



Cloudy, shower 52/42 • Tomorrow: Mostly cloudy 52/37 B20

Democracy Dies in Darkness

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 23, 2025 • \$4

Trump to name Navy battleships in his honor

‘Golden Fleet’ boosts building, upends military christening protocols

BY DAN LAMOTHE
AND TARA COPP

President Donald Trump on Monday said he will oversee the development of a new class of Navy battleship — named after himself.

The move was cast in part as an effort to give the nation’s stagnant shipbuilding industry a shot in the arm, but also will upend the Navy’s ship-naming norms and thrust presidential politics firmly into the program from its genesis. The announcement follows a flurry of recent actions by Trump to rebrand existing institutions to include his name, including the U.S. Institute of Peace and the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts.

Trump, speaking alongside Secretary of State Marco Rubio, Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth and Navy Secretary John Phelan at his Mar-a-Lago estate in Florida, said the new warships will have “guns and missiles at the highest level,” along with hypersonic weapons, electric rail guns and lasers. The first battleship, to be called the USS Defiant, will be part of a broader effort to build a modern “Golden Fleet” of warships, Trump said, indicating that he will play a leading role in the program. “The U.S. Navy will lead the design of these ships along with me, because I’m a really aesthetic person,” Trump said.

The Navy said in a news release after Trump’s announcement that the vessel “will be the most lethal surface combatant ever constructed” and triple the size of a current Arleigh Burke-class destroyer, which is about 505 feet long and weighs about 9,000 tons. That would be smaller than existing aircraft carriers and amphibious assault ships, vessels that commonly carry Marines at sea.

A logo unveiled for the new ship class depicts Trump in the moments after a July 2024 assassination attempt, fist held high.

The Trump-class naming, first reported by the Wall Street Journal, would defy the Navy’s longstanding — if unevenly applied — traditions of naming aircraft carriers after presidents and battleships after states. Almost all of the

SEE BATTLESHIP ON A9

In eastern Congo, where rape is widespread, the cancellation of USAID funding for PEP kits has left many victims vulnerable, according to nearly 50 interviews



ARLETTE BASHIZI/ FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

Survivors endure painful hunt for care

BY KATHARINE HOURELD

Nadine was a top student at her high school in eastern Congo. Then, in April, she was gang-raped by four men as she was gathering firewood for her family.

The 17-year-old set off on a frantic search for help — first to her local clinic, where there were no rape kits left, and then to the hospital, where she was told that none of the medication she needed was available. It took her several days to scrape together enough money to travel the few miles to neighboring Uganda for medical care.

By the time she got there, it was too late: Her tests showed she was HIV-positive and pregnant.

Giulia Kanugho Maghozi holds the last post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) kit in her pharmacy in Beni, Congo. The kits contain medicine that can prevent pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV.

“I sat down with my friend and cried,” said Nadine, who like others in this article is being identified only by her first name. The Washington Post does not identify victims of sexual assault without their permission.

Sexual violence is endemic in this part of the Democratic Republic of Congo, where it has become a weapon of war in a region that has rarely known peace over the past 30 years. Women and girls are raped in the forest, by the roadside, in their homes, anywhere they are vulnerable, by men and boys with guns, knives or sticks, secure in their impunity.

SEE CONGO ON A14

Cruz eyes a presidential run as rivalry with Vance heats up

BY LIZ GOODWIN
AND EMILY DAVIES

Sen. Ted Cruz sat down with a longtime ally in November at an office near D.C.’s Union Station to discuss the future of the Republican Party. Before long, the discussion touched on his own future.

His friend Morton Klein, president of the Zionist Organization

of America, told Cruz he believed that “Jew hatred and Israel bashing” were on the rise on the right — and that something had to be done about it. Cruz, who had begun a series of speeches decrying antisemitism in the GOP, told Klein he had been fielding requests from people urging him to run for president in 2028.

Cruz came across as someone

“seriously” considering such a run, Klein recalled.

With the future of the party up for grabs in a Donald Trump-less 2028 primary race, Cruz has in recent months positioned himself as a loud voice for a more traditional, hawkish Republican foreign policy. He’s also urging the GOP to rid itself of popular MAGA pundit Tucker Carlson, who he

argues is injecting the “poison” of antisemitism into the movement with his broadsides against Israel. Carlson has rejected that characterization.

As he feuds with Carlson, Cruz is weighing a second presidential

SEE CRUZ ON A6

‘Walking a tightrope’: Vance navigates GOP divide on Israel. A3

Colorado River is on verge of crisis without any solutions

Seven states are struggling to agree on water-sharing rules

BY JOSHUA PARTLOW

LAS VEGAS — When Carly Jerla left her home in the Rocky Mountains to attend the annual conference of the most bitterly contested river in the American West, the signs around her were grim: December temperatures in the 60s, meager snowpack and projections of below-average runoff to sustain the Colorado River.

“The way things are setting up isn’t looking good,” Jerla, one of the Bureau of Reclamation’s top experts on the Colorado River, told the conference this week, adding that the region could be facing a dry stretch “that could

really put the system into an untenable position.”

Once again, the Colorado River is heading toward a crisis. This time, the way out appears murkier than ever.

For months, the seven states of the Colorado River basin have failed to reach an agreement on new rules to share the river’s dwindling supply of water. The current rules that divvy up water among 40 million people in the West, including Los Angeles, Phoenix and farming regions that provide most of the country’s produce in winter, expire next year. By October, one of the nation’s largest reservoirs, Lake Powell, now just 28 percent full, could drop to the point where its hydroelectric plant could no longer produce power, risking the flow of water to states such as Arizona and California, according to Reclamation’s most recent projections.

SEE COLORADO RIVER ON A8



ALESSANDRO GAROFALO/AP

Global ambassador

Jackie Chan carries the Olympic torch on a leg of the relay that passed through Pompeii, Italy, on Monday, leading to the 2026 Milan Cortina Games. Chan has been a torchbearer previously.

DOJ aims at D.C.’s gun law

SUES OVER LIMITS ON SEMIAUTOMATICS

Officials say registration ban is unconstitutional

BY EMMA UBER
AND JASMINE GOLDEN

The Justice Department is suing D.C. police, calling the District’s ban on AR-15s and other weapons unconstitutional.

In a lawsuit filed Monday, government attorneys chastised the city for its code that bans most semiautomatic rifles and certain firearms from being registered with the police department, ultimately making any possession of those weapons illegal. Among the prohibited weapons are AK-47s and AR-15s.

Without registration, people who own these firearms for lawful purposes are subject to misdemeanor charges and fines, attorneys for the Justice Department said.

“Their decisions to deny certificates of registration for commonly possessed semiautomatic firearms runs afoul of binding Supreme Court precedent,” the lawsuit claims, “and therefore trample the Second Amendment rights of law-abiding citizens.”

The government cited a 2008 Supreme Court ruling, *District of Columbia v. Heller*, which held that people may possess firearms in their homes for purposes such as self-defense, invalidating a handgun ban that the District had in place at the time.

In response to the *Heller* decision, D.C. updated its gun laws to include a registry and training requirements for gun owners in the city. The law effectively outlawed assault-style rifles by making

SEE GUNS ON A5

Probe of DCA crash faults Army, seeks process review

BY TARA COPP,
LORI ARATANI
AND RACHEL WEINER

A congressional panel examining January’s fatal midair collision between an Army Black Hawk helicopter and an American Airlines regional jet found fault with the military’s procedures for operating in the airspace around D.C., according to a report issued Monday.

The bipartisan review, led by Reps. William Timmons (R-South Carolina) and Suhas Subramanyam (D-Virginia) of the House Oversight subcommittee on Military and Foreign Affairs, reflects a growing concern with the military’s tendency to fly aircraft in congested areas without transmitting their location data and, in the case of Reagan National Airport, without having the proper training to be fully aware of the region’s complex airspace.

The report also highlights a close call on May 1, when two commercial jets were directed to abort their landing approaches at National Airport to avoid military traffic landing at the Pentagon’s helipad.

Taken together, the report says,

SEE CRASH ON A8

IN THE NEWS

‘60 Minutes’ faces fallout A segment on the deportation of Venezuelan migrants was postponed after the Trump administration refused to grant the network an interview. A4

A different Nochebuena The Latino Christmas Eve tradition takes on a pall amid expanded immigration enforcement. A10

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