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MYUNG J. CHUN Los Angeles Times

ROBYNN FRANSON, left, and her mother, Frances Franson, wait at LAX for their flight home to Canada.

Nationwide ground stop roils air travel

Many fliers stuck at terminals after what Homeland Security calls telecom outage.

BY TERRY CASTLEMAN, HANNAH FRY, CLARA HARTER AND IRIS KWOK

The Federal Aviation Administration on Friday issued an extraordinary four-hour ground stoppage on all flights in the United States after a communications issue crippled air traffic control centers.

The move caused havoc at airports across the country and affected thousands of flights. The stop was lifted about 5:30 p.m., but it's expected to have a cascade effect that will disrupt air travel for days.

Homeland Security Secretary Markwayne Mullin confirmed that it was a telecommunications outage and that the ground stop did not constitute a national security threat.

"There is no indication that we've had, no reason to believe, that as of right now this was a threat to the United States," Mullin told reporters at the White House, later repeating there was "no indication as of yet that this was a nefarious attack against us."

It marks the second full ground stop since the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attack on the World Trade Center in New York. The most recent full ground stop, which lasted about 90 minutes, was in 2023 when a pilot notification system went down.

"Due to extraordinary circumstances and for reasons of safety," the FAA advisory read, "all departing traffic should remain ground stopped until further notice." Inbound international flights would be handled "on a case by case basis," according to the agency.

There were more than 9,900 flights delayed across the United States and about 900 cancellations Friday afternoon, according to FlightAware, a flight-tracking website. At Los Angeles International Airport, more than 550 flights were delayed and 47 had been canceled.

It appeared that some flights were being permitted to resume. Hawaiian/Alaska Airlines confirmed that all of its West Coast flights will resume, the Hawaii Department of Transportation wrote on social media.

The outage comes days

[See **Stop,** A9]

Lutnick facing criticism in Nvidia scandal

Commerce secretary at center of bipartisan questions about department decisions.

BY ALICIA DIAZ AND MAGGIE EASTLAND

Fallout from Jensen Huang's ouster as Nvidia Corp. chief executive officer is reaching deep into Washington, where Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick is confronting accusations that his department didn't do enough to keep the company's prized artificial intelligence chips out of China's hands.

As the ultimate overseer of U.S. export control programs, Lutnick is accountable for any policy or enforcement gaps that allowed Nvidia's AI processors to reach unauthorized Chinese buyers. Internal tension over his role burst into the open on Friday when Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent blamed him for failing to blacklist a Singapore-based company, Megaspeed, over possible violations.

"Treasury, [the U.S. Trade Representative office] and State — they were in favor of putting Megaspeed on the entity list for months, but Commerce has the pen," Bessent said in an interview with CNBC. "We have all the authorities that we need. They just need to be implemented."

Lutnick is a controversial figure in President Trump's orbit. People with ties to the White House, who asked not to be identified describing private conversations, said he's been marginalized within the administration for a while. At the same time, his exit has been predicted before, and he's still in the job.

As of Thursday, the Commerce chief retained Trump's blessing. In a statement, the White House said

[See **Lutnick,** A12]

Digital footprints lead Iran to U.S. targets

Troops' social media, fitness apps give them away

BY NABIH BULOS

MANAMA, Bahrain — When Iran's military planners prepared to hit American bases in the Middle East, they relied on intelligence from an unlikely source: U.S. service members themselves.

According to security experts and even the U.S. military, Iran harvested data from social media accounts, fitness apps and even ads to establish patterns of life in U.S. bases across the region. Paired with imagery reportedly provided by Russian satellites, the Iranians selecting the targets constructed a surprisingly accurate picture of where U.S. troops assembled and where to strike.

The result, seen in fusillades of drones and missiles that — despite many interceptions — found their mark, leaving more than a dozen service members dead and hundreds of others wounded and causing billions in damage to facilities and equipment.

The full scope of the carnage, and what it means for the viability of the United States' long-term presence in the Middle East, is still being assessed.

As President Trump considers a new offensive and the specter of a widened Iranian retaliation looms over the region, the U.S. military is scrambling to move or hide assets while service members struggle to counter what experts call an era of ubiquitous technical surveillance (or UTS) and reduce digital footprints that have proved all too easy to track.

In recent months, congressional pressure on the military pushed several

[See **Bases,** A4]



VAHID SALEMI Associated Press

MOURNERS hold posters of supreme leaders past and present at a mass funeral in Tehran for unidentified soldiers killed in the '80s Iran-Iraq war.

California voters unsure about filling out the census, poll finds

BY NICOLE NIXON

SACRAMENTO — More than a quarter of registered voters in California are unsure whether they will fill out the upcoming 2030 census, largely due to privacy concerns, according to a new poll.

The survey from the UC Berkeley Institute of Governmental Studies showed 72% of voters said their household is certain to fill out the census. Of the 28% who expressed reluctance, 16% said they will "probably" fill it out; 5% said there is a 50-50 chance they will; 3% said they probably or certainly will not; and 4% were unsure.

The once-per-decade national population count is used to reapportion the U.S. House of Representatives' 435 seats among the states. It is also used to determine federal funding for schools, healthcare, transportation and other public services.

By law, all responses to the national census are kept confidential, a fact that was mentioned by pollsters when they asked respondents about the topic.

"We're in a moment where there are a lot of rea-

[See **Census,** A9]

Impeachment off the table for now

California Democrats to investigate Trump policies they say led to affordability crisis.

BY SEEMA MEHTA

California Democrats, poised to play a prominent role in the next Congress, plan to use their newly won power to investigate President Trump over allegations that corruption, cronyism and self-dealing enriched the president, his family and his allies while housing, fuel and food costs skyrocketed for everyday Americans.

The potential targets are wide-ranging, from immigration raids and the fatal shootings of protesters by federal agents to Trump's ties to the late Jeffrey Epstein and billions of dollars in investment made by Middle Eastern countries allegedly seeking to influence U.S. foreign policy.

The Iran war, which increased oil prices, the military operation in Venezuela and dizzying tariff policies are also expected to come under intense scrutiny.

However, Democrats are notably focused on investigations, not the other "I-word" — impeachment.

"That's not on my bingo card," said Rep. Pete Aguilar (D-Redlands), who is expected to become House Democratic whip. "We're focused on accountability, and we're focused on holding people accountable, and that should be to follow the evidence wherever it leads ... but that's not anything that House Democrats are discussing at this point."

Sen. Adam Schiff (D-Calif.), who played a leading role in the impeachment proceedings against Trump in 2020, said the priority is to alleviate the affordability crisis, but that the administration's actions must be scrutinized for causing it.

[See **Democrats,** A6]

For emerging screenwriters, AI can be an ally

Though fears of the technology have rattled Hollywood, newcomers use it to pitch and connect

BY ADA TSENG

In fall of 2022, when OpenAI released ChatGPT to the general public, Justin Trevor Winters was intrigued. A screenwriter and professor at Loyola Marymount University, he saw the potential of large language models to help with research and brainstorming.

He was pitching a reimagining of the "Popeye" comic strip that he had developed with his creative partner Mixa Martinez. It was set in 1930s Prohibition-era Florida and told through the point of view of Olive Oyl, a second-generation Afro-Cuban. Struggling to get the logline right, he wondered what would happen if he uploaded some of his screenwriting lectures to guide the AI to help him.

Within an hour, he landed on his elusive logline, and within a few weeks, the project sold.

He immediately shared the technology with his students. They were toiling away on their own lackluster loglines, and Winters thought ChatGPT might help them.

"It wasn't like, all of a sudden, the

[See **Hollywood,** A14]



GERALD HERBERT Associated Press

TANKER HITS BOAT

All passengers and crew of American Heritage cruise boat are rescued after a crash Friday on the Mississippi River in New Orleans. **NATION, A5**

Democratic leader challenge

Sen. Chris Van Hollen (D-Md.) touts change in bid to replace Chuck Schumer. **NATION, A5**

Newsom assails U.S. absence

Governor criticizes lack of official delegation at COP31 climate talks in Turkey. **CALIFORNIA, B1**

Weather
Morning shower.
L.A. Basin: 72/56. **B8**

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