

CDC’s head fired after not yielding on vaccines

Ousted director accuses Kennedy of ‘weaponizing public health’ for politics

BY LENA H. SUN, DAN DIAMOND AND LAUREN WEBER

The White House on Wednesday fired Susan Monarez as director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention after she refused to resign amid pressure to change vaccine policy, which sparked the resignation of other senior CDC officials and a showdown over whether she could be removed.

Hours after the Department of Health and Human Services announced early Wednesday evening that Monarez was no longer the director, her lawyers responded with a fiery statement saying she had not resigned or been fired. They accused HHS Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. of “weaponizing public health for political gain” and “putting millions of American lives at risk” by purging health officials from government.

“When CDC Director Susan Monarez refused to rubber-stamp unscientific, reckless directives and fire dedicated health experts, she chose protecting the public over serving a political agenda,” the lawyers, Mark S. Zaid and Abbe Lowell, wrote in a statement. “For that reason, she has been targeted.”

Soon after their statement, the White House formally fired Monarez.

“As her attorney’s statement makes abundantly clear, Susan Monarez is not aligned with the President’s agenda of Making America Healthy Again,” White

SEE CDC ON A9

Killer targets children at Mass in Minn.



RICHARD TSONG-TAATARI/MINNESOTA STAR TRIBUNE/AP

A mother hugs her son after an attack at Annunciation Catholic Church in Minneapolis. A shooter killed two people and wounded 17.

8- AND 10-YEAR-OLD SLAIN IN THEIR PEWS

Shooter takes own life; FBI suspects hate crime

BY HANNAH KNOWLES, SHEILA REGAN, ANUMITA KAUR AND REIS THEBAULT

MINNEAPOLIS — The children filed into the pews of Annunciation Catholic Church on Wednesday morning for their first Mass of the new school year, a time of nervous energy and excitement. The theme of the coming term was borrowed from the prophet Jeremiah: “A future filled with hope.”

But just minutes into the service, as the students were reciting Psalm 139 — a call-and-answer prayer about God’s all-knowing love — the sound of gunfire ripped through the air and the church windows shattered. In an instant, the back-to-school glee dissolved into terror and chaos.

An assailant — later identified as 23-year-old Robin Westman — had stood outside the stately brown brick church on this city’s southwest side and aimed a rifle through the glass at the young

SEE SHOOTING ON A4

Assailant: Investigators scour rambling videos for a motive. A4

U.S. sends 8 warships on anti-cartel mission, rattling Venezuela

BY TARA COPP, SAMANTHA SCHMIDT AND ANA VANESSA HERRERO

The U.S. Navy is surging eight warships to the Caribbean and Pacific waters near several Central and South American countries, a significant buildup for a region that has rarely seen such a large presence of U.S. military vessels

and a move that has escalated tensions with nearby Venezuela.

The ships are part of an “enhanced counter narcotics operation” to carry out drug interdiction missions in Latin America, a defense official told The Washington Post, speaking on the condition of anonymity to provide details that had not yet been made public. The move comes weeks

after Trump administration officials said they are evaluating plans for using military force against drug cartels in what would be a major escalation of U.S. involvement in Latin America.

In total, three destroyers, two landing dock ships, an amphibious assault ship, a cruiser and a littoral combat ship are either in the region or on their way. The

destroyers are each carrying detachments of U.S. Coast Guard and law enforcement officials aboard who would carry out detentions or arrests in drug interdictions.

The news of a potential buildup of warships in the region has raised suspicions that the U.S. might take military actions against Venezuela, a U.S. adver-

sary whose president, Nicolás Maduro, is accused by the Trump administration of running a drug cartel. The United States this month raised the bounty for Maduro’s capture for the second time this year — doubling it from \$25 million to \$50 million. Maduro and his officials have announced the mobilization of

SEE VENEZUELA ON A18

Trump’s D.C. surge faces resistance in federal court

Viral sandwich thrower among defendants jurors have refused to indict

BY SALVADOR RIZZO AND MICHAEL LARIS

President Donald Trump’s surge of federal law enforcement on the streets of D.C. is meeting resistance in the city’s federal courthouse, where magistrate judges have admonished prosecutors for violating defendants’ rights and court rules, and grand jurors have repeatedly refused to issue indictments.

On Tuesday, a federal grand jury refused to indict a former Justice Department employee who threw a sandwich at a federal law enforcement agent in an incident this month that went viral on social media, according to two people with knowledge of the case who spoke on the condition of anonymity because they weren’t authorized to discuss it publicly. Prosecutors had sought to charge Sean Charles Dunn with a felony count of assaulting, resisting or impeding a federal officer.

The president declared a crime

SEE SETBACKS ON A6

Takeover: Transportation Dept. will oversee Union Station. B13



MARIAM DAGGA/AP

A chronicler of war becomes a casualty

Palestinians surround an aid truck near Rafah in Gaza on Aug. 4, in this photo by Mariam Dagga, a Palestinian journalist who was killed in an Israeli strike Monday. Story and photos, A10

New light graces old mystery on life’s origin

BY KASHA PATEL

When a bone grows, our bodies’ proteins help provide the structure. When a muscle tears, proteins help rebuild it. When we fight an infection, transport oxygen in our blood or send messages to a cell, proteins often step up to the plate. But how did these skilled molecules first form on Earth and help give rise to life?

The mystery, which has evaded

Study gives backstory to molecular Swiss Army knives we call proteins

scientists for more than five decades, can be explained with rather simple chemistry, according to a study published Wednesday in Nature.

In lab experiments, scientists have successfully shown how two basic ingredients of life — ribonucleic acid (RNA) and amino acids — can combine to start protein synthesis.

These basic ingredients and conditions — in water — are thought to have been around on Earth about 4 billion years ago, providing clues to how early life may have been kick-started or

SEE LIFE ON A2

DHS bars aid groups from serving the undocumented

New rules require U.S. contractors to assist in enforcement operations

BY BRIANNA SACKS

The Department of Homeland Security is now barring states and volunteer groups that receive government funds from helping undocumented immigrants, according to a Washington Post analysis of updated guidelines and interviews with Federal Emergency Management Agency employees. The new rules also require groups to cooperate with immigration officials and enforcement operations.

Several disaster assistance groups, FEMA employees and emergency management experts said the new requirements in the department’s fiscal 2025 aid contracts would make it harder for nonprofits to help the most vulnerable people in the aftermath of a disaster. Some members of the national volunteer disaster group network also questioned whether the new requirements are constitutional and point out that they seem to violate some local and state laws that prevent asking about a person’s immigration status.

By accepting the federal grants and awards, the new documents state, volunteer organizations that help after disasters must agree to not “operate any program that benefits illegal im-

migrants or incentivizes illegal immigration.”

That could put groups that provide food, housing, mental health support and other assistance in disaster-stricken states in the position of having to verify aid recipients’ legal status before providing assistance, experts said.

“There is no historical context for this,” said Scott Robinson, an emergency management expert and FEMA historian who teaches at Arizona State University. “The notion that the federal government would use these operations for surveillance is entirely new territory.”

The affected contractors include faith-based groups and nonprofits such as the Salvation Army and the Red Cross, which states usually rely on to set up shelters and deliver basic assistance. They often serve communities with large Latino populations, where people often have trouble getting federal aid because they are uninsured or live in multigenerational households so they can’t all apply to FEMA. They serve those who have lost their homes or incomes after a catastrophic event but are not in the United States legally. Such humanitarian organizations typically do not ask about religious beliefs, political affiliation or documentation status when offering aid.

The federal government first awards funds to states, which then bring in organizations once they have accepted the contract

SEE FEMA ON A5

IN THE NEWS

CIA Russia expert sidelined An officer lost her classified material clearance days after helping President Trump prepare for his Alaska summit with Vladimir Putin. A7

A ‘trap’ for Democrats? The president said he is pushing the party to a position where it will risk being seen as soft on crime. A7

THE NATION Trump’s prodding of Indiana officials underscores the fervor of his redistricting push. A8 The FDA approved the new coronavirus vaccine, but only for “higher risk” people. A8

THE WORLD Germany’s cabinet, wary of Russia, passed a plan that opens the door to conscription. A12 Russia is restricting WhatsApp and pushing a state-backed platform instead. A12

THE ECONOMY The Post enlisted volunteer librarians to test which AI tool gives the best answers without making stuff up. One bested ChatGPT. A13 Gen Z is pushing for clearer consent and better digital privacy in conversations about smart glasses. A14

STYLE The president’s taste for gilding, which has taken over the Oval Office, has implications for his massive ballroom addition. B1

SPORTS At the U.S. Open, Coco Gauff’s toughest opponent might just be her own rebuilt serve. B12

THE REGION A former soldier arrested for burning an American flag near the White House said he was exercising his “right as a citizen.” B13

LOCAL LIVING After years of expanding the home plot, a gardener finds wisdom in the “less is more” adage.

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