



OCEANWIDE PLAZA in downtown L.A. has been largely ignored since the developer abandoned the project, until taggers went to work.

## BRACE YOURSELF: STORM WILL BE A WHOPPER

‘Life-threatening’ flooding a possibility as heavy rainfall hits already soaked region.

By GRACE TOOHEY AND HAYLEY SMITH

Officials across Southern California are warning residents to prepare for what could be “life-threatening and damaging flooding” beginning Sunday, as a storm system fueled by a massive atmospheric river brings heavy, sustained rainfall and dangerous waves to an already soaked region.

This storm could dump more than double Thursday’s rainfall, which caused significant flooding, road closures and water rescues across the region.

“This is a potentially dangerous situation, and we are urging everyone to be preparing in advance,” Ariel Cohen, a National Weather Service meteorologist, said Friday. That includes positioning sandbags, altering

[See Storm, A7]

### Deal is reached on border policy

Senators agree on bill, but proposal to overhaul asylum system faces fight. **NATION, A6**

### January report on jobs stuns

U.S. employers delivered a burst of hiring and shrugged off interest rates. **BUSINESS, A8**

### Compromise on Catalina deer?

Alternatives to eradication are discussed amid outrage by residents. **CALIFORNIA, B1**

### Weather

Cloudy.

L.A. Basin: 60/51. **B8**



## Vandalism or street art? Taggers stir civic debate

Mass graffiti on an abandoned skyscraper in downtown L.A. is a test for how the city is viewed — falling apart versus vibrant

GUSTAVO ARELLANO

From a parking lot on the corner of 12th and Figueroa streets, Michael Lopez carefully commandeered his drone through the skyline around L.A. Live.

A video screen showed the drone’s slow ascent. Up and up it went, until it framed a shot almost straight out of Ansel Adams. The cloud-covered San Gabriel Mountains. Green foothills glimmering from recent rains. And an abandoned, half-finished skyscraper plastered in bright, bubbly graffiti.

Two other towers were similarly hit, virtually every floor of each 20-plus-story building featuring graffiti on the corners.

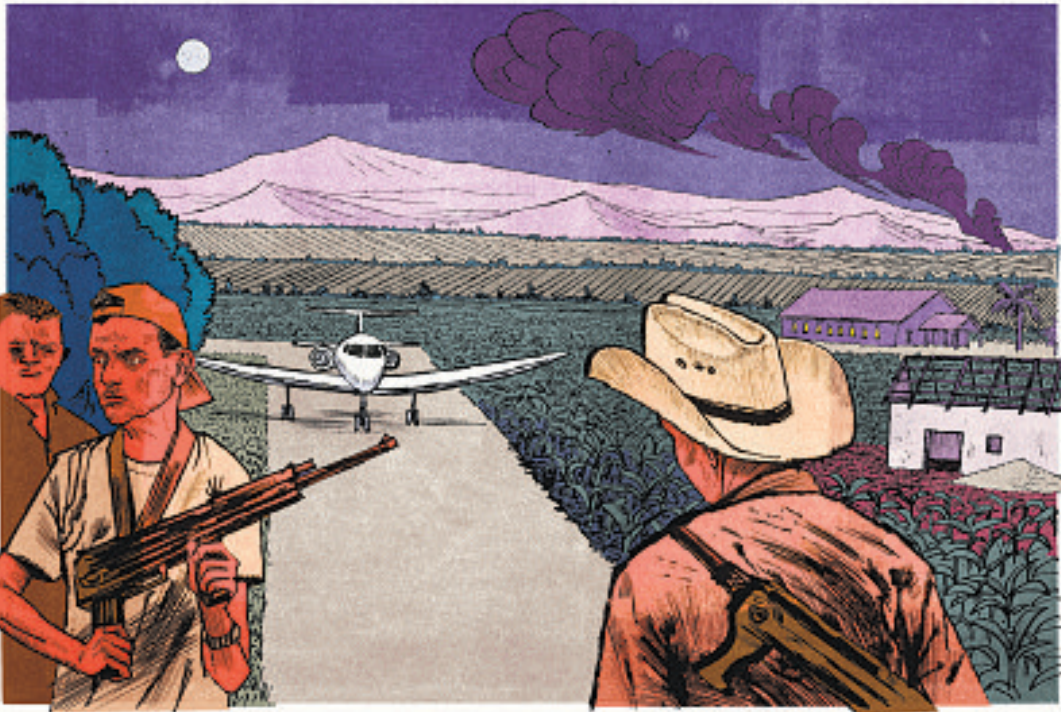


The audacity and visibility of the taggers’ feat — you can see it from the 10 Freeway and as far away as the Sixth Street Bridge — and the fact that the Grammys will be held on Sunday across the street at Crypto.com Arena have attracted worldwide attention.

It’s also become L.A.’s latest Rorschach test.

For civic leaders and professional L.A. haters, it’s the latest proof that the city is spiraling down in a doom cycle, another nightmare to add to our dumpster fire of street takeovers, homeless encampments and mass break-ins. The \$1-billion behemoth, called Oceanwide Plaza, was once one of the biggest real estate projects in the city, but

[See Arellano, A10]



MATT ROTA For The Times

COLUMN ONE

## From devout farmer to drug suspect

Franz Kauenhofen was once a pious member of his Mennonite community in this tropical stretch of southern Mexico. He read the Bible, tended to his fields and reared his three children to obey the teachings of the church.

“He never bothered anyone,” a childhood friend recalled. “He was a very kind, very noble person.”

Mennonites are Christians who, like the Amish, believe that admission to heaven depends on dressing modestly, doing good works, embracing pacifism and eschewing many modern conveniences. Kauenhofen’s community — a hamlet known as Las Flores — allowed

In Mexico, even insular Mennonites haven’t escaped the deadly pull of the cartels

By Steve Fisher  
REPORTING FROM  
LAS FLORES, MEXICO

cars and electricity but banned televisions, computers, the internet and smartphones.

Despite such restrictions, Mennonites are among the most successful industrial farmers in Mexico. Kauenhofen owned at least 100 acres, where he and his farmhands grew soybeans.

But today at age 40, he sits in prison accused of running clandestine airstrips for drug planes and commanding groups of assassins. Prosecutors say he was on the payroll of the Sinaloa cartel, once headed by the infamous drug lord Joaquín “El Chapo” Guzmán.

“He was a rising criminal,” said

[See Mennonite, A4]

## U.S. strikes targets in Iraq, Syria

Sites linked to Iran-backed militias hit in response for attack that killed U.S. troops.

By TARA COPP, LOLITA C. BALDOR AND ABDULRAHMAN ZEYAD

WASHINGTON — The U.S. military launched an air assault on dozens of sites in Iraq and Syria used by Iranian-backed militias and Iran’s Revolutionary Guard on Friday, in the opening salvo of retaliation for the drone strike that killed three U.S. troops in Jordan last weekend, according to the U.S. military and officials.

President Biden and his administration had been warning for days that the U.S. military would strike back at the militias, and they made it clear it wouldn’t be just one hit but a “tiered response” over time.

“This afternoon, at my direction, U.S. military forces struck targets at facilities in Iraq and Syria that the [Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps] and affiliated militia use to attack U.S. forces,” Biden said in a statement. “Our response began today. It will continue at times and places of our choosing.”

The massive barrage of strikes by manned and unmanned aircraft hit more

[See Airstrikes, A5]

## Scalia enters border dispute

Texas’ test of federal immigration authority backed by late justice’s dissent in a 2012 case.

By DAVID G. SAVAGE

WASHINGTON — For more than a century, immigration and border enforcement have been seen as falling exclusively under federal control, and when states tried to exert a greater role, courts shut them down.

Texas is now moving to challenge that legal interpretation before the U.S. Supreme Court’s current conservative majority. And the outcome may turn on a lone 2012 dissent by the late conservative Justice Antonin Scalia.

Scalia insisted it was a myth that the Constitution gave the federal government exclusive power over immigration. He noted that most federal immigration laws did not come into existence until the 1880s, and that before that, states put their own limits on who could enter.

He referred to the U.S. as “an indivisible union of sovereign states” and said lax federal enforcement of immigration laws deprives “sovereign” states like Texas and Arizona of “the power to exclude ... people who have

[See Immigration, A10]



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