

The Washington Post

Prices may vary in areas outside metropolitan Washington.

RE V1 V2 V3 V4

Sunny, breezy 64/43 • Tomorrow: Partly sunny 63/48 B6

Democracy Dies in Darkness

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 16, 2024 • \$3

Sex assault allegation roils Hegseth's future

Pick to lead Pentagon was not charged after 2017 police investigation

BY MICHAEL KRANISH, JOSH DAWSEY, DAN LAMOTHE AND JOHN HUDSON

Senior officials on President-elect Donald Trump's transition team on Friday weighed the future of Pete Hegseth, Trump's choice to lead the Defense Department, amid new revelations that police investigated an allegation that he sexually assaulted a woman in 2017.

The internal turmoil over Hegseth's future was sparked by a complaint shared with the transition team with extensive information about a woman's claim that Hegseth assaulted her in a

hotel in Monterey, California, after a Republican conference, according to a person familiar with the condition of anonymity out of fear of retaliation. The woman who drafted the complaint said the alleged victim was a friend who later signed a nondisclosure agreement with Hegseth.

Monterey police confirmed that they investigated Hegseth over an allegation of "alleged sexual assault" in 2017 and that the incident did not result in criminal charges.

The transition team was caught by surprise by the detailed allegations and now fears

SEE HEGSETH ON A8

Geatz ethics investigation

Speaker aims to withhold report. A4

Kennedy Jr. in his own words

10 claims, conspiracy theories. A6

Burgum's second job

Interior pick to be "energy czar." A8



GUADALUPE PARDO/AP



SAUL LOEB/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

FROM TOP: A protester on the sidelines of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation summit in Peru on Friday. President Joe Biden next to Vietnamese President Luong Cuong at the APEC summit. Biden had no plans for a news conference during his six-day visit to Peru and Brazil.

Trump eclipses Biden's last trip

PRESIDENT IN PERU FOR TRADE SUMMIT

He keeps low profile as successor sucks oxygen

BY MATT VISER

LIMA, PERU — When President Joe Biden first took office, he treated Donald Trump like the Harry Potter villain Voldemort, refusing to name him and calling him "the former guy." It's an approach that many of his senior advisers wish they could return to, but instead they find themselves grappling with how to treat the man who is now the incoming guy.

As Biden flew from Washington to Peru on Thursday on Air Force One, his national security adviser, Jake Sullivan, faced questions from reporters about what the president could accomplish on his last foreign trip — and seemed to grow agitated at the relentless focus not on Biden and his final trip to an international summit, but on his predecessor-turned-successor.

Are there national security concerns given that billionaire businessman Elon Musk is joining Trump's calls with heads of state? "I don't have any comment about that," Sullivan said. "I've just seen the reports, but they'll make their own decisions about how they want to engage with foreign leaders."

Might disparaging comments about Palestinians by Mike Huckabee, Trump's pick for ambassador to Israel, affect a deal

SEE BIDEN ON A14

Normal, again: An "existential threat" becomes Biden's guest. C1

Stealthy project sought to sour voters on Harris

Anonymous cash fueled effort whose targeted ads engaged in misdirection

BY MICHAEL SCHERER AND JOSH DAWSEY

Muslims in Michigan began seeing pro-Israel ads this fall praising Vice President Kamala Harris for marrying a Jewish man and backing the Jewish state. Jews in Pennsylvania, meanwhile, saw ads from the same group with the opposite message: Harris wanted to stop U.S. arms shipments to Israel.

Another group promoted "Kamala's bold progressive agenda" to conservative-leaning Donald Trump voters, while a third filled

the phones of young liberals with videos about how Harris had abandoned the progressive dream. Black voters in North Carolina were told Democrats wanted to take away their menthol cigarettes, while working-class White men in the Midwest were warned that Harris would support quotas for minorities and deny them Zyn nicotine pouches.

What voters had no way of knowing at the time was that all of the ads were part of a single, \$45 million effort created by political advisers to Tesla founder Elon Musk who had previously worked on the presidential campaign of Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis (R), according to a presentation about the group's efforts obtained by The Washington Post.

The project, funded with anonymous donations, micro-

SEE HARRIS ON A7

HBCUs seize a moment of goodwill and connection

As other campuses end race-conscious admissions, leaders see their long-term plans paying off

BY DANIELLE DOUGLAS-GABRIEL

When Anthony Davis became president of Livingstone College in October 2022, the historically Black school in Salisbury, North Carolina, had a freshman class of 220 students. Back then, it was common for only half of Livingstone's freshmen to return the next academic year. Davis planned to disrupt that trend.

By connecting students with academic support centers and engaging them before they could consider leaving, the new president and his team raised the retention rate at the private HBCU from 50 percent to 78 percent. The freshman head count climbed the following year as Livingstone expanded its recruitment, and it soared to 441 this fall — at a time when fewer high school graduates are heading to college.

"Our strategy is working," Davis said. "We've been looking at how we recruit and retain students, being very intentional, and we've seen great results."

Enrollment at historically Black colleges and universities is recovering from the pandemic at a faster rate than much of the rest of higher education. Some HBCUs have reported as much as a 30 percent growth in this year's freshman class compared with prior years. The end of race-



ALLISON ROBERT FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

Members of Alpha Kappa Alpha after Howard University's homecoming parade in D.C. on Oct. 19.

conscious admissions, record philanthropic gifts and the rise of HBCU graduate Vice President Kamala Harris has placed an enduring spotlight on the sector.

While HBCU leaders say those factors may have helped raise the

profile of their schools, they mostly attribute the gains in head count to years of strategic planning paying off. The schools are seizing a moment of goodwill and attracting students who value being in an environment where they

feel more comfortable and can pursue a rigorous education.

"Every professor I've met here cares about whether I'm succeeding," said Christian Gibbs, 18, a freshman at Livingstone studying

SEE HBCU ON A16

N. Korea's Kim: Never so brazen or in demand

Trump says the leader 'misses' him, but it looks like he's moved on

BY MICHELLE YE HE LEE

SEOUL — After closing off his country at the start of 2020, as covid-19 erupted in neighboring China, North Korean leader Kim Jong Un is storming back onto the world stage with a series of audacious moves.

He has abandoned North Korea's seven-decade goal of reuniting with the South. He has dramatically ramped up idol-worship propaganda around himself. And he has sent thousands of North Korean troops to Russia — demonstrating his commitment to an alternative world order aligned against the West.

Heading into 2025, Kim is presenting himself as more confident than ever — with more-advanced nuclear capabilities and a newfound alliance with Russian President Vladimir Putin.

That means President-elect Donald Trump, who courted Kim during a first term that included two chummy summits and says the North Korean leader "misses" him, will find a much more brazen counterpart in Pyongyang in his second term.

"We're seeing an emboldened Kim Jong Un," said Rachel Minyoung Lee, an expert on North Korean state media who has noticed a clear shift in the way Pyongyang portrays its role in the world. "I think it views itself as a bigger player than it used to."

The shift comes after four years in which Kim not only survived the pandemic-induced border closures that should have sunk his broken economy, but used the opportunity to impose even-more-draconian measures to keep the populace under control, restricting the movement of his citizens inside the country and making it virtually impossible to escape it.

It's a stark change for the totalitarian leader, who took power in 2011 at only 27 years old and quickly set about emulating his grandfather, the state's revered founder — down to his haircut and his raspy voice — to legitimize his own rise.

Today, the North Korean leader is no longer the young man piggy-backing on his grandfather's legacy to justify his own. He is now a seasoned authoritarian poised to exploit his sudden relevance in a conflict that has the world's democracies on edge.

"All that propaganda that was tying him to his grandfather, he doesn't need that," said Ken Gause, a longtime North Korea

SEE NORTH KOREA ON A13

IN THE NEWS

Musk's U.S. tangles, unraveled The divisive billionaire, tapped to help cut the federal government, has clashed with its agencies. A5

Corridor upgrade The Biden administration announced \$321 million in grants to improve Amtrak service and stations between Baltimore and D.C. B1

THE NATION
Wildfires in the eastern U.S. can be more destructive than their western cousins. A2
Ruben Gallego's campaign is offering Democrats a blueprint to win back Latino men. A3

THE WORLD
An Israeli strike collapsed a building in Beirut as Lebanon mulled a cease-fire deal. A9
New Zealanders put on a war dance to protest a bill that would erode Maori rights. A14

THE ECONOMY
Workplace experts and researchers report that return-to-office mandates will hurt corporate diversity. A15
In Silicon Valley, some are hoping for a windfall from government contracts and Trump's plans to roll back regulations. A16

THE REGION
Two climate activists who vandalized the U.S. Constitution display at the National Archives were sentenced to more than a year in prison. B1
Two teens have been arrested in connection with the death of a beloved D.C. DJ and hairstylist. B1

STYLE
Former NSO music director Leonard Slatkin celebrated his 80th birthday with a visit to the Kennedy Center. C1
SPORTS
The SEC could be looking at an eight-way tie for first place, wreaking havoc with the College Football Playoff. D1

BUSINESS NEWS.....A15
COMICS.....C5
OBITUARIES.....B4
OPINION PAGES.....A17
TELEVISION.....C4
WORLD NEWS.....A9

CONTENT © 2024
The Washington Post
Year 147, No. 54037

