

Trump’s plan for Maduro remains unclear

His revelation of a covert CIA strike in Venezuela set off a scramble in D.C.

By MICHAEL WILNER

WASHINGTON — The day after Christmas is typically quiet in the nation’s capital. But President Trump’s decision to acknowledge a covert U.S. strike on Venezuelan territory, in an interview with an obscure local news outlet on Friday, set off a scramble in a drowsy Washington that has become a hallmark of the president.

Officials working on Latin America policy for the administration that had been closely tracking reports of refinery fires and other curious events throughout Venezuela couldn’t immediately figure out which target the president was talking about, three sources familiar with the matter told The Times.

Trump would later detail that the strike targeted a “dock area where they load the boats up with drugs.” But initial confusion from within his own government signaled just how tight a circle within the West Wing is determining whether to climb the escalation ladder toward war with Caracas.

Trump initially confirmed he had authorized CIA actions in Venezuela in an exchange with reporters in October. Although the administration is obligated to report covert CIA operations to Congress, more robust congressional authorization is required for the use of military force.

“I authorized for two reasons, really. No. 1, they have emptied their prisons into the United States of America,” Trump said at the time. “And the other thing, the drugs, we have a lot of drugs coming in from Venezuela, and a lot of the Venezuelan drugs come in through the sea.”

The strike comes as Venezuelan authorities have increased the number of U.S. citizens detained in their custody, the New York Times first reported on Friday. Caracas had freed 17 Americans and permanent residents held in notorious Venezuelan prisons at the start of the Trump administration.

Evan Ellis, who served in Trump’s first term planning State Department policy on Latin America, the Caribbean and international narcotics, said it was “unclear whether the initial plan was for this operation to be publicly announced in an interview by the president.” Venezuela’s dictatorial president, Nicolás Maduro, “was certain” [See Venezuela, A7]



CARLIN STIEHL Los Angeles Times

LAW ENFORCEMENT officers are now banned from wearing masks on duty.



DANIA MAXWELL Los Angeles Times

OIL PRODUCTION can ramp up, allowed by a law aimed at stabilizing gas prices.



JONATHAN ALCORN For The Times

GOV. GAVIN NEWSOM announces a plan to sell \$11 insulin pens through CalRx.

SWEEPING NEW LAWS FOR 2026

By Katie King and Phil Willon

SACRAMENTO — Gov. Gavin Newsom’s office this week described 2025 as “the year that would not end.” But it has, and in its aftermath comes a slew of new laws passed that year that will affect almost every Californian.

The governor signed nearly 800 bills last year, including legislation that caps the cost of insulin, streamlines California State University admissions and temporarily allows sexual assault claims that are past the statute of limitations. He also approved legislation banning law enforcement officers from wearing masks to hide their identities during operations—a law that’s already being challenged in court by the Trump administration.

Some of the new state laws were passed years ago and are just now taking effect.

“These new laws reflect who we are: a state that protects workers, respects students, puts people before politics, and isn’t afraid to hold powerful interests accountable,” Newsom said in a

Tuesday statement.

Most of the laws listed below take effect on New Year’s Day. As in years past, the list mostly reflects the interests of the Democrats who hold a supermajority in both the state Senate and Assembly and hold every statewide office in California, including the governorship.

Here are a few notable laws going into effect:

Health

Fertility treatments: Large employer health plans will be required to cover infertility treatments, including in vitro fertilization, for everyone, regardless of marital status, gender identity or sexual orientation. “California is a proud reproductive freedom state — and that includes increasing access to fertility services that help those who want to start a family,” Newsom said after signing the bill in 2024. The governor later pushed to delay implementation of state Senate

[See Laws, A8]

President pulls Guard out of L.A., other cities

Trump says troops can go with crime ‘greatly reduced.’ Newsom cites court rulings.

By MELODY GUTIERREZ AND JAMES QUEALLY

SACRAMENTO — President Trump said Wednesday that he is removing the National Guard from the Democrat-led cities of Los Angeles, Portland, Ore., and Chicago, following a Supreme Court ruling that cast doubt on the administration’s legal theory for using the troops in domestic law enforcement operations.

The president, however, said the decision was based solely on what he described as “greatly reduced” crime in those cities and left open the possibility of future federal intervention.

Gov. Gavin Newsom’s office countered Trump’s reasoning for removing troops in Los Angeles, saying the decision was due to California’s recent victories in court, including a ruling Wednesday returning control of the Guard to the state. “I’m glad President Trump has finally admitted

defeat: we’ve said all along the federalization of the National Guard in California is illegal,” Newsom said in a statement.

The back-and-forth followed a brief filed with the U.S. 9th Circuit Court of Appeals on Tuesday in which Justice Department lawyers said they formally withdrew a request to keep the troops under federal control while the appeal proceeds. A subsequent order Wednesday from the appeals court returned control of the California National Guard to Newsom.

Last week, the U.S. Supreme Court handed Trump a temporary defeat, blocking him from deploying the National Guard in Chicago.

In their ruling, the justices said the power to deploy troops domestically is given to the president only in “exceptional” circumstances.

The decision was seen as a turning point in a contentious legal fight over Trump’s use of state National Guard troops, which the president said was necessary to quell unrest over immigration enforcement. Justice Department lawyers [See Guard, A6]

Edison is ordered to assess idle lines

In aftermath of Eaton fire, regulators tell utility to identify risks of unused equipment.

By MELODY PETERSEN

State regulators have ordered Southern California Edison to identify fire risks on its unused transmission lines such as the century-old equipment suspected of igniting the devastating Eaton wildfire.

Edison also must tell regulators how its 355 miles of out-of-service transmission lines located in areas of high fire risk will be used in the future, according to a document issued by the Office of Energy Infrastructure Safety on Dec. 23.

State regulations require utilities to remove abandoned lines so they don’t become a public hazard. Edison executives said they did not remove the Eaton Canyon line because they believed it would be used in the future. It last carried power in 1971.

The Office of Energy Infrastructure Safety said Edison must determine which unused transmission lines

are most at risk of igniting fires and create a plan to decrease that risk. In some cases that might mean removing the equipment entirely.

While the OEIS report focuses on Edison, the agency said it also will require the state’s other electric companies to take similar actions with their idle transmission lines.

Scott Johnson, an Edison spokesman, said Monday that the company already had been reviewing idle lines and planned to respond to the regulators’ requests. He said Edison often keeps idle lines in place “to support long-term system needs, such as future electrification, backup capacity or regional growth.”

“If idle lines are identified to have no future use, they are removed,” he said.

Johnson said that since 2018, Edison has removed idle lines that no longer had a purpose seven times and provided a list of those projects.

The investigation into the cause of the Eaton wildfire by state and local fire officials has not yet been released. Edison has said the leading theory is that the [See Electricity, A12]

Voices STEVE LOPEZ COLUMNIST

Are workouts accelerating my demise?

One day my left foot hurt for no good reason. I stood up to shake off the pain and tweaked my right Achilles tendon, so I headed for the medicine cabinet, bent over like an ape because of a stiff back.

Actually, I lied. It wasn’t one day. It’s pretty much every day.

None of this is severe or serious, and I’m not complaining at the age of 72. I’m just wondering.

Are my exercise routines, which were meant to keep me from falling apart, slowing my demise, or accelerating it?

What better time than the start of a new year to get an answer? In one poll, the

An orthopedic surgeon and radio show host provides insights



GENARO MOLINA Los Angeles Times

DR. ROBERT KLAPPER of Cedars-Sinai is the author of “Stop Exercising, You’re Killing Yourself.”

top New Year’s resolution for 2026 is exercising more. Also among the top six resolutions are eating healthier, improving physical health and losing weight, so good luck to all you dreamers, and I hope you last longer than I have with similar resolutions.

Instead of a resolution, I have a goal, which is to find a sweet spot — if there is one — between exercise and pain.

Maybe I’m asking too much. I’ve had two partial knee replacements, I’ve got a torn posterior cruciate ligament, a scar tissue knob on a frayed Achilles tendon, a hideously pronated left foot, a right shoulder that feels like it needs an oil

[See Lopez, A6]



KAYLA BARTKOWSKI Los Angeles Times

A SOGGY NEW YEAR

A shovel is stuck in the sand at the L.A. County Public Works Fleet Maintenance Yard sandbag filling site ahead of a storm. **CALIFORNIA, B1**

Few women in top film jobs

The gender imbalance has been “remarkably stable” for many years, a researcher says. **BUSINESS, A10**

Weather Rain, a thunderstorm. L.A. Basin: 65/54. **B6**

Markets **A12**
Opinion Voices **A13**

L.A.’s sports teams saved him

The success of Dodgers, others made a terrible 2025 bearable for Bill Plaschke. **SPORTS, B10**

For the latest news, go to **latimes.com**.



7 85944 00200 5