

The Washington Post

Prices may vary in areas outside metropolitan Washington.

RE V1 V2 V3 V4

Sunny 43/29 • Tomorrow: Mostly cloudy 42/36 B20

Democracy Dies in Darkness

SUNDAY, JANUARY 4, 2026 • \$6

No U.S. deaths; unspecified number of Venezuelan security personnel killed

Decision makes good on Trump's long-held desire to remove strongman

No congressional authorization; panels told of surprise operation after the fact

U.S. seizes Maduro in raid

Ousted leader and wife face federal case in New York

BY PERRY STEIN
AND SHAYNA JACOBS

Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro and his wife could appear in federal court in Manhattan within days to face narcotics charges, which, if accepted by a jury, could put them behind bars on American soil for decades.

A plane carrying Maduro arrived at a suburban airport outside New York on Saturday evening. He was expected to be processed by Drug Enforcement Administration officials and will be held at the Metropolitan Detention Center in Brooklyn until a court appearance, most likely on Monday, according to people familiar with the plans who spoke on the condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak on the record.

Maduro's capture and indictment have drawn protests from some lawmakers and scholars, who say international law does not allow President Donald Trump to unilaterally attack a foreign country and bring its leader to the United States to face charges.

Even those critics, however,

SEE MADURO ON A8

A defiant VP, murky future in dazed Venezuela

BY ANA VANESSA HERRERO,
ANTHONY FAIOLA
AND SAMANTHA SCHMIDT

CARACAS, VENEZUELA — The stunning nighttime capture of President Nicolás Maduro by the U.S. military plunged this oil-rich country and its 26-year-old experiment in socialism into dizzying uncertainty Saturday, as President Donald Trump vowed to "run" the nation with the cooperation of Maduro's vice president while extracting a "tremendous amount of wealth" from the ground.

But Vice President Delcy Rodriguez did not appear to be following Trump's script. In an address to the nation, she denounced the U.S. operation as "shameful," evoked socialist icon Hugo Chávez and South American liberator Simón Bolívar, and demanded the release of Maduro and his wife, first lady Cilia Flores.

SEE FUTURE ON A16



IMAGE FROM VIDEO/JOSE ABREU/X/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Smoke billows over Caracas early Saturday morning during a U.S. military operation to capture Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro and his wife, Cilia Flores. The couple were taken by chopper to the USS Iwo Jima, an amphibious assault ship positioned off Venezuela.



JONATHAN ERNST/REUTERS

President Donald Trump at a briefing Saturday with Secretary of State Marco Rubio, who is also national security adviser.



GABY ORAA/REUTERS

A woman in Caracas joins government supporters Saturday to protest the U.S. operation, which utilized more than 150 aircraft.

Oil futures: Trump envisions a windfall, but the obstacles are many. **A6**

Congress reaction: Democrats say Rubio misled them on intentions. **A6**

Sunday Take: Operation recalls U.S. interventions in Latin America. **A12**

A familiar specter: Raid alters security dynamic across the continent. **A12**

Expatriates in U.S.: Venezuelans feel liberated but fear uncertainty. **A13**

China condemns: The attack occurred hours after meeting with Maduro. **A20**

Secret Service faces challenges in hiring surge for 2028

BY DEREK HAWKINS

The Secret Service has launched one of the most ambitious hiring efforts in its history, seeking to bring on thousands of agents and officers to ease strain on its overstretched workforce and prepare for multiple major events in 2028, including the presidential election and the Olympics.

Service leaders say they want to hire 4,000 new employees by 2028 — a surge that law enforcement experts say has no clear precedent and reflects mounting concerns about staff burnout, a loss of experience.

rienced agents and a relentless operational tempo. The added staff would make up for expected retirements and increase the size of the agency by about 20 percent, to more than 10,000 for the first time.

Under a plan led by Deputy Director Matthew Quinn, the service aims to expand its special agent ranks from about 3,500 to about 5,000. Officials also want to add hundreds of officers to the Uniformed Division, for a total of about 2,000, and hire additional support staff. The figures have not been previously reported.

The agency faces serious obstacles, however, including a shortage of qualified candidates; competition with other law enforcement agencies, especially in immigration enforcement; and bottlenecks in hiring and training, according to former service officials.

A previous attempt to reach 10,000 employees over a roughly 10-year period ending in 2025 failed as the agency struggled with leadership turnover and disruptions from the coronavirus pandemic, among other issues. The service fell far short of recruitment and retention goals despite

SEE SECRET SERVICE ON A5

Minn. fraud uproar looms over Walz's third-term bid

BY CAROLINE O'DONOVAN
AND HANNAH KNOWLES

MINNEAPOLIS — Just a few months ago, Larissa Laramee would have encouraged Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz to run for president. She admired the man who helped lead the Democratic presidential ticket in 2024 — and who once taught her social studies.

But Laramee's feelings have changed as a years-long welfare fraud probe in Minnesota becomes a national maelstrom. Prosecutors say scammers stole brazenly from safety net programs, taking hundreds of millions of dol-

lars in government funding — potentially billions — for services they never provided while Walz led the state.

"I like him as a person. He's fantastic," said Laramee, 40, who works at a Minnesota nonprofit for people with disabilities. Walz, as her high school teacher, helped inspire her career, she said. "But with all of this that's happened, I'm struggling with seeing a path forward for him."

Laramee's doubts show how the sprawling fraud cases in Minnesota now hang over Walz — even as it's too soon to tell how they will ultimately affect his political future.

SPORTS

A peek inside one of the first "sober houses" for gambling addicts. **B1**

BUSINESS

Virtual and augmented reality are reshaping the auto design world. **B9**



ARTS & STYLE

Two looks at music's AI reckoning: pop's future and country's backlash.

WORLD

Italy's debate over what is and isn't authentic cuisine boils over. **A14**



TRAVEL

A Post photojournalist summits Mount Fuji for a steaming bowl of udon.

BOOK WORLD

In the novel "The Rest of Our Lives" a man flees a middling marriage.

\$322

SUNDAY
COUPON
INSERTS

CONTENT © 2026
The Washington Post / Year 149, No. 54451

