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Democracy Dies in Darkness

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 29, 2024 • \$3

NATO says N. Korean troops sent to Kursk

Forces could enter direct combat with Ukraine in Russian border region

BY ELLEN FRANCIS, DAN LAMOTHE AND FRANCESCA EBEL

BRUSSELS — NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte said Monday that North Korean soldiers have been deployed to Kursk, the Russian border region where Ukrainian forces seized territory in a surprise attack over the summer, in what could be a “dangerous expansion” of the war in Ukraine.

The North Korean deployment marks an escalation in Pyongyang’s “growing involvement” in Russia’s war, said Rutte, who became the NATO military alliance’s top official this month. The assignment means that North Korean troops could enter into direct combat with Ukrainian forces and significantly exacerbate Pyongyang’s long-standing tensions with the West.

“Today I can confirm that North Korean troops have been sent to Russia and that North Korean military units have been deployed to the Kursk region,” Rutte told reporters, without saying how many forces might be there.

The Pentagon appeared to concur with key parts of Rutte’s assessment, saying later Monday that it now assesses that up to 10,000 North Korean soldiers have been sent to eastern Russia for military training ahead of a likely effort to augment Russian forces.

Sabrina Singh, a Pentagon spokeswoman, told reporters that U.S. defense officials had seen reports over the weekend indicating that North Korean soldiers “have started arriving in western Russia,” closer to Ukraine.

“We are increasingly concerned that Russia intends to use these soldiers in combat or to support combat operations against Ukrainian forces in Russia’s Kursk [region] near the border with Ukraine,” Singh said.

Ukrainian forces launched a surprise assault into Kursk in August, capturing nearly 500 square miles of terrain and hundreds of Russian prisoners of war, Ukrainian military officials have said. Ukrainian troops have managed

SEE RUSSIA ON A22



MELINA MARA/THE WASHINGTON POST

Vice President Kamala Harris in Michigan. Harris is set to release ads in the mainland and on the island aimed at Puerto Rican voters.

Brown puts fate in the hands of ticket-splitters in Ohio Senate race

BY THEODORIC MEYER

AUSTINTOWN, OHIO — Democratic Sen. Sherrod Brown’s political future — and perhaps his party’s chances of holding onto the Senate — could come down to voters like Tom McGuire.

McGuire voted for Barack Obama twice but flipped in 2016 to support Donald Trump. He is planning to vote for Trump again this year — but he is also backing Brown over his Republican challenger, Bernie Moreno.

“When you see all the ads on TV, [Moreno] barely talks about anything that he’s doing,” McGuire, 54, a contractor who lives in this Youngstown suburb, said as he loaded groceries outside the Giant Eagle supermarket wearing a Cleveland Browns cap and a Foreigner T-shirt. “It’s all about slamming the other guy.” Brown, he added, “just seems like a good guy.”

The gravelly voiced incumbent

SEE OHIO ON A13



JABIN BOTSFORD/THE WASHINGTON POST

Donald Trump at a rally in Atlanta. His New York rally over the weekend drew backlash after a comedian made offensive remarks about Puerto Rican and Black, Jewish and Palestinian people.

Pennsylvania: A key county reflects the race’s biggest themes, hurdles. A5

Speech on Ellipse: Harris to make her closing argument on Tuesday. A6

‘Progressive’ vs. old-school: Harris’s tactics varied as a prosecutor. A7

Showing support: Hard-right Christian movement is all in for Trump. A10

Some billionaires hedge election bets as Trump vows retribution

BY JEFF STEIN, JACQUELINE ALEMANY AND JOSH DAWSEY

At a five-star resort in California last week, Wall Street executives, fast-food CEOs, a few dozen other industry titans and two former presidents gathered for off-the-record conversations. One subject that inevitably came up, according to two people familiar with the matter: the possibility that former president Donald Trump could return to the White House.

The gathering of the Business Council — an invitation-only association of chief executives — at the Waldorf Astoria Monarch Beach in Dana Point was not supposed to be about the election, but some attendees wound up discussing how to protect themselves and their companies if Trump wins the presidency next week and tries to use the power of the Oval Office against his perceived enemies,

SEE TRUMP ON A12

Harris keys on Latino voters

‘ISLAND OF GARBAGE’ JOKE SPURS OUTRAGE

Democrats seize on backlash to sway choice

BY SABRINA RODRIGUEZ AND HANNAH KNOWLES

PHILADELPHIA — Democrats on Monday aggressively rebuked Donald Trump over a rally he hosted featuring racist and demeaning insults, with Vice President Kamala Harris’s campaign spotlighting a disparaging comment about Puerto Rico while Trump and his allies strained to try to minimize the fallout.

Amid a heated battle over Latino voters, Harris’s campaign launched a new ad attacking Trump’s record on Puerto Rico and held a news conference in Philadelphia, where Puerto Rican leaders expressed outrage at the Sunday remarks from podcast host and comedian Tony Hinchcliff. A Democratic super PAC texted hundreds of thousands of Puerto Rican voters in Pennsylvania to make sure they saw a clip from the rally, in which Hinchcliff called Puerto Rico an “island of garbage.” And Hispanic leaders aligned with Harris spoke out sharply against the comment and other remarks broadly disparaging Latinos.

“I will never forget what Donald Trump did. He abandoned the island and offered nothing more than paper towels and insults,” Harris says in the new ad, which references Hinchcliff’s comments and will air in battleground states, according to the campaign. “Puerto Ricans deserve better.”

Trump and his allies scrambled to try to contain the backlash from the Sunday rally in New York and direct attention to other topics. “We had a great rally at Madison Square Garden,” Trump said at a faith summit in Powder Springs, Georgia. He talked about his own tendency to use coarse language and did not mention his introductory speakers on the previous day. “Sometimes I’ll use a little bit, not

SEE LATINOS ON A9

Commanders’ miracle represents seismic shift

Hail Mary to beat Bears inspires belief that could endure for players, fans

BY SAM FORTIER

After the miracle, Washington Commanders General Manager Adam Peters walked into the locker room to congratulate the players. He worked his way from the wide receivers to the running backs to the offensive linemen, who were exhausted and bruised.

“AP, how about that?” right guard Sam Cosmi said, beaming from his chair. Peters, beaming too, dapped him up.

Left guard Nick Allegretti limped over, still smarting from the charley horse he got on the final play, and shook his head, grinning.

“Unbelievable,” he said.

They all talked like that for a moment, the fragmented phrases of “Wow” and “I can’t —” and “Man!” somehow perfectly capturing one of the best moments of their football lives.

Soon enough, for the team, the afterglow of Jayden Daniels’s Hail Mary to beat the Chicago Bears, 18-15, on Sunday, will fade. Players will slip back into their relentless weekly routines and say their focus has shifted to the next opponent.

The locker room felt different Sunday night. For decades, the Commanders would have lost games such as that, but when the Bears scored to go up late, the stands didn’t immediately empty — a testament to the hope the team is giving the region.

The Commanders rewarded that faith with one of the greatest

SEE COMMANDERS ON A22

Sally Jenkins: The Hail Mary was lucky, but it was no accident. D1

Behind the screams at a Md. haunted house

A demented clown keeps guests running scared — and things running smoothly

BY KYLE SWENSON

A swollen full moon climbs the sky as Stitchy the Clown goes hunting for guests to scare.

He’s searching for signs of fear. Nervous walkers. Faces blank with anticipation. Timid first-timers. He’s been terrifying professionally half his life. He knows the look.

Dozens are already here on this mid-October Sunday night at Field of Screams Maryland, walking into an open area where fire pits burn and the smells of burgers and fried Oreos breeze in from the concession stands. These are the first of what will be more than 2,600 guests at the Olney location, a Halloween attraction ranked as one of the country’s top haunted spots.

Near the fire pits, some teenage girls have just arrived from the parking lot. They huddle for a selfie, squeezing in to get the pastel smear of sunset into the

SEE SCREAMS ON A15



MAANSI SRIVASTAVA FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

At Field of Screams Maryland, in Olney, co-creative director Ryan Wyatt, second from right, trains a group of actors on techniques for scaring visitors at the popular attraction.

IN THE NEWS

Grief and resolve Tyre Nichols’s mother discussed the federal trial of former Memphis police officers in her son’s fatal beating, this time leaving nothing unsaid. A4

Another Kissinger? As U.S. ties fray, China is seeking a diplomat like the one who helped thaw the nations’ relations in the 1970s. A16

THE NATION Three members of The Post’s editorial board stepped down after the decision not to endorse a presidential hopeful. A2 Helene left vast damage along stretches of the Appalachian Trail. A3

THE WORLD Thousands protested in Georgia after a pro-Russian party appeared to win elections. A17 Post-election, the turmoil roiling the Middle East is unlikely to change. A17

THE ECONOMY Mental health experts are concerned by a rise in people turning to AI chatbots in place of human therapists. A18 Germany’s Volkswagen is planning to shutter plants in its home country for the first time, labor representatives said. A22

THE REGION Early voting officially opened across the entire Washington region, with D.C. being the last to begin, on Monday. B1 D.C.’s Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services allows juveniles to languish in its facilities, a lawsuit filed Monday alleges. B1

STYLE A Timothée Chalamet look-alike contest brought hundreds to New York, including the man himself. C1

HEALTH & SCIENCE A woman suffered infections for a decade after giving birth, and doctors were astonished by what they found. E1

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