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Democracy Dies in Darkness

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Altman's ex-peers paint him as deceitful

Testimony has given new force to questions about CEO's trustworthiness

BY GERRIT DE VYNCK

OAKLAND, CALIF. — "Do you always tell the truth?" an attorney for Tesla CEO Elon Musk gruffly asked Sam Altman, CEO of ChatGPT maker OpenAI, in federal court this past week.

"I believe I'm a truthful person," Altman replied. The attorney pivoted, asking him if people Altman did business with would ever think he misled them. "I can't answer that for other people," said Altman — but several had already had their say in court.

Altman spoke on Tuesday in the closing days of a trial in which several of his onetime close associates, including former OpenAI executives and board members, testified that he misled or lied to them.

The CEO's trustworthiness has been at the heart of Musk's case in his lawsuit that colorfully played out in court over the past three weeks. The opposing sides gave closing arguments Thursday and jury deliberations begin Monday.

Musk alleges that Altman and OpenAI president Greg Brockman, who co-founded the artificial intelligence venture with Musk as a nonprofit in 2015, pivoted away from its mission of helping humanity benefit from AI after Musk left the project in 2018. Instead, Musk claims, Altman and Brockman transformed OpenAI into a profit-chasing business with the aim of enriching themselves.

The trial has given new life to allegations of lying and self-dealing that have followed Altman for years, even as he has cemented his position as the most influential CEO in Silicon Valley's AI revolution, sitting atop the company that kick-started it with ChatGPT and is now worth over \$850 billion. A former mentor once wrote admiringly of Altman that "you could parachute him into an island full of cannibals and come back in five years and he'd be the king."

OpenAI's rivals Google and Amazon see Altman on A2



OKSANA PARAFENIUK/FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

Civilians hunted by air in 'human safari' terror pursuits

On a cool evening last month, 12-year-old Anatolii Prokhorenko was up in a pear tree, cutting off a damaged branch for a neighbor, when he heard the buzz of a drone.

That sound often means death in Ukraine, and not just for soldiers on the front lines. Increasingly, civilians are tracked, chased and attacked by small, commercially available drones equipped with cameras, rigged with explosives and steered by fingers-on-joysticks a dozen miles away.

Ukrainians, darkly, have dubbed this Xbox-inflected hunting of civilians as Russia's "human safari" — a terror campaign that started in the once-occupied southern city of Kherson. In recent months, it has evolved with new technology and spread to border areas around the country.

Anatolii knew it had recently reached the small farming village

In northern Ukraine, it was boy vs. Russian drone. The boy won.

BY STEVE HENDRIX
AND KOSTIANTYN KHUDOV
IN CHERNIHIV, UKRAINE

where he and his family live in Ukraine's northern Chernihiv region, seven miles from the Russian border. Tractors, like the one his father frequently drove, had been hit in the fields. In March, a drone blew up a car next to a shop. Another had exploded on Anatolii's street just the day before.

Now, the one he spotted was heading right for his house.

As he clung to the tree trunk, the black quadcopter buzzed past, flying

just off the ground and bearing down on a cluster of buildings where three of his younger siblings were playing with other kids in their yard.

He watched as unseen eyes seemed to zero in on the structures and the drone began to climb, apparently rearing to strike.

"It saw the children and started gaining altitude," Anatolii said. "That's when I realized something was about to happen."

What Anatolii did next — something he had rehearsed, something few civilians in Ukraine have been taught — might have saved the lives of those children, his mother changing a diaper inside or other neighbors on the block.

His story — and the fact that a 12-year-old in a pear tree knows how to fight back against a Russian drone

SEE DRONES ON A13

Anatolii Prokhorenko, 12, and his father Volodymyr Poltoratskyi, 49, this month in Chernihiv, Ukraine.

At China summit, a quieter Trump

STARK SHIFT SHOWS TOLL OF HARD YEAR

Iran war, economic strain weigh down diplomacy

BY MICHAEL BIRNBAUM
AND ISAAC ARNSDORF

BEIJING — President Donald Trump was riding the early high of his return to power last year when he took his first major foreign trip and declared that he would make a sharp break from years of U.S. nation-building around the world.

Exactly one year after that visit to Saudi Arabia, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates, he came to China at a very different moment in his presidency, with inflation spiraling and no easy way out of a conflict with Iran. The fight has ensnared the U.S. military, driving energy prices up and Trump's approval rating down.

This time, there were no sweeping declarations about how Trump's America would manage the world, nor backslapping bonhomie shared with Gulf royals who offered golden swords and honor guards riding Arabian steeds.

Instead, there was Chinese President Xi Jinping, respectful but businesslike, welcoming but appearing to bend little on the U.S. leader's priorities.

Trump came to Beijing hoping to do trade deals. Xi made it known that Taiwan's fate, not investment, was China's top priority.

SEE SUMMIT ON A10

ICE blames deportee in slaying of her toddler

2-year-old was left with an uncle, now charged with beating him to death

BY MARIA SACCHETTI

After U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement detained his mother, 2-year-old Orlin Hernandez Reyes moved into a shed.

His uncle, Samuel Maldonado Erazo, was charged with taking care of the toddler and his three cousins, the oldest of whom was 7, while Orlin's mother and her sister waited in ICE detention to be deported to Honduras.

Maldonado had once served in the Honduran military, a co-worker later told investigators, and now lived in the Florida Panhandle. He was separated from Orlin's aunt, and police said he drank heavily and whipped the children with a wire. Orlin repeatedly endured the worst of the abuse.

An autopsy showed he had multiple broken bones. There were signs his tiny body had been sexually battered. Authorities allege Maldonado repeatedly struck Orlin in the head, stomped on his body and burned his skin with a lighter. His hands bore bruises, a sign that Orlin had

SEE ICE ON A8

Democrat in Trump country says his party became 'too urban'

A North Carolina farmer nominated for the House is distancing himself as the political brand loses sway with rural voters

BY MARIANA ALFARO

ASHEVILLE, N.C. — Fifth-generation farmer Jamie Ager won the Democratic nomination in a swingy, rural North Carolina House district in March. Now, he faces two opponents: a well-known Republican and his own party's brand.

Democrats' path to winning back power in this year's midterms may run through a handful of districts like Ager's, making rural voters a priority for a party that needs to capture only a handful of swing seats to overcome Republicans' razor-thin House majority. But decades of data show that the Democratic Party has lost sway with rural voters — a shift Republicans gleefully highlight and a point that Ager is eager to discuss.

"One of the reasons that I felt frustrated by the Democratic Party is because it's just become such an urban party," Ager said in an interview at Hickory Nut Gap, the farm his family has owned for generations in Fairview, North Carolina, and where he has spent



ALLISON JOYCE/FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

Jamie Ager last month at his Hickory Nut Gap Farm in Fairview, North Carolina.

the last 25 years raising cattle, poultry and pigs. "There's just a disconnect from what it's like to live in rural America."

Ager is one of a handful of Democratic candidates with backgrounds in farming, fishing or agriculture who are running for Congress this year, and who see a rare opening for Democrats to make inroads among rural voters after President Donald Trump's tariffs and the war in Iran have had an outside impact on agriculture, including rising prices and market instability.

Ager is pitching himself as a product of agrarian values, which he defines as having a strong work ethic, centering family and working with your hands. At times, his inclination to position cities as cultural foils is more akin to the views typically associated with Republicans.

"I did feel a little bit frustrated with the party. It felt like they didn't understand my lifestyle

SEE DEMOCRATS ON A6

Redistricting ruling: Democrats in Va. optimistic on midterms. B13

SPORTS

Long shot Napoleon Solo emerged victorious at the Preakness Stakes. B1

BUSINESS

We calculated your odds of winning on Polymarket. (They are not good.) B7



DINING GUIDE

10 standout restaurants in the D.C. area from the new critic on the block.

THE REGION

Friendship Bench DC gives people a spot to sit, friendly ear to vent. B13



ARTS & STYLE

Wendell Pierce, a force on TV and film, takes the lead onstage in "Othello."

TRAVEL

10 beaches for fun in the sand where you won't be packed in like sardines.

COMICS.....INSERT
OBITUARIES.....B17
OPINION PAGES.....A17
WORLD NEWS.....A12

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