



JIM HUYLEBROEK FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES  
Children passing members of an elite Taliban force in March in eastern Afghanistan. The Taliban have at least 50,000 active fighters.

## After 18 Years of War, Taliban Sense Victory Over a Superpower

**By MUJIB MASHAL**  
ALINGAR, Afghanistan — Under the shade of a mulberry tree, near grave sites dotted with Taliban flags, a top insurgent military leader in eastern Afghanistan acknowledged that the group had suffered devastating losses from American strikes and government operations over the past decade.  
But those losses have changed little on the ground: The Taliban keep replacing their dead and wounded and delivering brutal vi-

olence.  
“We see this fight as worship,” said Mawlawi Mohammed Qais, the head of the Taliban’s military commission in Laghman Province, as dozens of his fighters waited nearby on a hillside. “So if a brother is killed, the second brother won’t disappoint God’s wish — he’ll step into the brother’s shoes.”  
It was March, and the Taliban

**Using Grit and Carnage to Outlast the U.S.**  
had just signed a peace deal with the United States that now puts the movement on the brink of realizing its most fervent desire — the complete exit of American troops from Afghanistan.  
The Taliban have outlasted a superpower through nearly 19 years of grinding war. And dozens of interviews with Taliban officials

and fighters in three countries, as well as with Afghan and Western officials, illuminated the melding of old and new methods and generations that helped them do it.  
After 2001, the Taliban reorganized as a decentralized network of fighters and low-level commanders empowered to recruit and find resources locally while the senior leadership remained in neighboring Pakistan.  
The insurgency came to embrace a system of terrorism planning and attacks that kept the Afghan government under wither-

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CARLOS GONZALEZ/STAR TRIBUNE, VIA ASSOCIATED PRESS  
Crowds in Minneapolis protested after George Floyd died. A video showed an officer kneeling on his neck for several minutes.

## Videos and Police Reports Differ In String of Deadly Encounters

**By AUDRA D. S. BURCH and JOHN ELIGON**  
The Minneapolis police statement was short and sanitized. An allegation of forgery. A suspect who “appeared to be under the influence,” who “physically resisted officers” and who appeared to be “suffering medical distress.”  
The video that emerged hours later told a drastically different story. It showed a white police officer pressing his knee into the neck of a black suspect until he appeared limp and unconscious. Throughout the encounter, the man, George Floyd, could be heard saying “I can’t breathe” again and again. He later died at a hospital.  
The explosive footage of Mr. Floyd, 46, taken by a bystander and shared widely on social media early Tuesday, incited community

## Trump Slams MSNBC Host With a Smear

**By PETER BAKER and MAGGIE ASTOR**  
WASHINGTON — President Trump smeared a prominent television host on Tuesday from the lectern in the Rose Garden with an unfounded allegation of murder, taking the politics of rage and conspiracy theory to a new level even as much of the political world barely took notice.  
In an attack that once would have been unthinkable for a sitting president, Mr. Trump all but accused Joe Scarborough, a former Republican congressman who now hosts the MSNBC show “Morning Joe,” of killing a staff member in 2001 even though he was 800 miles away at the time and the police ruled her death an accident.  
The president’s charge amplified a series of Twitter messages in recent days that have drawn almost no rebukes from fellow Republicans eager to look the other way but have anguished the family of Lori Klausutis, who died when she suffered a heart condition that caused her to fall and hit her head on a desk. Mr. Trump doubled down on the false accusation even after Timothy Klausutis pleaded unsuccessfully with Twitter to take down the posts about his late wife because they were causing her family such deep pain.  
“A lot of people suggest that and hopefully someday people are going to get the facts.”  
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**FLAGGED** Twitter put links on two of the president’s tweets, urging people to “get the facts.” PAGE B1

## Beijing Seeing Risk as Young Want for Jobs

**By ALEXANDRA STEVENSON and KEITH BRADSHAW**  
Before China can fully recover from the devastation of the coronavirus outbreak, it needs to find people like Huang Bing a job.  
Ms. Huang, who graduated last year from one of China’s most prestigious drama schools, got an offer in December for her first job in show business, working for a company that books bands for bars in Beijing and Shanghai.  
The coronavirus, which virtually froze China for weeks, brought that gig to an end before it began. Ms. Huang has picked up freelance film production and publicity work, but she has slashed her spending and is counting her money.  
“When it was April and I still couldn’t start my job, I started to feel worried,” said Ms. Huang, 24. “I began worrying that I may not be able to work this year at all. I can’t just keep waiting.”  
Relations with the United States are at their lowest point in decades, and Hong Kong is seething with fear and anger, but China’s biggest problem by far is getting its people back to work. Millions of workers were laid off or furloughed while China battled the coronavirus outbreak. Many of those who kept their jobs have seen their pay cut and future prospects narrow.  
China’s youngest workers in particular have entered perhaps the country’s toughest job market in the modern era. Many are reducing their expectations to take any job they can get. The pressure is about to intensify: Another

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## Millions of Children Face ‘Dire’ Wait for Hunger Aid

### Program Sputters as 15% of Those Eligible Get Replacements for School Meals

**By JASON DePARLE**  
WASHINGTON — As child hunger soars to levels without modern precedent, an emergency program Congress created two months ago has reached only a small fraction of the 30 million children it was intended to help.  
The program, Pandemic-EBT, aims to compensate for the declining reach of school meals by placing their value on electronic cards that families can use in grocery stores. But collecting lunch lists from thousands of school districts, transferring them to often-outdated state computers and issuing specialized cards has proved much harder than envisioned, leaving millions of needy families waiting to buy food.  
Congress approved the effort in mid-March as part of the Families First act, its first major coronavirus relief package. By May 15, only about 15 percent of eligible children had received benefits, according to an analysis by The New York Times. Just 12 states had started sending money, and Michigan and Rhode Island alone had finished.  
The pace is accelerating, with millions of families expected to receive payments in the coming weeks. But 16 states still lack federal approval to begin the payments and Utah declined to participate, saying it did not have the administrative capacity to distribute the money. Many Southern states with high rates of child hunger have gotten a slow start.  
As of May 15, states had issued payments for about 4.4 million children, out of the 30 million who potentially qualify, the Times analysis shows. If all states reached everyone eligible, an unlikely prospect, families could re-

ceive as much as \$10 billion.  
“The program’s going to be very important, but it hasn’t been fast,” said Duke Storen, a former nutrition advocate who leads the Virginia Department of Social Services, which began sending money last week. “The intent is to replace lost meals at school, but the meals have been lost for months, and few benefits have gone out.”  
Among pandemic-related hardship, child hunger stands out for its urgency and symbolic resonance — after decades of exposés and reforms, a country of vast wealth still struggles to feed its young. So vital are school meals in some places, states are issuing replacement benefits in waves to keep grocers from being overwhelmed.  
The lag between congressional action and families buying food is, in many places, less a story of bureaucratic indifference than a testament to the convoluted nature of the American safety net.  
Many officials have worked overtime to start the program amid competing crises. Yet even in delivering a benefit as simple as a school meal, federal, state and local governments can all add delays, as can the private companies that print the cards, which can only buy food.  
“We get it — this is dire,” said Lisa Watson, a deputy secretary of the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services. “We want these benefits out.”  
Aid in the United States generally follows a patchwork logic, but the arbitrary nature of the moment is especially pronounced: Families with three children in

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**Cautious Optimism**  
Traders wearing masks on the first day back at the New York Stock Exchange since the pandemic hit. Markets rallied. PAGE B2.

## In Hard-Hit Bronx, High-Rises Have Become ‘Death Towers’

*This article is by Kimiko de Frey-tas-Tamura, Winnie Hu and Lindsey Rogers Cook.*  
Working on the front lines of the coronavirus pandemic can be hazardous, but staying home isn’t safe either for the emergency responders, pharmacists, home health aides, grocery clerks and deliverymen who fill River Park Towers in the Bronx.  
Even a ride down the elevator is risky. Residents often must wait up to an hour to squeeze into small, poorly ventilated cars that break down frequently, with people crowding the hallways like commuters trying to push into the subway at rush hour.  
There is talk that as many as

100 residents have been sickened by the coronavirus at the two massive towers rising above the Morris Heights neighborhood along the Harlem River. But no one knows for sure, since the leader of the tenant association died from Covid-19 in April.  
“It’s the death towers, you could say that,” said Maria Lopez, 42, a resident with a variety of health issues, including asthma, who has watched 10 of her neighbors being taken away by paramedics.  
The worst health crisis in a century has exploded across New York City, and it has inflicted the worst toll on the Bronx, the city’s poorest borough.  
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**Sounds of Solace**  
In a belfry high above Ottawa, the Dominion Carillonneur bolsters morale with the only live music performance in town these days. PAGE A14

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**Astronauts Flying Private**  
A successful launch would make SpaceX the first company to send a NASA crew into orbit. PAGE A22

**Rivals Edge In on Convention**  
Georgia and Florida have suggested they would host the Republican gathering if North Carolina hesitates. PAGE A19



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**Wuhan Tests 6.5 Million So Far**  
In the Chinese city where the pandemic began, the government aims to test all residents to halt a second wave. PAGE A5

**Pelosi Is Sued Over Proxy Votes**  
House Republicans move to raise suspicions on the efforts to make voting easier during the pandemic. PAGE A9

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AT&T’s streaming platform goes live on Wednesday. At \$15 a month, it’s more expensive than its rivals at a time when household income is dropping. PAGE B1

**Repurposing Virus Apps**  
With the outbreak in China fading, officials explore new uses for the tracking software on many phones. PAGE B1

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The N.H.L. is the largest North American professional league to announce definitive plans for a return. PAGE B8

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A New York Times/Siena College Research Institute poll found that theatergoers who are hesitant to return worry that the people around them won’t follow the rules. PAGE C1

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**Drummer on ‘Kind of Blue’**  
Jimmy Cobb, 91, the last surviving member of the group on the landmark Miles Davis album, propelled his bandmates with a quiet persistence. PAGE B11

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**Jennifer Weiner** PAGE A25



FOOD D1-10  
**The Delectable Dozen**  
Twelve of the nation’s best restaurants share great recipes with us. Above, from Felix in Los Angeles, tagliatelle with prosciutto and butter. PAGE D1

