

Trump assails trial as a fraud against him

As N.Y. case wraps up, he harps on alleged political motivations

BY SHAYNA JACOBS AND MARK BERMAN

NEW YORK — Donald Trump’s civil fraud trial wound down Thursday with closing statements in the case, which accuses the former president of exaggerating the values of his properties and other assets to secure better financial terms.

While much of the day unfolded in conventional fashion — with lawyers from both sides using their allotted time to offer summaries of the case — Trump was allowed to interrupt that rhythm shortly before lunchtime to deliver an extended disquisition, excoriating the judge, the entire case and New York Attorney General Letitia James, who filed the lawsuit and is seeking a \$370 million penalty.

“Your honor, look. I did nothing wrong,” Trump said during his remarks, which lasted about six minutes. “They should pay me for what we’ve had to go through.”

The trial, which began a little more than three months ago, follows a lawsuit that James brought in 2022 against Trump, his namesake business and some of his adult children. The lawsuit accuses Trump and his business of misstating values and basic facts about properties in financial statements to get better terms from bankers and lenders from 2011 to 2021.

Trump and his attorneys say no one was defrauded and deny any wrongdoing. Trump, the leading contender for the Republican presidential nomination this year, has repeatedly accused James, a Democrat, of being politically motivated.

The case appears to have struck a nerve with Trump, who has long touted himself as a titan of business and real estate. Trump has repeatedly attended the proceedings when he was not obligated to do so, periodically pausing in the courtroom hallway to address reporters and belittle James and the lawsuit and defend his business experience. **SEE TRUMP ON A4**

South Africa makes case against Israel at international court



THILO SCHMUELGEN/REUTERS

Pro-Palestinian demonstrators protest as an outdoor screen shows a live broadcast from the International Court of Justice in The Hague, where South Africa argued Thursday that Israel’s actions in Gaza, including its bombardment and siege of the enclave, showed “genocidal intent” against Palestinians. **Story, A13**

Gazans tell of abuse at detention sites in Israel

BY MIRIAM BERGER AND HAJAR HARB

JERUSALEM — Jihad Hammouda said he spent 17 days blindfolded and handcuffed in an Israeli detention facility, made to kneel on the ground for hours at a time. He did not know where he was or when he would be released.

Israeli soldiers stormed his family home in Gaza City on Dec. 8, the 20-year-old told The Washington Post. He said they shot dead his 78-year-old grandfather, who suffered from dementia, and rounded up his sister, cousins, uncles and grandmother.

Hammouda initially spent more than a day in confinement at a neighbor’s home in Gaza,

Hundreds have been held without charge under a secretive legal framework decried as open to misuse

where he said he was stripped to his underwear. Interrogators beat him when he denied being involved with Hamas, he recounted; one soldier held a knife to his hand, threatening to cut off a finger unless he admitted to possessing weapons.

“I assured them that I was a university student and had no connection to any military organizations,” Hammouda said.

On the afternoon of Dec. 9, he said, soldiers drove him over the embattled border to what he as-

sumed was an Israeli military site. From beneath his blindfold, he glimpsed a large barracks surrounded by barbed wire. Soldiers took roll call every day for some 120 detainees in gray jumpsuits. Armed guards patrolled. He heard aircraft circling above. Each prisoner had a wristband with a number: His was 057906.

The Post could not independently verify Hammouda’s account, but it is consistent with those of six other recently released detainees interviewed for

this story, as well as testimonies collected by human rights groups and other media reports.

Hundreds of Palestinians — both combatants and civilians — have been detained by Israeli forces in Gaza and incarcerated without charge inside Israel under a secretive legal framework that rights groups say has never before been applied at this scale. Advocates say the system is intentionally opaque and open to abuse, allowing detainees to effectively disappear into a legal gray zone.

Hammouda has no official record. **SEE GAZANS ON A12**

Blinken trip: Secretary’s optimism on postwar Gaza hits snags. **A13**

Strikes target Houthi militia

U.S.-LED COALITION HITS SITES IN YEMEN

Escalation follows surge in attacks on Red Sea

BY ALEX HORTON, DAN LAMOTHE, MISSY RYAN AND ABIGAIL HAUSLOHNER

A U.S.-led military coalition struck Iran-aligned Houthi militants in Yemen on Thursday, a dramatic escalation after the group ignored repeated warnings from the Biden administration and other governments to stop attacking commercial vessels in the Red Sea.

The operation follows weeks of hostility as the Houthis, protesting Israel’s military campaign in Gaza, have disrupted global trade by making the vital passage a dangerous place for ships to transit. The group, which functions as the de facto government in parts of Yemen, has carried out at least 27 attacks since November, officials have said, leading to repeated altercations as the United States and partner nations have surged warships into the region to protect against the incoming fire.

In a statement, President Biden characterized the strikes as a necessary retaliation, saying Houthi violence has affected several countries. Thursday’s assault, he said, was directed at targets used by the Houthis to launch their attacks. He did not disclose whether there are indications anyone was killed in the operation.

“These attacks have endangered U.S. personnel, civilian mariners, and our partners, jeopardized trade, and threatened freedom of navigation,” Biden said. “I will not hesitate to direct further measures to protect our people and the free flow of international commerce as necessary.”

Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin, hospitalized since Jan. 1 after suffering complications from a recent surgery, said in a statement **SEE YEMEN ON A11**

PERSPECTIVE

A coaching maestro, suddenly out of work

As Patriots run ends, six-time champ Belichick, a master at creating culture, will not lack for suitors

BY SALLY JENKINS

If somebody told you to trust your money to Bill Belichick to invest, would you? Now turn the question around. Why would you trust football decisions to a mall developer? It’s that time of year again, the NFL hiring cycle, when billionaire superegos confuse their industrial or inherited wealth with locker room expertise and go haphazardly shopping for a new coach who will establish “a winning culture.” Instead, what most of them will get is what they deserve: organizational misalignment.

Football is not business, and business is not football. The job of NFL coach has no real managerial parallel. It’s a mix of hard technical proficiency and perva-

sive authority in which basic managerial precepts are turned on their heads. Predictability is death, unpredictability is a virtue, and the competition is equally protean. The roster changes not just seasonally but within seasons; injuries mean combinations are constantly reshuffled. And that’s before you have addressed the opponent. One man has prevailed over these peculiar instabilities better than any in modern league history: Belichick. Yet on Thursday, he was released by a football amateur. That’s the nature of this strange nonbusiness.

At 71, Belichick still has **SEE JENKINS ON A9**

Mutual decision: Belichick, Patriots part after 24 seasons. **D1**

15 GOP-led states reject summer food aid for kids

BY ANNIE GOWEN

Moving beyond efforts to block expansion of health care for the poor and disabled, Republican governors in 15 states are now rejecting a new, federally funded summer program to give food assistance to hungry children.

The program is expected to serve 21 million youngsters starting around June, providing \$2.5 billion in relief across the country.

The governors have given varying reasons for refusing to take part, from the price tag to the fact that the final details of the plan have yet to be worked out. Iowa Gov. Kim Reynolds (R) said she saw no need to add money to a program that helps food-insecure youths “when childhood obesity has become an epidemic.” Nebraska Gov. Jim Pillen (R) said bluntly, “I don’t believe in welfare.” **SEE FOOD ON A5**

IRS budget: GOP claws back \$20B and has more cuts in mind. **A5**



JOE RAEDLE/GETTY IMAGES

Barbara Neri, left, and Sheila Johnson work in a community kitchen last year in Fort Lauderdale, Fla. The state is not participating in a food program approved as part of a bipartisan budget deal in 2022.

IN THE NEWS

Maui wildfire’s toxic waste Residents and government officials debate where to store debris from the Lahaina blaze, with plans for a temporary site sparking concern. **A20**

Elections official resigns A now-former member of Maryland’s elections board has been charged in the Capitol riot. **B1**

THE NATION **Phoenix officials** and the Justice Department are in a standoff over a policing probe. **A3** **The border** has become a point of contention between Nikki Haley and Donald Trump. **A7**

THE WORLD **China is** suspected of election interference in the run-up to Taiwan’s presidential vote. **A10** **Italy’s prime minister** faces pressure to condemn fascist salutes seen at a recent rally. **A11**

THE ECONOMY **A partial government** shutdown could unleash havoc on the roughly 5 million families who receive federal rental assistance. **A15** **The FAA** will investigate whether Boeing followed rules to ensure the aircraft it built were safe for operation. **A16**

THE REGION **Prosecutors** in Virginia want to toss criminal fraud cases spurred by Amazon after the company’s civil claims were largely dismissed. **B1** **The Alexandria** City Council will soon vote on a plan to rename four streets that reflect a Confederate past. **B1**

SPORTS **Nick Saban’s** retirement at Alabama left football fans in Tuscaloosa dealing with emotions that ran the gamut. **D1**

WEEKEND **Tim Carman** bids farewell to the Casual Dining column after 11 years of learning about D.C., the world and himself.

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