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Democracy Dies in Darkness

FRIDAY, APRIL 3, 2026 • \$4

Trump ousts Bondi as attorney general

BY JEREMY ROEBUCK,
NATALIE ALLISON,
EMILY DAVIES
AND PERRY STEIN

President Donald Trump announced Thursday that he was ousting Pam Bondi as attorney general, ending a tumultuous 14-month tenure in which she transformed the Justice Department into a tool for avenging the president's grievances but frustrated him with her struggles to prosecute his enemies and her handling

of files related to convicted sex offender Jeffrey Epstein.

The president called Bondi "a Great American Patriot" and loyal friend in a social media post about her departure. He named Todd Blanche, Bondi's chief deputy and Trump's former personal lawyer, to take over as acting attorney general until a permanent replacement could be confirmed.

"We love Pam, and she will be transitioning to a much needed important new job in the private sector, to be announced in the

DEPUTY BLANCHE GIVEN JOB IN ACTING ROLE

President vexed by her struggles to prosecute his foes

near future," Trump wrote. He did not elaborate on the new position.

Bondi, in a post of her own, said she remains "eternally grateful for the trust that President Trump placed in me to Make America Safe Again." She said her transition out of the job would take place over the next month.

Bondi's departure makes her the second Cabinet secretary Trump has ousted in the span of weeks, following his decision last month to remove Kristi L. Noem as homeland security secretary. Within minutes of Trump's announcement Thursday, names of possible successors began circu-

lating among Republican lawmakers, conservative influencers and prominent Trump allies.

The president has privately discussed Lee Zeldin, administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency, as a possible replacement in recent days, according to a person familiar with his thinking who spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss those conversations.

He met with Zeldin at the White House, a different person with SEE BONDII ON A6



DEMETRIUS FREEMAN/THE WASHINGTON POST

The firing ends Pam Bondi's tumultuous 14-month tenure.

Repairs put off before bursting of sewage line

D.C. work proposed in 2018 delayed amid long environmental reviews

BY AARON C. DAVIS

The D.C.-area utility responsible for a massive sewer line that failed catastrophically in January had planned to reinforce the aging section years ago but repeatedly delayed construction as federal officials studied potential environmental impacts, including risks to a blue wildflower and an endangered bat species, a Washington Post investigation found.

D.C. Water asked the National Park Service for permission to fast-track repairs in 2018, after inspectors found widespread corrosion and detached rebar in one area of the six-foot-wide concrete pipe that runs under federal parkland in Maryland, records show. The utility sought to strengthen a three-quarter-mile section that included the point that later ruptured.

Left unaddressed, it warned, the corrosion could "result in a catastrophic failure leading to the release of raw sewage into soil, groundwater, and waterways," records show.

But the National Park Service's environmental review dragged on for years and was still not complete when the pipe collapsed—a delay that experts said appeared to flout a 2020 federal rule requiring such examinations be done within one year.

"That's a process gone wrong," SEE PIPELINE ON A8



KATARINA PREMFORIS/FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

Americans don't buy president's Iran pitch

Trump is in a precarious political moment seven months before midterms

BY CLEVE R. WOOTSON JR.
AND CAT ZAKRZEWSKI

Near the end of President Donald Trump's 19-minute address to the nation on Wednesday night, he pointed listeners to what he said would be a brighter economic picture following the U.S. conflict in the Middle East.

The oil "will resume the flowing, and the gas prices will rapidly come back down," he said in the prime-time address from the White House. "Stock prices will rapidly go back up."

The remarks contrasted with a difficult reality for Trump, who is in a precarious political moment seven months before the midterm elections. He is facing some of the lowest approval ratings of his second term, and is presiding over a deeply unpopular war with widespread economic fallout.

His promise Wednesday of a swift end to the U.S.-Israel attack on Iran did not appear to shift American perceptions of the war or its economic aftereffects. Oil prices spiked and stock markets slid as investors responded to Trump's threat to bring Iran back "to the stone ages" and the lack of a plan to open the Strait of Hormuz, a way station for 20 percent of the world's oil and liquefied natural gas.

"Markets wanted something different," wrote Paul Donovan, SEE IRAN ON A13

Muzaffar Ali Ghulam traveled here four years ago at the invitation of his cousin, hoping to build the house of his dreams back in Pakistan for his young family.

The 27-year-old worked 12-hour days as a driver in Dubai, sending most of his salary home to his wife and three children, said his cousin, Masood, who spoke on the condition that only his first name be used because of security concerns. When Iran started firing missiles and drones at the United Arab Emirates a month ago, Masood said, there was no discussion of fleeing Dubai. There was no way they could afford it.

Migrant workers keep Dubai running but can't afford to flee Iranian strikes

BY RACHEL CHASON
IN DUBAI

Mohammed Shahbaz, who moved to Dubai from Pakistan 10 years ago, and other migrant workers risk their lives to earn money that they can send home to their families.

Shrapnel from an Iranian strike hit Ghulam's car March 7, Emirati officials said, killing him instantly.

"I miss him every day, and I still don't believe he is gone," Masood said in an interview in Al Lisaili, an area where the city gives way to desert and many migrant workers live. "Sometimes I think he is still here with us."

Ghulam was one of more than a dozen civilians killed across the Persian Gulf since the United States and Israel began pummeling Iran with strikes Feb. 28 and Iran began retaliating by striking wealthy Gulf nations that for years had been heralded for their stability.

SEE IMMIGRANTS ON A14

Ballroom commission altered file at White House's request

BY JONATHAN EDWARDS
AND DAN DIAMOND

An independent planning commission reviewing President Donald Trump's ballroom building softened its own official documentation about the project at the White House's request, records show.

The National Capital Planning Commission voted Thursday to approve the project, the final procedural obstacle to building a 90,000-square-foot structure that would dramatically remake one of the most recognized symbols of American power and democracy. Emails obtained by The Washington Post through a public records request show the commission changed what would become a public FAQ document about the ballroom after a White House staffer asked it to soften language about the com-

mission's authority over the project. The commission then released the document ahead of its Jan. 8 meeting to provide information about its role in reviewing federal construction projects, when it would take up the ballroom and whether it had reviewed previous White House projects.

The draft included the sub-head "Why is the National Capital Planning Commission reviewing the project?" under which it definitively stated that the White House sits on federal land—a fact that "requires" federal agencies to get commission approval, according to a Dec. 19 email sent by commission General Counsel Meghan Hottel-Cox. White House staffer Heather Martin SEE BALLROOM ON A4

Review: Panel packed with Trump allies approves ballroom plans. A4



HEIDI LEVINE/FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

Celebrating Passover underground

Israelis in Tel Aviv pass out boiled eggs, symbolizing sacrifice but also the "circle of life," Wednesday evening at a communal Passover seder in an underground parking lot that also serves as a bomb shelter and a respite from air raid sirens. Story, A11

IN THE NEWS

2020 election case A Colorado appeals court tossed the nine-year sentence for Tina Peters, a former Mesa County clerk convicted on charges related to stolen-election claims. A3

Army chief of staff The defense secretary asked the service's top general to step down, an extraordinary move amid the Iran war. A6

THE NATION Two lawsuits have been filed challenging the president's order limiting mail ballots. A3
The death of a blind refugee left in a parking lot by Border Patrol was ruled a homicide. A5

THE WORLD In parts of Asia, war-time fuel shortages have spawned panic, killings and robberies. A12
Sexual violence in Sudan is being used as a weapon in the civil war, an aid group says. A12

THE ECONOMY The more people use social media, the less likely they are to support democracy, a survey found. A7
The president ordered a new 100 percent tariff on imported drugs made by companies that have not agreed to lower their retail prices. A18

STYLE The gothic, orchestrated aesthetic of London quintet the Last Dinner Party marries the eye and the ear. B1

SPORTS The Nationals' home opener is Friday. Here are five takeaways from the team's six-game opening road trip. B7

THE REGION Some students at George Washington University will face costs nearing \$100,000 next school year. B12

WEEKEND **Batter up:** The experience at Nationals Park will be different this baseball season. Here's what you need to know.

BUSINESS NEWS.....A18
COMICS.....B4
OBITUARIES.....B14
OPINION PAGES.....A15
TELEVISION.....B6
WORLD NEWS.....A11

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