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JUSTICE DEPARTMENT CRACKDOWN

BOLTON PLEADS NOT GUILTY

Trump’s former national security adviser turned critic accused of sharing government secrets



Former Trump administration national security adviser John Bolton arrives for his arraignment at the Greenbelt Federal Courthouse in Greenbelt, Md., on Friday. **ROD LAMKEY JR./ASSOCIATED PRESS**

By **Eric Tucker**
and **Alanna Durkin Richer**
ASSOCIATED PRESS

GREENBELT, Md. — John Bolton pleaded not guilty Friday to charges accusing the former President Donald Trump national security adviser turned critic of emailing classified information to family members and keeping top secret documents at his Maryland home.

Bolton was ordered released from custody after making his appearance before a judge in the third Justice Department case brought in recent weeks against an adversary of the Republican president.

The case accusing Bolton of putting the country’s national security at risk is unfolding against the backdrop of growing

concerns that the Trump administration is using the law enforcement powers of the Justice Department to pursue his political foes. Bolton has signaled he will argue he is being targeted because of his criticism of the president, describing the charges as part of a Trump “effort to intimidate his opponents.”

The investigation into Bolton, however, was already well underway by the time Trump took office a second time this past January and appears to have followed a more conventional path toward indictment than other recent cases against perceived Trump foes, who were charged by the president’s hand-picked U.S. attorney in Virginia over the concerns of career prosecutors.

Bolton is accused of sharing with his

wife and daughter more than 1,000 pages of notes that included sensitive information he had gleaned from meetings with other U.S. government officials and foreign leaders or from intelligence briefings. Authorities say some of the information was exposed when operatives believed to be linked to the Iranian government hacked Bolton’s email account he used to send the diary-like notes about his activities to his relatives.

The Justice Department also alleges Bolton stored at his home highly classified intelligence about a foreign adversary’s plans to attack U.S. forces overseas, covert action taken by the U.S. government and other state secrets.

See **BOLTON** on Page A5

PROPERTY TAX BILLS

County to offer installment payments

Taxpayers will have option starting in 2026

By **Jeff Horvath**
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SCRANTON — Lackawanna County taxpayers will have the opportunity next year and thereafter to pay their annual property tax bills in quarterly installments instead of all at once.

Commissioners Bill Gaughan and Chris Chermak recently authorized the change, which should give cash-strapped property owners flexibility when paying their taxes and potentially bolster the county’s collection rate.

It will allow taxpayers to pay the face value of their bills in four installments due on the last workdays of March, June, August and October. Failure to pay any installment by the due date would result in a 10% penalty added to the installment, per the resolution commissioners passed Wednesday.

“This resolution may look to people like a small procedural item on paper, but in reality it represents a meaningful step forward for taxpayers in Lackawanna County, especially for working families, seniors on fixed incomes and small business owners who are trying to make ends meet,” Gaughan said before the vote. “When I first took office last year one of the biggest concerns that I heard from residents was how difficult it can be to pay the full amount of their property taxes all at once. For a lot of people the single bill hits at the wrong time, when household budgets are already stretched very thin. This plan that we’re putting forward today gives them flexibility, it gives them breathing room.”

See **PAYMENTS** on Page A5

SCRANTON

Zoning board denies family’s request to keep 15 chickens

By **Christine Lee**
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An East Mountain family wants to keep their 15 chickens without ruffling any feathers.

But Scranton’s zoning hearing board denied a request by Chris Verchuk for a variance to keep all of the chickens at his family’s Leslie Drive property. Residents are allowed to have only two chickens under the city’s zoning ordinance. Verchuk attended the meeting with his wife, Laurel, and 15-year-old son, Eli.

Chris Verchuk said the family has owned the chickens for a year. They are housed in a heated, enclosed Amish-built coop surrounded by a fence. The coop protects the chickens from predators and the elements. It is not visible from the street.

Chris and Laurel Verchuk emphasized they only own hens and don’t plan to purchase more chick-

See **CHICKENS** on Page A5

Sources: U.S. seized survivors after strike on suspected drug-carrying vessel in Caribbean

By **Konstantin Toropin**
and **Lisa Mascaro**
ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON — The United States took survivors into custody after its military struck a suspected drug-carrying vessel in the Caribbean — the first attack that anyone escaped alive since President Donald Trump began launching deadly strikes in the region last month, a defense official and another person familiar with the matter said Friday.

Trump later confirmed the

attack.

“We attacked a submarine, and that was a drug-carrying submarine built specifically for the transportation of massive amounts of drugs” Trump said while hosting the Ukrainian president at the White House.

Secretary of State Rubio did not dispute that there were survivors, but he repeatedly said details would be forthcoming.

The strike Thursday brought the death toll from the Trump administration’s military action against vessels

in the region to at least 28.

It is believed to be at least the sixth strike in the waters off Venezuela since early September, and the first to result in survivors who were picked up by the U.S. military. It was not immediately clear what would be done with the survivors, who the people said were being held on a U.S. Navy vessel.

They confirmed the strike and the seizing of survivors on the condition of anonymity because the attack had not

See **STRIKE** on Page A5



President Donald Trump speaks before a lunch with Ukraine’s President Volodymyr Zelenskyy in the Cabinet Room of the White House on Friday in Washington. **ALEX BRANDON/ASSOCIATED PRESS**

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