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Democracy Dies in Darkness

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ELECTION 2024

China uses antisemitic claims to sway races

Fake accounts intend to amplify divisions in U.S., intelligence officials say

BY JEREMY B. MERRILL, AARON SCHAFER AND NAOMI NIX

China is increasingly targeting downballot elections in America, according to a Washington Post analysis and senior U.S. intelligence officials, using fake accounts on social media to spread divisive and sometimes explicitly antisemitic claims and conspiracy theories about politicians — part of an effort to inflame tensions in the country just one month before the 2024 election.

One covert influence operation has focused on Rep. Barry Moore (R-Ala.), who is running to retain his House seat. A China-linked account on X called Moore “a Jewish dog” and claimed he won his primary because of “the bloody Jewish consortium,” among other derogatory tropes, according to a Post analysis of thousands of posts on X, of which about 75 concerned Moore.

Moore, who recently backed new sanctions on Chinese officials, is not Jewish.

The accounts are part of Spamouflage, China’s largest known covert influence operation, which often uses prolific distribution techniques to spread Chinese Communist Party talking points across the internet. Active since at least 2017, the network has posted

SEE CHINA ON A6

Immigration: In Arizona, Vance and Walz show their contrasts. **A5**

On the trail: Obama admonishes Black men on support for Harris. **A7**

Trump allies tie gender gap to a men-first campaign

BY ISAAC ARNSDORF, JOSH DAWSEY AND ASHLEY PARKER

Soon after Donald Trump’s campaign team took over the Republican National Committee earlier this year, a senior Trump aide was asked how to combat news stories that the campaign had an insufficient get-out-the-vote operation.

“We are going to beat the reporters into retardation!” shouted James Blair, one of the two men now leading the operation, on a call with other advisers, according to two people with direct knowledge of the conversation. Blair did not respond to a request for comment.

Such pugnacity has come to define much of the tone and image of Trump’s 2024 campaign, reflecting the personalities of many of the men leading it as well as the candidate. Trump has long valued being viewed as an alpha male who never apologizes or shows weakness.

In many ways, that campaign culture mirrors some of its strategies. Trump and his advisers are calculating that, at a time when polls show voters dissatisfied with the direction of the country, and with turmoil abroad revealing the limitations of America’s

SEE TRUMP ON A4

Wet and dazed, Floridians take stock



KATHLEEN FLYNN FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

Shane Ostrander looks for items Thursday in his ruined home near Fort Pierce, Fla. He and his wife rode out a tornado in this closet.

Bracing for hurricane, community is left stunned by swarm of tornadoes

BY JOSHUA PARTLOW AND SCOTT DANCE

LAKEWOOD PARK, FLA. — They had everything they needed for Hurricane Milton. A new metal roof on their four-bedroom home, battened down with hurricane clips. Metal shutters barricaded over their windows. As the rains and winds picked up, Nicholas Gaza and Shane Ostrander sat on their living room couch, clutching their German short-haired pointer, Atticus, when their front door began to heave in and out.

They weren’t expecting a tornado.

The couple raced back into their bedroom closet and Ostrander braced its door with his back. That’s when Gaza heard a sound that ruptured her eardrums.

They had chosen the only corner of the house that would survive.

“The minute we closed the closet door, the explosion happened,” Gaza said.

Even before Milton slammed into Florida’s Gulf Coast, a swarm of deadly tornadoes touched down on the other side of the state, ripping a gash through residential neighborhoods and retirement communities. At least six people were killed, county officials said, and search crews had rescued 25 people from homes and buildings that received significant damage. Search-and-rescue efforts are ongoing.

The barrage of late-afternoon twisters turned out to be among the most shocking and destructive elements of a storm that left

SEE TORNADOES ON A9



EVA MARIE UZCATEGUI FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

A capsized boat Thursday at Marina Jack in Sarasota, Fla. Hurricane Milton weakened slightly before coming ashore as a still-powerful Category 3. The largest storm surge of eight to 10 feet came in Sarasota County, where Milton made landfall.

GOP: Republicans are split over storm misinformation. **A3**

Tropicana: Ballpark meant to be evacuation hub is damaged. **A8**

Tampa Bay: A dreaded storm surge from the gulf fizzles. **A10**

Local response: Groups mobilize to answer call for rescue, aid. **B1**

AT LEAST 14 DEAD IN MILTON’S RAMPAGE

Millions in the dark, but no ‘worst-case’ outcome

This story is by Bryan Pietsch, Molly Hennessy-Fiske, Joshua Partlow, Lori Rozsa and Joanna Slater

SARASOTA, FLA. — Floridians began returning to damaged and waterlogged homes on Thursday after Hurricane Milton carved a path of destruction and grief across the state, the second massive storm to strike Florida in as many weeks.

At least 14 storm-related deaths were attributed to the hurricane, which made landfall south of Sarasota at 8:30 p.m. Wednesday, officials said. Six of them were killed when two tornadoes touched down ahead of the storm in St. Lucie County on Florida’s central Atlantic coast.

The deadly tornadoes, rising waters, torrential rain and punishing winds battered the state from coast to coast as Milton churned eastward before heading out to sea early Thursday.

The hurricane tore the fiberglass roof off a baseball stadium and sent a construction crane crashing into a high-rise building in St. Petersburg. It destroyed homes and inundated roads across a wide swath of Florida. About 3 million people were without electricity after power lines snapped.

On the state’s west coast, more than 700 people stranded by floodwaters were rescued Thursday in a single county, Hillsborough. Residents who had evacuated ahead of the storm after being implored to leave by local officials ventured home as roads and bridges reopened, navigating downed power lines, toppled trees and shredded debris.

Still, authorities had feared even more catastrophic impacts from the storm, particularly along the state’s central western coast, an area that was also pummeled by Hurricane Helene on Sept. 26.

Milton weakened slightly before coming ashore as a still-powerful Category 3 hurricane. It also turned slightly south of Tampa Bay rather than hitting it head on, sparing the heavily populated area a potentially devastating

SEE MILTON ON A8

ETHEL KENNEDY 1928-2024

Matriarch of storied family scarred by loss, driven by duty

BY MATT SCHUDEL

Ethel Kennedy, the resilient widow of Robert F. Kennedy who endured the assassination of her husband and other losses to emerge as a stoic and strong-willed protector of the legacy of one of the country’s foremost political families, died Oct. 10. She was 96.

Her grandson Joe Kennedy III, a former Democratic congressman from Massachusetts who currently serves as U.S. special envoy to Northern Ireland, announced her death on X. The cause was complications from a stroke that she suffered last week, he wrote in the post, which did not say where she died.

Mrs. Kennedy, the scion of a wealthy Catholic family and mother of 11 children, was a steady presence in the tragedy-scarred Kennedy family and in the life of her husband, who served as U.S. attorney general and as a Democratic senator from New York. In recent months, she watched as many in the Kennedy



JOHN LENT/AP

Ethel Kennedy and Robert F. Kennedy in 1955 in New York.

clan spoke out against her son, Robert F. Kennedy Jr., after he dropped his presidential bid as an independent and pledged support to Republican Donald Trump.

Lively, high-spirited and a longtime fixture in Washington’s social and political circles, Mrs. Kennedy was often seen as a common-touch counterpoint to

SEE KENNEDY ON A20

IN THE NEWS

Escalation in Beirut Israeli strikes killed 22 people in the deadliest attack since fighting began Oct. 8, 2023, when Hezbollah launched its first rocket attacks on northern Israel. **A12**

Tesla promises Chief executive Elon Musk has long said robotaxis will be on the road, but his predictions have fallen short. **A15**

THE NATION A far-right news site settled a defamation lawsuit with two Georgia election workers. **A4**
Ohio voters reject Trump’s false claims about Haitian migrants, a poll found. **A6**

THE WORLD Two peacekeepers in Lebanon were wounded by Israeli fire, the U.N. said. **A11**
On Taiwan’s National Day, its new leader says China has “no right” to represent the island. **A14**

THE ECONOMY Social Security recipients will see a modest 2.5 percent increase in monthly checks in 2025, the federal government announced. **A15**
Inflation eased last month, the last such report before the election, but not by as much as economists hoped. **A16**

THE REGION A debate in Maryland between Senate nominees started civilly, then veered into each side accusing the other of lying about their record. **B1**
A teacher in Montgomery County who is accused of selling fentanyl to a man who later overdosed was indicted. **B1**

STYLE The Nobel Prize for literature was awarded to Han Kang, the category’s first South Korean laureate. **C1**
WEEKEND We rounded up six judges to taste 108 bagels from nine beloved D.C. shops. One toasted the competition.

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