

## ICE plans \$100 million push to hire thousands

‘Wartime recruitment’ strategy would target gun and military enthusiasts

BY DREW HARWELL  
AND JOYCE SOHYUN LEE

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement officials are planning to spend \$100 million over a one-year period to recruit gun rights supporters and military enthusiasts through online influencers and a geo-targeted advertising campaign, part of what the agency called a “wartime recruitment” strategy it said was critical to hiring thousands of new deportation officers nationwide, according to an internal document reviewed by The Washington Post.

The spending would help President Donald Trump’s mass-deportation agenda dominate media networks and recruitment channels, including through ads targeting people who have attended UFC fights, listened to patriotic podcasts or shown an interest in guns and tactical gear, according to a 30-page document distributed among officials this summer detailing ICE’s “surge hiring marketing strategy.”

The Department of Homeland Security has spoken publicly about its fast-tracked effort to significantly increase ICE’s workforce by hiring more than 10,000 new employees, a surge promoted on social media with calls for recruits willing to perform their “sacred duty” and “defend the homeland” by repelling “foreign invaders.” The agency currently employs more than 20,000 people, according to ICE’s website.

But the document, reported here for the first time, reveals new details about the vast scale of the recruitment effort and its unconventional strategy to “flood the market” with millions of dollars in spending for Snapchat ads, influencers and live streamers on Rumble, a video platform popular with conservatives. Under the

SEE RECRUITMENT ON A4

## Welcoming the new year with a dance



ROBERT MILLER/THE WASHINGTON POST

Mona Gantugs, left, and Beck Byambadorj of Annandale, Virginia, trip the light fantastic Wednesday night as images are projected onto the Washington Monument, kicking off a six-day art installation. The light displays will run nightly through Monday to salute the country’s upcoming 250th birthday. **Story, B12, and Photos, A9**

## Dean who suspended archbishop faced own audit

BY IAN SHAPIRA

The interim leader of the Anglican Church in North America — who suspended the denomination’s archbishop over allegations of sexual misconduct — was himself previously investigated over two separate allegations of financial impropriety, according to a federal lawsuit and a global charity’s internal records.

Bishop Julian Dobbs was appointed on Nov. 15 as the dean of

Interim Anglican leader was previously accused of financial impropriety

the Anglican Church in North America, assuming the duties of Archbishop Stephen Wood. The next day, with the consent of five other bishops, Dobbs, 57, “inhibited” or suspended Wood for 60

days after allegations of sexual misconduct surfaced by two women, one of whom was a church employee. The woman said Wood, a married father, put his hand on the back of her head and tried to kiss her inside his South Carolina office in April 2024, shortly before he was elected archbishop.

Dobbs’s appointment, approved by the denomination’s College of Bishops, comes at a critical moment for the conserva-

tive church of 128,000 members and 1,000-plus congregations across the United States, Canada and Mexico. Its bishops gathered last month for a quickly arranged meeting in Texas, where they addressed how they’ve “lacked attentiveness or care for the flock committed to us,” according to a church report. “It was clear throughout our deliberations that there is a significant deficit of trust toward the College of Bish-

SEE ANGLICAN CHURCH ON A2

## Tiny Saipan doubles down on a giant Chinese casino

Project is billed as economic lifeline for U.S. territory, but detractors allege money laundering, criminal ties

BY SHIBANI MAHTANI

SAIPAN, NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS — The beachfront casino built here by a Chinese mother-and-son duo a decade ago was billed as a \$2 billion investment, a resort bigger than the Casino de Monte-Carlo in Monaco. The giant, gilded Imperial Palace would transform this tiny American island’s economy, the venture’s investors said.

Instead, it ended up drawing multiple U.S. investigations and a litany of lawsuits, and its operators abandoned it half-built, with hundreds of millions of dollars still owed to the local government. The original owners also left behind accusations against them of massive money laundering and corruption, and a half-finished building with peeling gold-leaf accents, mildewed carpets, unplugged slot machines and hollow arches where the windows should be. The Chinese gambling scion who spearheaded and oversaw the casino venture is now wanted in Beijing, where he was named as the head of an organized criminal syndicate.

In August, a new investor bought the rat-infested complex, promising to finish and reopen it, while bringing jobs and tourists to Saipan’s depressed economy.

The buyer presented himself to local authorities as Hiroshi Kaneko, a Japanese businessman who claimed to have a track record of raising capital and overseeing successful real estate developments. In a 2023 email to the U.S. territory’s governor, as Kaneko began to broach taking over the casino, he vowed to build on the “rich experiences” of the casino’s original Chinese operators and to spend at least \$300 million to finish the resort, repeating promises that it could be the centerpiece of Saipan’s tourist economy.

There was much Kaneko left out, however.

Rather than representing a break from the Saipan casino’s troubled past, Kaneko and the company he founded to acquire the casino, Team King Investment, have long-standing ties to its original operators — Cui Lijie, 67, and her son, Ji Xiaobo, who is believed to be in his early 40s —

SEE SAIPAN ON A12



SALWAN GEORGES/THE WASHINGTON POST

The Imperial Palace, an unfinished casino resort on Saipan in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, seen on Aug. 5.

## Muslims emerge as a potent force in Mamdani’s New York

Mayoral victory ushers in a new era for city and its changing demographics

BY TIM CRAIG

NEW YORK — Othman Alahleml and 200 other men had crammed into the decades-old Bronx Muslim Center for afternoon prayers, tripping over each other as they tried to leave down a narrow set of stairs in the two-story building.

But as he stepped outside, he could see a new, 32,000-square-foot mosque rising above a community of Yemeni food markets, gift shops and clothing stores. The new Bronx Muslim Center, scheduled to open in late 2026 in the recently named “Little Yemen” neighborhood, will become the largest mosque in New York state — at least until several other Muslim communities in the city complete their own expansion projects.

“We have built a neighborhood and community here,” said Alahleml, a Yemeni immigrant who looked up at a flag from his native country that hangs on a street once dominated by Italian immi-

grants. “We are going to have a bigger space, where we can also teach our children, and Muslims from all over will be coming here.”

In a city famous for its ethnic diversity, where power has been held by successive waves of Dutch, Irish, Italian, Jewish and Black residents, Muslims are now rising to prominence and becoming a distinct political force. In November, they formed the backbone of Zohran Mamdani’s mayoral election victory, ushering in a new era for New York and the city’s changing demographics.

The 34-year-old assemblyman takes office Thursday as the city’s first Muslim and South Asian mayor, bringing hope to Muslim residents who for decades have felt they were merely on the edges of municipal power.

“We feel reflected in him,” Hafeez Raza, a 64-year-old seamstress in Brooklyn, said about Mamdani. “For the first time in a long time, people here feel the power to speak.”

New York’s Muslim community includes surging populations of South Asians, Indo-Caribbeans, Arabs and Africans as well as a historical population of African American Muslims. They have transformed neighborhoods from

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Year 149, No. 54448

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