

The Washington Post

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SU V1 V2 V3 V4

Partly sunny, breezy 50/28 • Tomorrow: Partly sunny 44/38 B6

Democracy Dies in Darkness

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 1, 2025 • \$4

Roughly 30 Capitol riot prosecutors are sacked

Interim U.S. attorney also looks to scrutinize elected Democrats, ex-DOJ officials

BY SPENCER S. HSU AND TOM JACKMAN

Interim D.C. U.S. attorney Edward R. Martin, Jr., on Friday dismissed about 30 federal prosecutors who have worked on Jan. 6, 2021, Capitol riot cases over the past four years, undertaking a house-cleaning of the top prosecutor's office in Washington, while preparing to extend the office's scrutiny to top Democratic leaders and former Justice Department officials, people close to Martin said.

The prosecutors were on probationary status after being converted to full-time from shorter-term positions after Election Day under circumstances the Trump administration is investigating, according to documents from Martin and acting deputy attorney general Emil Bove that were emailed around 5 p.m. and viewed by The Washington Post.

In his first 11 days in office, Martin, 54, SEE FIRINGS ON A5

FBI begins purge; more firings may come after review

BY JEREMY ROEBUCK, PERRY STEIN, SALVADOR RIZZO AND CAROL D. LEONNIG

A top Justice Department official on Friday ordered the firing of at least eight senior FBI executives and a sweeping examination of the work of thousands of other bureau employees, including all those who worked on investigations tied to the Jan. 6, 2021, attack on the U.S. Capitol, according to a memo obtained by The Washington Post.

The directive from Acting Deputy Attorney General Emil Bove said those field agents and FBI support staff could face "additional personnel action," suggesting that the number of firings could swell in the coming weeks.

Bove instructed Acting FBI Director Brian Driscoll to terminate the eight executives he identified — including David Sundberg, assistant director in charge of the bureau's Washington field SEE FBI ON A16

Official retires after clash with Musk allies over payment system

BY JEFF STEIN, ISAAC ARNSDORF AND JACQUELINE ALEMANY

The highest-ranking career official at the Treasury Department left the agency after a clash with allies of billionaire Elon Musk over access to sensitive payment systems, according to three people with knowledge of the matter, who spoke on the condition of anonymity to describe private talks.

David A. Lebryk, who served in non-political roles at Treasury for several decades, announced his retirement Friday in an email to colleagues that was obtained by The Washington Post. President Donald Trump named Lebryk acting secretary upon taking office last week. Lebryk had a dispute with Musk's surrogates over access to the payment system the U.S. government uses to disburse trillions of dollars every year, the people said. The exact nature of the disagreement was not immediately clear, they said.

SEE MUSK ON A4

Homan: The White House wants border officers to have access to minors' data. A2

USAID: A career official who tried to undo Trump's removals has been put on leave. A4

The final seconds for 67 souls



JOHN MCDONNELL FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

Helicopter was told of plane's presence two minutes before crash

BY IAN DUNCAN, EVAN HILL, SAMUEL OAKFORD AND MEG KELLY

Air traffic controllers twice alerted the crew of a U.S. Army helicopter to the presence of an inbound American Airlines jet, with the first warning issued two minutes before the aircraft collided Wednesday night near Reagan National Airport, radio transmissions show.

While the quality makes it difficult to hear the audio recordings, aviation experts who reviewed the communications for The Washington Post said that a member of the Black Hawk helicopter crew responded each time by saying that he could see the plane and requested "visual separation," meaning the helicopter crew would maintain a safe distance. Each time, the request was approved.

At about 8:48 p.m., roughly 12 seconds after the second alert from the control tower, the aircraft collided several hundred feet above the Potomac River.

SEE HELICOPTER ON A7



ALLISON ROBERT FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

FROM TOP: Recovery efforts are underway Friday on the Potomac River after Wednesday night's midair collision. A memorial in Alexandria, Virginia, honors the victims, about a third of whom were young figure skaters and their coaches.

Wichita: The city where plane departed has known aviation glory as well as disaster. A6

Radar footage: Black Hawk was above the permitted altitude of 200 feet. A7

HORROR AND HEARTACHE AFTER SUDDEN TRAGEDY

Stunned officials face a grim aftermath in hunt for answers

BY JENNY GATHRIGHT, PETER HERMANN, EMILY DAVIES AND PAUL DUGGAN

That low-altitude flash of fire seen on video around the globe erupted in the sky above the nation's capital a little before 9 p.m. Wednesday, a midair collision claiming 67 lives in an instant and triggering the gamut of human responses to immense and sudden tragedies: shock, courage, resilience, sorrow, bewilderment.

The evening was clear and cold. American Eagle Flight 5342 from Wichita, with 60 passengers, two pilots and two flight attendants aboard, was a few hundred feet up, preparing to land at Reagan National Airport. An Army Black Hawk helicopter carrying a crew of three was aloft on a training flight in the same airspace, at the same moment. SEE CRASH ON A6

In Kenya, rebellious rock rises up from the underground

Restless young urbanites, raging against those in power, are embracing a raucous style of music the country once shunned

BY RAELE OMBUOR AND ED RAM

NAIROBI — The guitar thrummed, the drumsticks smashed into a quivering cymbal, and the lead vocalist for Rash howled into the mic, electrifying the night air.

After years in the wilderness, Kenya's tiny rock and metal scene is exploding — and bands like Irony Destroyed, Last Year's Tragedy and Rash are clawing their way up the charts.

Very few Africans have traditionally listened to rock music, said Nick Wathi, one of Kenya's first rock producers. Its reputation for rebelliousness and subversion creates suspicion in a society that values religion and respect for elders, Wathi said. But that's what drew him in.

"It was the devil's music!" he laughed. Samuel Gakungu, Rash's drummer, has his musical roots in a church choir. He came to rock, he said, because it spoke to him more deeply.

"There was no structure, there was no right way or wrong way to do things, I just had to be me, without any judgment," said the 31-year-old car dealer. He

met the other four band members through a friend 11 years ago, creating hits like "Darkness and Witchcraft" and "Do or Die" — attracting a fan base of restless young urbanites increasingly furious with authority.

In a few hours, they would be taking the stage at Nairobi's premier rock and metal festival: Undertow.

Rock in Kenya has had an uneven ride. A decade ago, bands would sometimes show up for gigs that had been canceled without their knowledge. Audiences were tiny. The closure of Kenya's only rock radio station, XFM, in 2019 and the arrival of covid in 2020 nearly smothered the scene altogether.

The first Undertow concert in April 2022 rescued bands on the brink of collapse by providing a dependable gig and venue. Now a well-established quarterly event held in Nairobi's upscale Westlands District — its neon-nightclub-lined promenade nicknamed Electric Avenue — the concert has featured most of Kenya's 16 commercial rock bands, said Wathi.

SEE KENYA ON A9



ED RAM FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

Kenyan music fans react to the band Irony Destroyed during a performance in September at the Undertow festival in Nairobi's upscale Westlands District.

IN THE NEWS

Trump ratchets up tariff plan The president confirmed that he will impose import taxes today on China, Mexico and Canada and said he now plans to target European goods. All

Chaos at Walter Reed Flooding and an infrastructure failure affect patient care at the flagship military hospital. B1

THE NATION **RFK Jr.'s** confirmation could hinge on his embrace of the false vaccine-autism link. A3 **The CDC edited** or removed online references to transgender people and gender identity. A4

THE WORLD **Ahead of elections**, top politicians in Germany are calling for Syrians to go back. A8 **Venezuela** released six U.S. detainees after a Trump envoy met with Nicolás Maduro. A10

THE ECONOMY **The House GOP** is uniting around a tax-and-spending package to enact Donald Trump's agenda but may lack the votes. A12 **The president** and the Nvidia CEO met amid concerns of China's rising influence in artificial intelligence. A16

THE REGION **Virginia officials** consider whether to increase film incentives in light of the enduring economic impact of "Dirty Dancing." B1 **Ibram X. Kendi**, author of "How to Be an Antiracist," will join Howard University's faculty later this year. B1

OBITUARIES **Dick Button**, 95, was a champion figure skater and broadcaster who helped popularize the sport. B4

STYLE **Chuck Todd** is leaving NBC News after nearly two decades, including working as host of "Meet the Press." C1

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