

The Washington Post

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Democracy Dies in Darkness

SUNDAY, MARCH 29, 2026 • \$6



EVELYN HOCKSTEIN/REUTERS

Demonstrators march Saturday in D.C. Passion abounded in the nation's capital, where the president has shaken up the federal workforce.



GEORGE WALKER IV/AP

The scene Saturday in Nashville. Like many political uprisings, the meaning of No Kings varies from protester to protester.



KEREM YUCEL/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

A protester in Minnesota holds up an image of Alex Pretti, a nurse who was shot to death by federal immigration agents in January.

Pentagon makes ready for weeks of ground operations

IF APPROVED, A RAFT OF RISKS FOR TROOPS

Targeted raids in Iran, sources say, no full invasion

BY DAN LAMOTHE

The Pentagon is preparing for weeks of ground operations in Iran, U.S. officials said, as thousands of American soldiers and Marines arrive in the Middle East for what could become a dangerous new phase of the war should President Donald Trump choose to escalate.

Any potential ground operation would fall short of a full-scale invasion and could instead involve raids by a mixture of Special Operations forces and conventional infantry troops, said the officials. All spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss highly sensitive military plans that have been in development for weeks.

Such a mission could expose U.S. personnel to an array of threats, including Iranian drones and missiles, ground fire and improvised explosives. It was unclear Saturday whether Trump would approve all, some or none of the Pentagon's plans.

The Trump administration in recent days has vacillated between declaring that the war is winding down and threatening to amplify it. While the president has signaled a desire to negotiate an end to the conflict, White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt warned Tuesday that if the regime in Tehran does not end its nuclear ambitions and cease its threats against the United States and its allies, Trump is "prepared to unleash hell" against them.

In a statement responding to questions for this report, Leavitt said: "It's the job of the Pentagon to make preparations in order to give the Commander in Chief maximum optionality. It does not mean the President has made a decision."

Discussions within the administration over the past month have touched upon the possible seizure of Kharg Island, a key

SEE IRAN ON A12

Yemen: Iran-backed Houthis join war in missile strike at Israel. A13

Global aid is in limbo as war snarls deliveries

Iran's attacks on the Gulf are delaying food and medicine for millions

BY RACHEL CHASON AND RAELE OMBUOR

DUBAI — The World Food Program says 10,000 tons of food meant for hundreds of thousands of children in Afghanistan has yet to arrive. The World Health Organization has been held up in sending a \$6 million shipment of medicine to Gaza. And Save the Children warns that 90 primary health care facilities in Sudan could be left without essential supplies.

As the war in the Middle East hits the one-month mark, it has upended the global economy and caused an acute energy crisis. It has also wrought mayhem in the already battered humanitarian

aid sector, which supports hundreds of millions of the world's most vulnerable people.

That global aid system depends on the United Arab Emirates, especially Dubai, as a massive government-backed humanitarian hub — a logistical linchpin that is home to a sprawling tax-free port and, under normal circumstances, one of the world's busiest airports.

Now, Dubai's location on the Persian Gulf has become a vulnerability, as the UAE has borne the brunt of Iran's retaliatory strikes. Iranian drones and missiles have hit key infrastructure, including at the port and airport, and the Strait of Hormuz, the narrow waterway through which most of the goods from Dubai transit, remains mostly closed.

The result has been havoc in the aid sector, which was decimated by funding cuts from the United States and Europe last year and is now straining to meet

SEE AID ON A14

No Kings rallies fill streets across U.S.

BY DANIELLE PAQUETTE, MICHELLE BOORSTEIN AND JOANNA SLATER

Protesters filled the streets Saturday at more than 3,300 rallies across all 50 states for No Kings, a movement that bills itself as non-violent opposition to what organizers view as authoritarian rulers in the White House and beyond.

The swell of marches marked the third major collective action for the grassroots campaign,

Marchers gather in third such action to vent fury at Trump administration

which began as an outlet for those infuriated by the Trump administration. To many hitting the pavement, America's leaders are stomping on democratic values with escalating immigration crackdowns, rolled-back abortion

rights and, among other grievances, another unpopular war.

The theme of the day was executive overreach, with no one issue singled out as the *raison d'être*. But like many political uprisings, the meaning of No Kings varies from protester to protester. Some showed up eager to defend what they cast as lofty ideals. Others just don't like President Donald Trump.

"It's just ... everything," said one first-time protester, 37-year-old Caitlin Pease, who brought

her 14-month-old daughter to a rally in a predominantly Republican Upstate New York county.

She'd made a sign that said: "It's so bad the introverts are out here."

The backlash comes as Trump's approval ratings have plummeted to new lows, and even key chunks of the MAGA base have discarded their once-bulletproof solidarity to express growing frustrations. Among their objections: The president who vowed to stop wars

SEE PROTEST ON A9

Patel readies file on Swalwell, sparking concerns within FBI

Decade-old inquiry tied to Democratic lawmaker did not yield any charges

BY PERRY STEIN

FBI Director Kash Patel is pressing to release a decade-old investigative file involving Rep. Eric Swalwell (D-California) and a suspected Chinese intelligence operative, recently dispatching agents in the bureau's San Francisco office to quickly redact the files before they are released publicly despite no evidence of wrongdoing by Swalwell, according to three people familiar with the effort.

The potential release is part of the Trump administration's aggressive push to investigate Swal-

well, a vocal critic of President Donald Trump and a leading Democratic candidate for California governor, according to the people familiar with the effort. It is highly unusual for the FBI to release case files tied to a probe that did not result in criminal charges.

As FBI director, Patel has focused on trying to bring a criminal case against the outspoken Democrat, reassigning multiple agents in San Francisco to work on the matter, the current and former officials said. FBI leaders have even discussed sending agents to China to talk to the suspected intelligence operative, believing she could have damaging information about Swalwell, according to two of the people familiar with the investigation. The people familiar with the matter spoke on the condition of

SEE FBI ON A2

Philadelphia's iconic food gets a daring new recipe

Birthplace of the cheesesteak breaks family tradition

BY DANIELLE PAQUETTE



JOE LAMBERTI/FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

Frank Olivieri Jr., center, third-generation owner of Pat's King of Steaks, wanted to change things.

PHILADELPHIA — It was not enough to have invented the Philly cheesesteak, Frankie Olivieri was sure of that, even if his father disagreed.

The sandwich that had tempted four presidents, Oprah Winfrey, Sylvester Stallone as Rocky Balboa, the pope's valet — need he go on? — was, per one food influencer, "dying." Other internet critics slammed his great-uncle's creation as touristy, insisting diners could find tastier versions among the legion of copycats.

Frankie, 62, dismissed most of his competitors as "anyone with credit card debt and a Honda

SEE CHEESESTEAK ON A20

POLITICS & THE NATION

TSA queues are so out of control that travelers are hiring line sitters. A3

SPORTS

Familiar defensive issues sink the Nats in a 10-2 road loss to the Cubs. B1



ARTS & STYLE

Trump is the biggest threat to D.C.'s splendor since the War of 1812.

BUSINESS

RFK Jr. and Dr. Oz have a plan to save rural health care. There's a catch. B7



TRAVEL

\$500 tee times, private yachts: Bachelor(ette) trips are out of control.

METRO

The first ride. A surprise encounter. Memories of Metro's 50 years. B13

COMICS.....INSERT
OBITUARIES.....B16
OPINION PAGES.....A17
WEATHER.....B20

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0 70628 127100 7