

Chicago Tribune



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BREAKING NEWS AT CHICAGOTRIBUNE.COM



A DUAL HERITAGE WITH SPECIAL PAIN

People who are half-Ukrainian, half-Russian caught in middle as the war rapidly escalates

By Angie Leventis Lourgos | Chicago Tribune

Draped in a Ukrainian flag, Vasily Bublikov marched during a recent downtown Chicago demonstration marking 1,000 days since Russia's full-scale invasion, an unprovoked attack that pit the two nations of his heritage against one another in a rapidly escalating war that threatens global peace. His mother is Ukrainian. His father is Russian. This dual ancestry has spurred a unique pain for Bublikov and others of similar mixed origin as the conflict mounts overseas at an alarming pace, risking international expansion. "It is like my dad beating my mom, it feels like that," the 41-year-old West Ridge neighborhood resident said during a recent interview with the Tribune. "It's already almost

Above: Vasily Bublikov and his wife, Veronika Markova, make tea after dinner as their two children, Eugene, 11, and Sofiya, 15, hang out in the dining room in their West Ridge apartment on Wednesday. **CHRIS SWEDA/CHICAGO TRIBUNE**

three years, but sometimes it all feels (unreal). It's not only about my personal background. Almost everyone in Russia has relatives, friends in Ukraine. It's the two closest nations." The fighting reached a flashpoint Tuesday when Russian President Vladimir Putin lowered the threshold for Moscow's use of nuclear weapons, a change approved shortly after President Joe Biden permitted Ukraine to fire American-supplied longer-range missiles at limited targets in Russia for the first time since the war's inception. Kyiv launched the first of these missiles into Russia on Tuesday. The U.S. Embassy in Kyiv temporarily shut down Wednesday amid fears of a potential Russian air attack, but resumed opera-

Turn to Heritage, Page 13

MICHAEL MADIGAN TRIAL

Feds' case turns into 'The Danny Solis Show'

FBI mole's credibility could be big factor in jury's eventual verdict

By Jason Meisner and Megan Crepeau
Chicago Tribune

For five weeks, federal prosecutors methodically built their case that then-House Speaker Michael Madigan engaged in a yearslong conspiracy to accept bribes from Commonwealth Edison in exchange for helping the utility giant's legislative agenda in Springfield. In some ways, it's been the corruption trial version of a TV rerun, with the same familiar cast of characters — former legislators, precinct captains, ComEd executives and Madigan loyalists — who testified last year in the related "ComEd Four" bribery case. Now, though, the feds have raised the curtain on new material that promises to be popcorn viewing: The Danny Solis Show. Solis, the former 25th Ward alderman turned FBI mole, took the witness stand late last week to begin what will be a fascinating dive into one of the biggest public corruption cases in Chicago's sordid history.

Turn to Trial, Page 8

INSIDE



JOHN J. KIM/CHICAGO TRIBUNE

Stuck in neutral

Montez Sweat and the Bears defense are in a pass-rushing slump. Will a "reset" turn the tide? Plus, how rookie Rome Odunze made a "Vegas" gamble pay off. **Chicago Sports**

Beyond burnout

As many Americans cope with exhaustion, one author preaches the right to rest and unplug from toxic grind culture. **Life+Travel**

Chicago aglow

Despite the dropping temperatures, holiday lights will entice you outdoors. Our top 12 displays, from Botanic Garden to ZooLights. **A+E**

Fluoride in drinking water comes under fire

Proponents swear by mineral as others rethink its safety, use

By Adriana Pérez
Chicago Tribune

Made from one of the most common elements on Earth, fluoride is naturally present in human bodies and water, and common in toothpaste and mouthwash. And for decades, the mineral has been added to the water supplies of thousands of communities across the United States to help prevent dental cavities and decay. Dental professionals believe this practice is an effective and affordable approach to oral well-being, and consider it among the country's 10 most significant public health achievements of the 20th century. Fluoride's long-standing presence in many public water systems has not gone uncontested, but questions about its safe ingestion have been rekindled with the election of Donald Trump. Former presidential candidate and anti-vaccine activist Robert F. Kennedy Jr., named by Trump on Nov. 14 to lead the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, has vowed



Dental assistant Leslie Hernandez applies fluoride varnish to preschooler Jad Ahmed's teeth Friday at Ridge Lawn Elementary School in Chicago Ridge. **E. JASON WAMBSGANS/CHICAGO TRIBUNE**

"Water fluoridation — one of the nice things about it is it doesn't require any special behavior on people's part. Just drinking water or preparing your food with fluoridated water confers prevention benefits. And it's one of incredibly few public health measures that actually saves money."

— Scott Tomar, associate dean of prevention and public health sciences in the College of Dentistry at the University of Illinois Chicago

Turn to Fluoride, Page 6

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