



**GOING DEEP:** NASA Administrator Jared Isaacman said America will need nuclear propulsion technology to dominate the 21st-century space race.

**SPACE**

## NASA fast-tracks nuclear-powered craft

By **JOHN T. SEWARD**  
THE WASHINGTON TIMES

**COLORADO SPRINGS, COLO.** | The U.S. is developing a nuclear-powered spaceship designed by technology critical to deep-space exploration and national security, NASA Administrator Jared Isaacman told The Washington Times in an exclusive interview this week. Speaking to The Times at the Space Symposium 2026 conference, Mr. Isaacman presented nuclear power and propulsion not as options but as necessities

**Exclusive**

### Space Reactor-1 Freedom program aims for interplanetary travel in 2028

for America to dominate the 21st-century space race. Those technologies are critical to establishing a permanent base on the moon and to possible human travel to Mars, he said.

The current focus is the Space Reactor-1 Freedom program, a nuclear electric propulsion spacecraft that Mr. Isaacman described as “interplanetary.” A fission reactor powering electric thrusters would enable travel well beyond the

moon and help future astronauts begin a history-making journey to Mars.

“We’re going to get underway in 2028 with SR-1 Freedom,” Mr. Isaacman said. “The first-of-its-kind nuclear-powered interplanetary spacecraft.”

The 2028 timeline calls for launching the SR-1 Freedom to Mars with a full payload of what NASA describes as “mass transport in deep space,” pushing even farther into our solar system,

beyond Jupiter.

“Solar power is 4% [effective] as you go past Jupiter,” Mr. Isaacman said. “You’re going to need nuclear power.”

The Trump administration is leveraging that spacecraft to “set regulatory and launch precedent” and “activate the industrial base for future fission power systems” that could be used in multiple applications, NASA’s website says. Those developments will require continued partnerships with the Department of Energy and the Department of Defense, unofficially called the

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**VIRGINIA**

## National leaders rally voters over new map

### Redistricting wars are wrapping up

By **SUSAN FERRECHIO**  
THE WASHINGTON TIMES

Virginia’s referendum next week marks the beginning of the end of a nationwide battle to use mid-decade redistricting to gain seats in the U.S. House.

The fight is drawing to a close in nearly a dozen states that have gerrymandered, or plan to gerrymander, congressional district lines for partisan advantage ahead of the November elections.

House Speaker Mike Johnson of Louisiana and former Virginia Gov. Glenn Youngkin rallied Republican voters this weekend in deep-red Rockingham County, Virginia. A special election Tuesday will decide whether Democrats can redraw district lines and cut out nearly all the state’s Republican representation in Congress.

“This monstrosity has been created to overwhelm and overcome the voice of the people,” Mr. Youngkin told the crowd, urging them to vote and bring their neighbors to the polls.

Democrats say Texas Republicans triggered the multistate redistricting brawl last year by redrawing their state’s legislative map to give Republicans five more House seats.

Republicans have gained a three-seat net advantage so far in redistricting in California, Missouri, North Carolina, Ohio, Texas and Utah, according to Ballotpedia, which is tallying the redistricting fight.

Redistricting efforts in Georgia, New York and Louisiana remain subject to litigation and court decisions.

The showdown will likely conclude this month with the closely watched referendum in Virginia and legislative action in Florida.

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**HOMELAND SECURITY**

## ICE aims for 1 million deportations



**PUSHING GOALS:** U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement deported 442,637 migrants last year, 166,939 of whom had criminal records besides crossing the border illegally. That was far below the Homeland Security Department’s touted level.

By **STEPHEN DINAN**  
THE WASHINGTON TIMES

It has long been rumored and denied, but ICE has now made it official: a goal of 1 million deportations a year.

The agency quietly included the number in its budget explanation to Congress several weeks ago. It told lawmakers it has the “capacity” and “commitment” to deport more illegal immigrants.

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement also revealed in the document that it ousted 442,637 migrants last year just 166,939 of them had criminal records, aside from crossing the border illegally. That is 38%, far below the 70% level the Homeland Security Department has been touting.

ICE said it wants 99,000 deportation beds in use each day this year and next. That is also higher than the agency said in planning documents earlier this year.

### Claims ‘capacity,’ ‘commitment’ in budget explanation for 2026, 2027

The revelations suggest an agency that, despite chaos and missteps over the past 12 months, including the shooting deaths of American civilians and repeated legal battles, remains dedicated to President Trump’s mass deportation mission.

Deporting 1 million people a year was an informal goal set by White House Deputy Chief of Staff Stephen Miller. It was dismissed by Homeland Security Department officials, most recently by Secretary Kristi Noem, who flatly rejected the 1 million-migrant mark in

testimony to Congress.

“There’s been no discussion of requirement on numerical quota targets,” she told senators before her ouster in March.

The new budget, though, specifically says targets.

“ICE has increased its future annual target to 1,000,000 returns and removals to reflect expanded operational capacity and ongoing commitment to enforcing immigration laws,” the agency wrote.

The agency said its goal for deporting criminals is 500,000 for both this fiscal year and next. That works out to a 50% rate. In fiscal 2025, which ended Sept. 30, ICE said it had tallied 166,939 criminal removals or returns out of a total of 442,637 deportations.

ICE said it set a goal of 400,000 immigration-related arrests a year. Last

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**MIDDLE EAST**

## U.S. presses for more talks before truce ends

### Trump teases Iran war breakthrough

By **TOM HOWELL JR.**  
THE WASHINGTON TIMES

President Trump has not agreed to a formal extension of the ceasefire with Iran, but the U.S. is engaging with Pakistani mediators and is open to a second round of talks in Islamabad, the White House said Wednesday.

The administration pointed to “productive and ongoing” conversations as Mr. Trump described the war as “close to over” and tightened the U.S. military’s grip on oil traffic near the Strait of Hormuz.

“We feel good about the prospects of a deal,” said White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt. “It’s obviously in the best interests of Iran to meet the president’s demands.”

The U.S. and Israel have pounded Iran with bombs and missiles for six weeks in an attempt to prevent Tehran from obtaining a nuclear weapon. Mr. Trump also wants to constrain Iran’s missile program and its ability to fund terrorist proxies in the region.

Both sides are operating under a two-week ceasefire that expires Tuesday, heaping pressure on negotiators to restart talks in Pakistan.

Pakistan’s army chief, Syed Asim Munir, traveled to Iran to meet with negotiators and set the table for another round of talks with the U.S.

The White House praised Pakistani efforts.

“We remain very much engaged in these negotiations, in these talks,” Ms. Leavitt said. “These conversations are productive and ongoing, and that’s where we are right now.”

Tensions remained high in the Persian Gulf region and the Strait of Hormuz, despite signs of progress.

A top Iranian commander said

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**MEDIA**

## Times wins 18 awards in Virginia Press Association journalism contest

By **SEAN SALAI**  
THE WASHINGTON TIMES

The Washington Times won 18 journalism awards — including a best-in-show and seven first-place honors — in the annual Virginia Press Association news and advertising contest.

VPA judges described a first-place news video that earned the best-in-show honors as “a powerful, newsy and well-done” report on Ukrainian resistance to

Russian invaders in Ukraine’s Donbas region.

“Great job of using reporter footage with government footage,” the judges wrote in comments on the Sept. 25 video. “The narration was excellent too.”

The video features Guillaume Ptak, a foreign correspondent for The Times, narrating his footage of shelled buildings and vehicles “fitted with homemade metal armor” in Kostyantynivka.

As of this month, soldiers continued

using drones to fend off larger Russian forces in the eastern Ukrainian city. It is a key line of defense that has become a ghost town because of civilian evacuations.

The Washington Times won first-place awards for the best podcast, website, lede, illustration, social media post and sports writing portfolio among publications with the highest daily circulation. This group includes The Washington Post, The Virginian-Pilot,

the Richmond Times-Dispatch, The Roanoke Times and the Daily Press.

“This recognition from the Virginia Press Association reflects what I see every day in our newsroom — journalists who combine deep expertise with real commitment to their craft,” said Christopher Dolan, president and executive editor of The Times.

“Winning Best in Show for our Ukraine video, alongside first-place honors for ‘Threat Status,’ our website,

social media, sports writing and more, is a testament to a staff that produces work that stands on its own merits across every platform and format,” Mr. Dolan added.

Additionally, The Times won eight second-place awards for multimedia content, breaking news coverage, health and science writing, sports writing, column writing and lede. It received two

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**POLITICS**

### Democrats file articles of impeachment against Pentagon’s Hegseth. **A3**

**NATION**

### Powerful, destructive storms rip through parts of Michigan. **A6**



**COMMENTARY**

### Alaska can secure American energy dominance again. **B1**

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