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Democracy Dies in Darkness

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 18, 2026 • \$4

U.S. dials up alarm on secret China test

New details on claim that Beijing detonated a nuclear weapon in 2020

BY ADAM TAYLOR AND CATE CADELL

A top Trump administration official on Tuesday disclosed new details to support its claim that China conducted an underground nuclear explosion during Donald Trump's first presidency, a contested assertion that, nevertheless, has become a catalyst for his push to resume such testing by the United States.

"We're not going to remain at an intolerable disadvantage," Christopher Yeaw, who heads the State Department's Bureau of Arms Control and Nonproliferation, said during a discussion at the Hudson Institute, a think tank in Washington. He urged Beijing to "come clean" about its nuclear weapons tests, which some U.S. officials and experts say is part of a determined Chinese effort to catch up to, if not eclipse, the United States' global advantage in nuclear weapons technology.

The event in question occurred June 22, 2020, "right near" a secretive facility known as Lop Nur in China's western Xinjiang region, Yeaw told those attending the discussion. The U.S., he added, used seismic data captured by a facility in neighboring Kazakhstan to conclude that China had conducted an explosive nuclear test.

The activity — measured at a magnitude of 2.76 — was not consistent with an earthquake or explosions used in mining, Yeaw said. The suspected explosion's

SEE CHINA ON A10

Historic presidential candidate and civil rights leader dies at 84

BY EDWARD WALSH

The Rev. Jesse Jackson, a charismatic preacher who became the leading voice of Black American aspirations in the years after the assassination of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. and was the first African American to gain significant traction as a presidential candidate, died Tuesday. He was 84.

His family announced the death in a statement, which did not say where or how he died. Rev. Jackson had initially been diagnosed with Parkinson's disease in 2015. Years later, he learned he had progressive supranuclear palsy, a neurological disorder that affects movement.

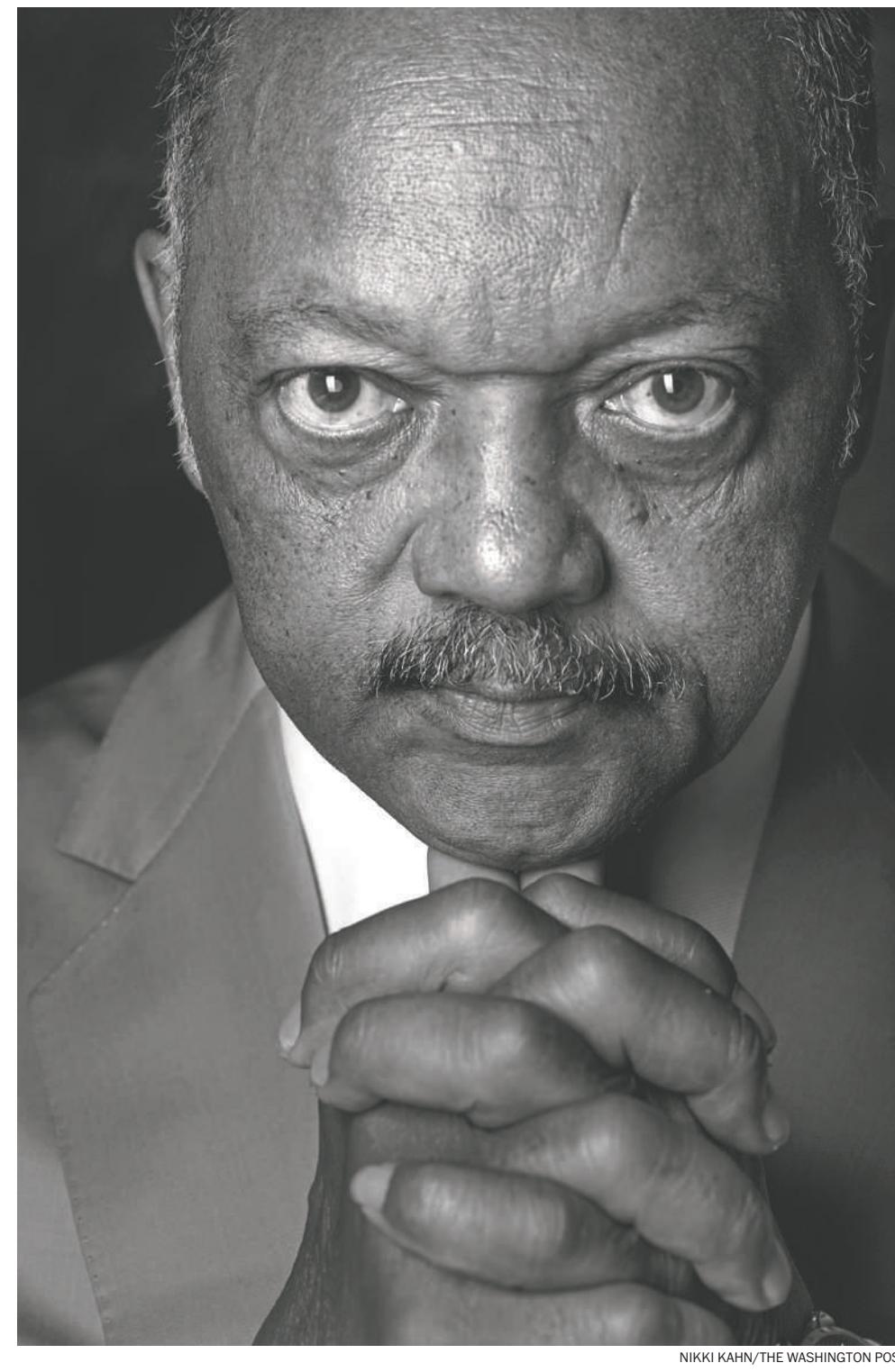
At the height of his influence, Rev. Jackson was widely regarded as the nation's preeminent civil rights leader, a ubiquitous presence before the television cameras. He showed up at protests and marches across the country to champion civil rights and social justice. And when civil disorder broke out — as it did after King's assassination in 1968 and, decades later, after the fatal police shooting of 18-year-old Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri, in 2014 — he urged restraint and nonviolence.

In the late 1970s, he began to expand his activities beyond the United States. He thrust himself into Middle East peacemaking, prisoner-release efforts and the movement against apartheid in South Africa, and he was regularly seen in the company of presidents and foreign leaders.

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The Take: Jackson faced racism in 1988 campaign. A11

Color of Money: He taught this fifth-grader to keep hope alive. A14



NIKKI KAHN/THE WASHINGTON POST

The Rev. Jesse Jackson was widely regarded as the nation's foremost civil rights leader, showing up at protests and marches to champion social justice.

11 killed in strikes on 3 alleged drug boats

Uptick in attacks comes as Pentagon refocuses warships toward Mideast

BY TARA COPP AND ALEX HORTON

The Pentagon announced Tuesday it struck three more alleged drug boats in separate attacks that killed 11 men, marking an uptick in strikes on the small vessels as the military redirects the vast number of warships it had focused on Venezuela and sends them toward the Middle East.

Since September, the United States has focused its military strategy and arsenal on the Western Hemisphere and seaborne cartel drug trade. The Pentagon and White House have identified the flow of narcotics as a national security threat and sent more than a dozen warships, including the aircraft carrier USS Gerald R. Ford, to the region to surround Venezuela and choke off illicit oil

SEE STRIKE ON A10

Latest Pentagon clash: Hegseth forces ouster of top spokesman. A4

A rite of faith



MAHMOUD ILLEAN/AP

Muslim worshippers perform the evening Tarawih prayers Tuesday during the holy fasting month of Ramadan, next to the Dome of Rock shrine at the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound in Jerusalem's Old City.

Suit claims censorship by Trump at U.S. parks

Groups say removal of civil rights, climate data undermines core mission

BY BRADY DENNIS

A coalition of scientific, preservation and historical groups on Tuesday sued the Trump administration, arguing that the removal of information about civil rights, climate change and other topics at multiple national parks amounts to illegal censorship.

"Censoring science and erasing America's history at national parks are direct threats to everything these amazing places, and our country, stand for," Alan Spears, senior director of cultural resources for the National Parks Conservation Association, said in a statement announcing the filing. "As Americans, we deserve national parks that tell stories of

our country's triumphs and heartbreaks alike. We can handle the truth."

Tuesday's lawsuit, filed in a federal court in Massachusetts, argues that in its haste to carry out President Donald Trump's order, the Interior Department has ignored well-established principles and legal requirements when seeking to overhaul information presented at national parks.

"The orders and resulting implementation actions ignore Congress's mandate for how the parks must be managed; erase the history of countless people and communities from public spaces; limit the availability of scientific information relevant to ensuring the long-term preservation of the parks themselves; and impair the mission of the National Park Service to preserve the parks for the enjoyment, education, and inspiration of this and future generations," the legal complaint states.

The Interior Department did

SEE PARKS ON A4

RFK Jr. claims keto diets can cure schizophrenia. Here's what science says.

BY FENIT NIRAPPIL

Health Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. has been inaccurately claiming that patients with schizophrenia were cured through ketogenic diets, the latest instance in which medical

experts say he has overstated nutritional science.

But his comments spotlight an emerging body of evidence that food can improve the lives of people with severe mental illness when medication alone isn't working.

"There's a germ of truth here," said Kent Duckworth, medical director of the National Alliance on Mental Illness, which raises awareness about mental health and advocates for improved patient care. "But the science is not sophisticated yet."

Psychiatrists say chronic mental illnesses like schizophrenia are managed and not cured. The doctor whose work Kennedy cited for the claim disputed how the nation's top health official described his work. Preliminary research has shown potential in

using the high-fat, low-carbohydrate diet to treat severe mental illness — but with crucial caveats that Kennedy did not offer.

While keto has been embraced as a fad diet for weight loss, research has long shown medical

SEE RFK ON A5

IN THE NEWS

Ukraine talks in Geneva High casualties and economic trouble signal that time is no longer on Russia's side, but Moscow isn't backing off its political and territorial demands. A8

No breakthrough A second round of nuclear talks between Iran and the U.S. ended amid Trump threats to attack if there's no deal. A9

THE NATION
DHS spokeswoman Tricia McLaughlin, whose regular Fox News appearances made her a face of the Trump administration's hard-line immigration agenda, is stepping down. A2

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The U.S. plans to deploy more high-tech missile systems to the Philippines to deter Beijing's "illegal, coercive, aggressive and deceptive activities" in the South China Sea. A10

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Bruce Springsteen will conclude his 20-date protest tour in May at Nationals Park, three miles from the White House. B7

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These four nourishing stews offer something for everyone and comfort when you need it.

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