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SPORTS, 1B

THE TOWN TALK

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ALEXANDRIA-PINEVILLE, LOUISIANA



A woman reacts holding a Venezuelan flag as Venezuelan immigrants celebrate after the United States struck Venezuela and captured its President Nicolas Maduro and his wife Cilia Flores, and they were brought to the Metropolitan Detention Center in Brooklyn (MDC Brooklyn), in New York City on Jan. 3. EDUARDO MUÑOZ/REUTERS

Representatives speak out

Louisiana Democratic congressmen condemn invasion of Venezuela

Greg Hilburn

Shreveport Times
USA TODAY NETWORK

Louisiana's two Democratic congressmen condemned President Trump's weekend operation to capture Venezuela President Nicolás Maduro and his wife as unconstitutional, as the state's Republican delegation, led by U.S. Speaker Johnson of Shreveport-Bossier, cheered the U.S. action.

Shreveport Rep. Cleo Fields and New Orleans Rep. Troy Carter said such military action demands congressional approval.

"I have serious concerns about President Trump's decision to take military action against Venezuela without informing congressional leaders, and there is absolutely no excuse for not doing so," Fields said in a statement.

Carter called Trump's order "unconstitutional. Period."

"The Constitution is clear," Carter

said in a text to USA Today Network. "The power to authorize the use of military force rests with Congress. No president, regardless of party, may bypass that responsibility. Acting without congressional authorization is not a strength. It is recklessness, and it places American lives at unnecessary risk."

"Congress cannot stay silent while its constitutional role is cast aside. Our men and women in uniform deserve more than impulsive decisions. They deserve leadership that respects the Constitution, honors established rules of engagement, and places their safety first, both at home and abroad."

Johnson said the Trump administration has scheduled briefings for members of Congress as they return to Washington Jan. 5.

Greg Hilburn covers state politics for the USA TODAY Network of Louisiana. Follow him on Twitter @GregHilburn1.

Speaker Mike Johnson calls capture of Venezuela president justified

Greg Hilburn

Shreveport Times
USA TODAY NETWORK

Republican U.S. House Speaker Mike Johnson of Shreveport-Bossier said President Trump's order to seize Venezuela President Nicolás Maduro and his wife in an overnight military operation on Jan. 3 was justified. Maduro and his wife were taken to New York, where Trump said they will face federal drug trafficking charges.

Following is Johnson's full statement:

"Today's military action in Venezuela was a decisive and justified operation that will protect American lives," Johnson said.

"Nicolás Maduro is responsible for the deaths of hundreds of thousands

of Americans after years of trafficking illegal drugs and violent cartel members into our country — crimes for which he's been properly indicted in U.S. courts and an arrest warrant duly issued — and today he learned what accountability looks like.

"President Trump is putting American lives first, succeeding where others have failed, and under his leadership the United States will no longer allow criminal regimes to profit from wreaking havoc and destruction on our country."

"The Trump Administration is working to schedule briefings for Members as Congress returns to Washington next week."

"Our brave military personnel who executed a precise, successful operation deserve our gratitude and congratulations."

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Avian Influenza causing wild bird deaths across LA

Houma Courier-Thibodaux Daily Comet
USA TODAY NETWORK

Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza, also known as H5N1, is causing deaths among wild birds in Louisiana, the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries announced.

Most reported mortalities have been detected in southwest Louisiana, where fall bird migrations have contributed to a resurgence of the disease in waterfowl and other wild bird species.

A wide range of birds can be infected

with H5N1, though geese and other waterfowl are particularly susceptible. While some birds recover and develop immunity to specific strains of avian influenza, others may exhibit neurological symptoms that can lead to death. Scavenging raptors, including vultures, are also vulnerable to infection.

Public health officials say the current strain of H5N1 poses a minimal risk to humans. However, LDWF urges

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Rural citizens to see healthcare improvements

Alexandria Town Talk
USA TODAY NETWORK

Louisiana will receive over \$208 million through the Rural Health Transformation Program (RHTP), established under President Trump's Working Families Tax Cuts legislation. Louisiana's award amount is among the highest in the Nation, and among the top three in the Southeast according to a press release from the Louisiana Department of Health.

Nearly 1.1 million Louisiana resi-

dents live in rural parishes, with 37% covered by Medicaid and 22% covered by Medicare. Rural parishes face persistent structural disadvantages, including limited industry diversification and economic opportunities, and higher unemployment.

LDH will implement initiatives aimed at long-lasting impacts on healthcare for rural Louisiana citizens, improving access to care and healthcare delivery across the state, strengthening

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