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Democracy Dies in Darkness

RE V1 V2 V3 V4

SATURDAY, JANUARY 10, 2026 • \$4

Inside the global race to find an escape route for Maduro

VATICAN CITY — On Christmas Eve, Cardinal Pietro Parolin, second-in-command to the pope and a longtime diplomatic mediator, urgently summoned Brian Burch, the U.S. ambassador to the Holy See, to press for details on America's plans in Venezuela, according to government documents obtained by The Washington Post.

Would the United States target only drug traffickers, he asked, or was the Trump administration really after regime change? Nicolas Maduro had to go, Parolin

conceded, according to the documents, but he urged the U.S. to offer him a way out.

For days, the influential Italian cardinal had been seeking access to Secretary of State Marco Rubio, the documents show, desperate to head off bloodshed and destabilization in Venezuela. In his conversation with Burch, a Trump ally, Parolin said Russia was ready to grant asylum to Maduro and pleaded with the Americans for patience in nudging the strongman toward that offer.

A Christmas Eve meeting in Vatican City was one of many attempts to secure safe harbor for the Venezuelan leader before the U.S. raid

This article is by Anthony Faiola, Samantha Schmidt, Hannah Natanson, John Hudson, Karen DeYoung and Catherine Belton

Where the crude oil flows

How much do U.S. rivals rely on Venezuelan oil? A7

Dilapidated tankers

The Coast Guard prepares for an influx of seized ships. A9

"What was proposed to [Maduro] was that he would go away and he would be able to enjoy his money," said a person familiar with the Russian offer. "Part of that ask was that [President Vladimir] Putin would guarantee security."

But it was not to be. A week later, Maduro and his wife would be seized by American Special Operations forces in a raid that killed about 75 people and be flown to New York to face drug trafficking charges.

The previously unreported meeting in Vatican City was one of many failed attempts — by the Americans and intermediaries, the Russians, Qataris, Turks, the Catholic Church and others — to head off a building diplomatic crisis and find safe harbor for Maduro before last weekend's U.S. raid to capture him.

"It is disappointing that parts of a confidential conversation were disclosed that do not accurately reflect the content of the

SEE MADURO ON A10

Officials weigh order on housing affordability

Administration seeks ways to encourage first-time home buyers

BY RACHEL SIEGEL AND EMILY DAVIES

The Trump administration is preparing an executive order focused on housing — with special attention to first-time buyers — as the White House attempts to address voter concerns about affordability.

An order could include policies that President Donald Trump has already floated, such as a 50-year mortgage or a ban on institutional investors buying single-family homes, according to five people close to the deliberations, who spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss private conversations. Other proposals are newer, like helping home buyers withdraw from their 529 or 401(k) savings accounts to make down payments without incurring tax penalties.

The exact timing or language is not final, and plans have been in flux over the past few weeks, the people said. But it's clear the White House increasingly sees housing policy as central to its broader affordability agenda. More details are expected when Trump speaks at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, later this month, according to the president's social media posts and housing officials.

Bill Pulte, head of the Federal Housing Finance Agency and a close Trump confidant, told The Washington Post on Thursday that an executive action was coming and would later need to be "codified by Congress."

"We've got 30 to 50 different ideas that are in front of the president," Pulte said. "He'll be releasing a handful of them in Davos."

Officials have been planning an executive order aimed at housing for months. But timing stalled as different factions with-

SEE HOUSING ON A5

How Renee Nicole Good ended up in an encounter with ICE in Minneapolis



PETER W. STEVENSON/THE WASHINGTON POST

A vigil organized by Faith in Action on Friday in Lafayette Square, near the White House, honors Renee Nicole Good.

•We had whistles. They had guns.‘

BY MOLLY HENNESSY-FISKE, ANNIE GOWEN, PRAVEENA SOMASUNDARAM AND KYLE REMPFER

MINNEAPOLIS — Renee Nicole Good had "stopped to support our neighbors" when she was fatally shot by an Immigration and Customs Enforcement officer during an exchange of words on a residential street, according to a statement issued by her wife and video made public Friday.

"We had whistles. They had guns," Rebecca Good said in the statement.

"We were raising our son to believe that no matter where you come from or what you look like, all of us deserve compassion and kindness," Good said. "Renee lived this belief every day. She is pure love. She is pure joy."

Renee Good, 37, was shot Wednesday morning blocks from her home by an ICE officer, who federal officials say fired in self-defense. Details of the shooting,



REUTERS
Good was "pure love," her wife said in a statement. A new video released Friday shows the couple's interaction with officers.

which was captured in videos widely disseminated online, are in dispute.

A recording released Friday by Alpha News appears to show the moments immediately before the shooting from the perspective of the ICE officer who shot Good. In the video, Renee Good can be heard speaking to an ICE officer through the open driver's side window, saying, "That's fine, dude, I'm not mad at you," as the officer circles her vehicle while filming with a phone camera in his hand.

Rebecca Good, who was outside the car, speaks more aggressively, questioning the officer about face masks and license plates. At one point she says to the officer, "Go get yourself some lunch, big boy." She soon reaches for the passenger door, as the officer tells Renee Good: "Get out of the car."

The video abruptly ends seconds

SEE GOOD ON A4

'This is war': In texts, U-Va. board members plot with Youngkin and decry DEI

BY DAN ROSENZWEIG-ZIFF

As Republican leaders moved to root out what they have criticized as liberal ideology at the University of Virginia, some conservative appointees to its board texted privately about ending "chemical and surgical mutilation" for transgender youth at its hospitals and undoing "regimes of racial classification" in its classrooms, according to nearly 1,000 pages of text messages reviewed by The Washington Post.

The board members coordi-

nated frequently with Gov. Glenn Youngkin (R) or his top aides in nearly every major debate at the flagship university in Charlottesville in the past year — which some observers have described as an unusual level of involvement by the state leader. The conservative appointees also spoke in candid, sometimes inflammatory terms about the university's then-president, James E. Ryan, his supporters and diversity policies.

"This is war!" Stephen Long wrote on April 17 to a fellow board member about a professor

who sought to preserve diversity, equity and inclusion programs.

Board members have often been reluctant to speak publicly on university matters outside of meetings. But the texts, exchanged between June 2023 and mid-December of last year by board members and top university officials, offer an unfiltered account of the body's inner workings as it rolled back some gender transition care, dissolved the university's DEI office and responded to several investigations by the Trump administration, among

other changes at U-Va. Ryan resigned in June amid the intensifying scrutiny.

At times, the texts show tension between conservative, moderate and more liberal board members, including one who referred to his fellow board members as "crazies."

The messages, obtained through Virginia's Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) by Richmond-based author Jeff Thomas and provided to The Post, also underscore the growing pressure universities are facing from the

Trump administration and Republican state officials as conservatives seek to eliminate what they view as progressive indoctrination of American campuses.

The U-Va. board has drawn criticism from some students, faculty and alumni, who have questioned their intentions and called for members to resign.

Thomas has previously submitted FOIA requests to U-Va. on other board member texts and about university admissions. He said he asked for texts exchanged

SEE MESSAGES ON A6

IN THE NEWS

December jobs Employers added 50,000 positions last month, new data shows, capping a year of growth whose pace was less than a third of what it was in 2024. A18

Iran "will not back down" The nation's supreme leader derided protesters and mocked Trump's threat to intervene. A12

THE NATION
Armchair sleuths used AI to try to identify an ICE agent, but results were misleading. A2

A plan to turn warehouses into ICE sites is stirring opposition even in pro-Trump areas. A3

THE WORLD
Russia unleashed a nuclear-capable missile in retaliation for a drone strike under dispute. A13
Japan and China are battling over exports of the latter's rare earth minerals. A15

THE ECONOMY

Amid outcry over Grok creating sexual images, X has limited image generation to paying subscribers. A2
In an account disputed by India, Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick said a trade deal stalled because Modi didn't call Trump. A13

STYLE

A Gazan child's desperate phone call inspired the must-see movie "The Voice of Hind Rajab," blurring the line between drama and documentary. B1
NASA's administrator appears to pull back the throttle on the relocation of a space shuttle. B1

SPORTS

In Chicago, a "genius" first-year coach has made the city fall back in love with the Bears. B7
THE REGION
African American and African immigrant winemakers in Maryland are working to break through in the industry. B13

BUSINESS NEWS A18
COMICS B4
OBITUARIES B16
OPINION PAGES A16
TELEVISION B6
WORLD NEWS A7

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