

# The Washington Post

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Democracy Dies in Darkness

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## Group's list targets activists for deportation

Zionist organization seeks removal of pro-Palestinian protesters

BY WILL OREMUS

Almost six weeks before federal immigration officials detained Columbia University graduate student Mahmoud Khalil, a group called Betar US said on its X account that it had put the pro-Palestinian activist on "our deport list."

"It's 10 p.m. and ICE is aware of his home address and whereabouts," the group posted on Jan. 29 under a video of CNN interviewing Khalil at a campus protest, referring to U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement. "We have provided all his information to multiple contacts."

Khalil, a green-card holder married to a U.S. citizen, was detained on March 8. Three days later, Betar shared with The Washington Post a list of potential next targets it said it had recently flagged to Trump administration officials. At the top was Momodou Taal, a Cornell University graduate student who was suspended twice last year for his role in pro-Palestinian protests there.

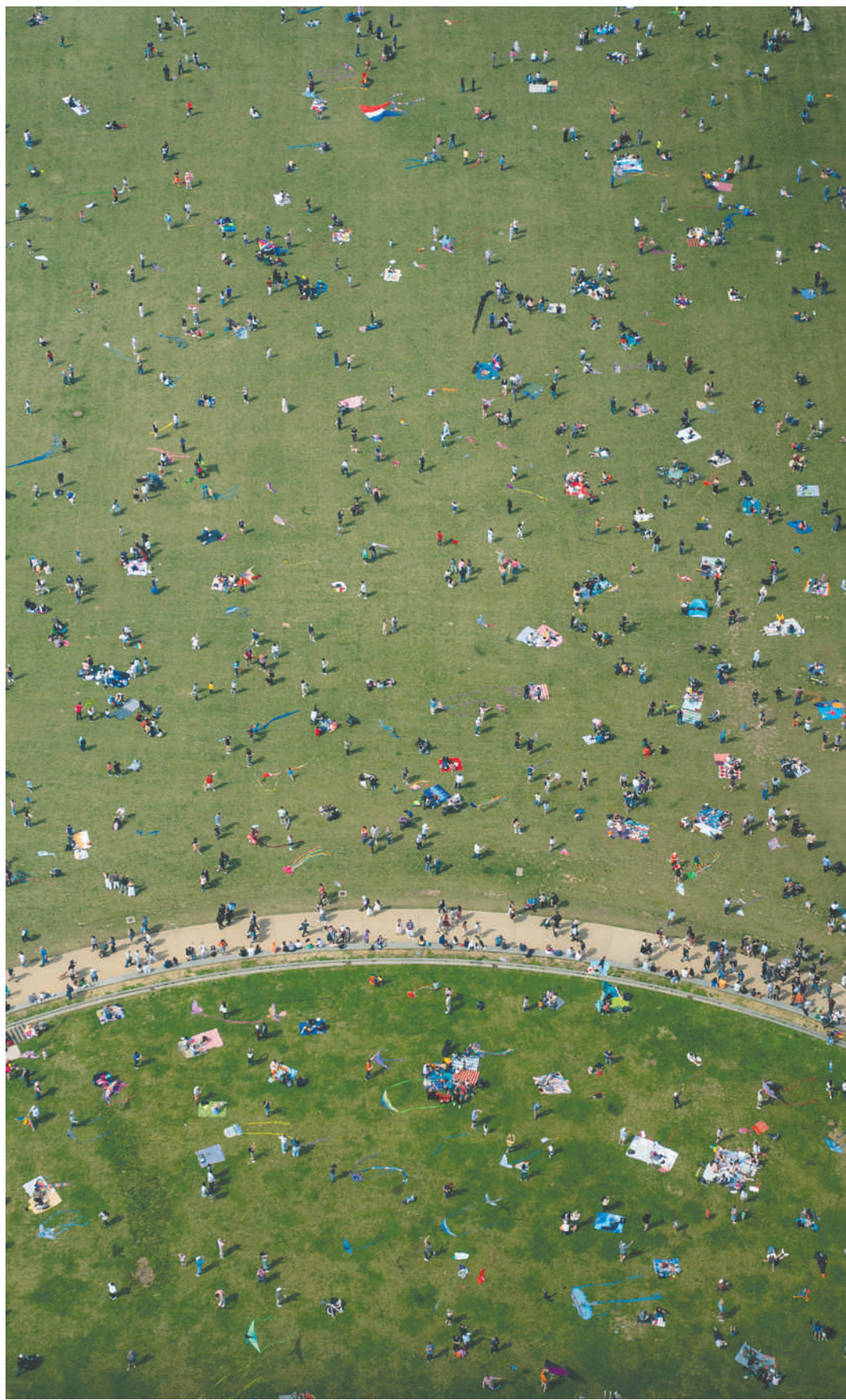
Now Taal, too, is fighting to stay in the country. Betar US, the newly revived and rapidly growing U.S. chapter of a century-old militant Zionist group, is claiming a share of the credit and moving on to the next names on its list.

The Post couldn't determine whether the group played a role in the Trump administration's decision to target Khalil and Taal for deportation. In a statement, the Department of Homeland Security said ICE "is not working with or received any tips through the ICE Tip Line from the group identified as Betar."

But the Zionist group claims the government is listening, and so do attorneys for Khalil and Taal, whose student visa has been

SEE GROUP ON A11

Where's Waldo? Probably flying a kite down there.



ALLISON ROBERT/ FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

People gather on the National Mall for Saturday's Blossom Kite Festival, which draws tens of thousands of fliers every year. The warmest day of the year greeted experts and beginners alike as they launched their creations into the breezy skies.

## Trump tees up a major escalation in world trade war

'LIBERATION DAY' AIMS TO REMAKE ECONOMY

Amid GOP jitters, he tells aides to go bigger on tariffs

BY JEFF STEIN AND THEODORIC MEYER

President Donald Trump is pushing senior advisers to go bigger on tariff policy as they prepare for what the White House has called "Liberation Day," the April 2 date he has set for a major escalation in his global trade war, four people familiar with the matter said.

Although many of his allies on Wall Street and Capitol Hill have urged the White House to take a more conciliatory approach, Trump has continued to press for aggressive measures to fundamentally transform the U.S. economy, the people said.

Trump's advisers are in intensive deliberations about the exact scope of the import duties to be imposed, which officials have de-

scribed as affecting trillions of dollars' worth of trade.

The option viewed as most likely, publicly outlined by Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent this month, would set tariffs on products from the 15 percent of countries the administration deems the worst U.S. trading partners, which account for almost 90 percent of imports. Trump has also moved forward with other tariffs that apply to imports from every country, but only on specific sectors. Trump applied 25 percent tariffs to all automobile imports on Wednesday and has suggested similar measures for the pharmaceutical and lumber industries, among others.

SEE TARIFFS ON A17

UAW: Union walks a risky path to find common ground on tariffs. A17

## Pentagon memo on priorities has Heritage's fingerprints

Secret Hegseth document focuses on homeland defense, deterring China

BY ALEX HORTON AND HANNAH NATANSON

Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth has reoriented the U.S. military to prioritize deterring China's seizure of Taiwan and shoring up homeland defense by "assuming risk" in Europe and other parts of the world, according to a secret internal guidance memo that bears the fingerprints of the conservative Heritage Foundation, including some passages that are nearly word-for-word duplications of text published by the

think tank last year.

The document, known as the Interim National Defense Strategic Guidance and marked "secret/no foreign national" in most passages, was distributed throughout the Defense Department in mid-March and signed by Hegseth. It outlines, in broad and sometimes partisan detail, the execution of President Donald Trump's vision to prepare for and win a potential war against Beijing and defend the United States from threats in the "near abroad," including Greenland and the Panama Canal.

The document — setting out a prioritization framework for senior defense officials and a vision to execute that work — also instructs the military to take a more direct role in countering illegal

SEE MEMO ON A5

## Patel mostly absent as chief at ATF, adding to uncertainty

BY PERRY STEIN AND YVONNE WINGETT SANCHEZ

In late February, President Donald Trump made an unusual announcement: FBI Director Kash Patel would also serve as interim head of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives.

That put Patel in charge of two Justice Department subagencies with two distinct missions — and no public mandate on how he would divide his time.

The next day, Patel arrived at ATF's Northeast Washington headquarters, snapped photos in the lobby, met career leaders and commended their work, according to multiple people familiar with the visit.

But since then, Patel has not returned, and there appears to be scant communication between the acting director and the people who work for the 5,000-person agency, said the people familiar with the situation, who like some others interviewed for this article spoke on the condition of anonymity to offer information

SEE PATEL ON A12

## Before DOGE, Argentina's Milei led the way on cuts

The chosen symbol for his war on spending — the chain saw — is now in Musk's arsenal

BY SAMANTHA SCHMIDT AND DAVID FELIBA IN BUENOS AIRES

The wild-haired president of Argentina, known as the libertarian Trump of South America, stepped onto the stage carrying his trademark accessory — a chain saw.

He beamed as he handed it to Elon Musk, who lifted it up triumphantly.

"This is the chain saw for bureaucracy!" Musk shouted before a roaring crowd at the Conservative Political Action Conference last month.

Javier Milei's chosen symbol for his war on government spending was now in the hands of the man charged with cutting U.S. bureaucracy down to size.

After the spectacle, the two men met for more than an hour and a half, discussing Milei's cuts in detail, the Argentine president said in an interview with The Washington Post the past week.

In less than a year and a half in office, Milei has reduced government ministries from 18 to eight, fired more than 40,000

federal employees, cut subsidies and halted most new government infrastructure projects. He has dramatically reduced inflation and achieved a yearly fiscal surplus for the first time since 2010.

"I find it fascinating that the chain saw has become an emblem of the new golden era of humanity," Milei said in a wide-ranging interview in Argentina's presidential palace, the Casa Rosada. He spoke at a long table in his office, his own chain saw at the table's other end.

Milei is one of President Donald Trump's biggest supporters in the Western Hemisphere. Trump has called Milei his "favorite president," and he invited him to his inauguration.

The Argentine president has relished the praise, and he has closely aligned himself with Trump's political vision: He has vowed to eradicate "woke" culture and has stripped certain rights from Argentina's transgender community. He has said

SEE MILEI ON A26



ANITA POUCHARD SERRA/ FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

Argentine President Javier Milei, shown this month in his office in Buenos Aires, is one of Donald Trump's biggest supporters.

## These 5 words have torpedoed grants across government

BY CAROLYN Y. JOHNSON AND JOEL ACHENBACH

In the waning days of the first Trump administration, new language went into effect in an obscure regulation covering federal grants. The change appeared to give the government the right to torpedo a grant in the middle of a project with little justification, even if the recipients were doing exactly what the government had told them to do.

The revision in November 2020 by Trump's Office of Management and Budget stated that, "to the greatest extent authorized by law," a grant could be pulled if it "no longer effectuates the program goals or agency priorities."

In the middle of a pandemic and a contentious election, not many people noticed the change in language buried inside a regulation like 2 CFR 200.340(a)(2). Now, after lurking mostly beneath the radar, five consequential words — "no longer effectuates agency priorities" — are being deployed by Trump's appointees to kill grants unilaterally across the

SEE GRANTS ON A8

**METRO**  
Maryland won't get promised jets from D.C., the White House said.

**SPORTS**  
Through it all, Mike Rizzo and Dave Martinez are constants for the Nats.



**ARTS & STYLE**  
Jake Gyllenhaal, master of complex villains, stars as Iago in "Othello."

**BOOK WORLD**  
"Yoko" digs deeply into artist's life and career, with and without Lennon.



**TRAVEL**  
Hardcore for Hard Rock: For superfans, every location is a destination.

**BUSINESS**  
Job hunting and hiring in the age of AI: Where did all the humans go?

\$146 SUNDAY COUPON INSERTS

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