump wielded constitutional clemency to forgive people who could help him politically in a way that no other president has



CAITLIN O'HARA FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

Joe Arpaio's campaign office in Fountain Hills, Ariz., is filled with mementos of his pardon on contempt of court charges by President Donald Trump. Arpaio, the 91-year-old former Maricopa County sheriff, was the first person pardoned by Trump.

## The power of the pardon

BY BETH REINHARD, MANUEL ROIG-FRANZIA AND CLARA ENCE MORSE IN FOUNTAIN HILLS, ARIZ.

At a diner known for political chitchat and Coca-Cola memorabilia, former Maricopa County sheriff Joe Arpaio walked from table to table on a recent fall morning, asking voters to back him for mayor of his Phoenix-area hometown — and to support the former president who once rescued him from a potential prison sentence.

"Are you for Trump?" Arpaio asked one restaurant patron, as town council members, a Republican Party activist and a Bible study group ate breakfast at tables nearby.

In the six years since Arpaio asked one restaurant patron, as town council members, a Republican Party activist and a Bible study group ate breakfast at tables nearby. In the six years since Arpaio received Donald Trump's first presidential pardon, the ex-sheriff known nationally for his anti-immigrant agenda has worked hard to boost his staunch ally in this swing state — from pressing voters one by one to vote for Trump in 2024



These 24 individuals were charged with or convicted of a range of crimes and were pardoned or freed from prison by Trump.

to issuing endorsements that the former president has reposted to millions of followers online.

Never before had a president used his constitutional clemency powers to free or forgive so many people who could be useful to his future political efforts. A Washington Post review of Trump's 238 clemency orders found that dozens of recipients, including Arpaio, have gone on to plug his 2024 candidacy through social media and national interviews, contribute money to his front-running bid for the Republican nomination or disseminate his false claims of voter fraud in the 2020 election.

Some clemency recipients are donating Trump's 2024 bid by banking money, working directly for his campaign or offering other support.

SEE PARDONS ON A16

## No letup in Gaza after end of pause

U.S. RAMPS UP CALL TO SPARE CIVILIANS

Netanyahu, Hamas signal no more hostage releases

BY HAZEM BALOUSHA, LIZ SLY AND KAREEM FAHIM

AMMAN, JORDAN — Israeli warplanes struck targets across Gaza on Saturday, intensifying the resumed bombardment of the enclave as hopes faded that a collapsed deal to halt the fighting could be revived.

With at least 200 people reported killed in the latest strikes, the United States also escalated pressure on Israel to do more to avert the heavy civilian casualties that are turning public sentiment worldwide against a continuation of the war.

Many of the strikes were in southern Gaza, where hundreds of thousands of Palestinians had taken refuge after the Israeli military had told them to relocate there for their safety. Israel has said that it believes Hamas commanders are also hiding there alongside civilians.

The shift in focus to the south suggested Israel is preparing to expand its ground operations beyond the Gaza City area where it has established control of some neighborhoods. Israeli aircraft dropped leaflets on several regions in southeastern Gaza ordering civilians to evacuate farther west, triggering speculation that a new ground incursion from Israel could be imminent.

But there were also strikes in the northern part of the enclave,

SEE GAZA ON A21

**Changing course:** White House shifts focus to civilian deaths. **A20**

**Left behind:** Babies found dead in besieged Gaza hospital. **A23**

## The rise and fall of an illegal sportsbook with A-list clients

BY GUS GARCIA-ROBERTS

Every detail of Grove XXIII, a private golf club in Hobe Sound, Fla., reflects the preferences of its founder, Michael Jordan.

The club shuns phones, photos and gossip about what happens on its grounds. The play is fast, with drones delivering drinks to players in souped-up golf carts and caddies keeping up on scooters. And memberships, which cost hundreds of thousands of dollars, are invite-only.

So it was notable when pairings from the club's December 2021 member-member tournament surfaced online, shedding light on the coterie of celebrities and business titans invited to play: John Elway, Wayne Gretzky, Rory McIlroy, Mark Wahlberg, Ari Emanuel, Bret Baier, Milwaukee Bucks co-owner Wes Edens, Boston Celtics majority owner Wyc Grousbeck and Houston Astros chairman Jim Crane.

So, too, was it notable that the roster included a lanky former bush league ballplayer whose source of wealth was more mysterious. Wayne Nix sometimes gave his occupation as "concierge" or "consultant." His friend Scottie Pippen, Jordan's longtime

SEE SPORTSBOOK ON A11

### METRO

Why D.C. teachers are leaving their classrooms at an alarming rate.

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