

TO GIVE THE NEWS IMPARTIALLY, WITHOUT FEAR OR FAVOR

Chattanooga Times Free Press

VOL. 157 | NO. 80

TIMESFREEPRESS.COM

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 4, 2026

Trump: US picks for Iran's next head also died

BY JIM TANKERSLEY,
AARON BOXERMAN,
CHRISTINA GOLDBAUM
AND MICHAEL LEVENSON
NEW YORK TIMES NEWS SERVICE

As the war in the Middle East expands, President Donald Trump on Tuesday acknowledged the deep uncertainty about what comes next in Iran, saying that officials whom the United States had eyed as potential new leaders

had been killed in the U.S.-Israeli bombing campaign.

"Most of the people we had in mind are dead," Trump said at the start of a White House meeting with Chancellor Friedrich Merz of Germany. He said it was possible that whoever takes over Iran could be "as bad" as Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, the country's supreme leader, who was killed in a strike on Saturday.

Trump's comments came as Israeli troops seized more areas

in southern Lebanon and called for the evacuation of at least 80 Lebanese villages. The Israeli military cast the move as an effort to defend Israeli border towns against rockets fired by Hezbollah, the militia backed by Iran.

Israeli warplanes also carried out heavy airstrikes near Beirut, the Lebanese capital, and Tehran, the Iranian capital.

The United States closed embassies that were hit by

drones in Saudi Arabia and Kuwait and urged Americans to immediately leave 14 Middle Eastern countries. Iran's state broadcaster, IRIB, said an Iranian drone had also hit the area of the U.S. Consulate in Dubai, United Arab Emirates. The government-run Dubai media office said that a fire from a "drone-related incident" near the consulate had been contained and that no injuries were reported.

Trump has offered several rationales for the U.S. military operation. The president said at the White House on Tuesday that he had made the decision to go to war to preempt Iran, which he claimed was about to attack. Officials with access to U.S. intelligence have said that Trump has exaggerated the immediacy of any threat Iran posed to the United States.

See PICKS › A5



STAFF FILE PHOTO BY MATT HAMILTON

The TVA Chattanooga Office Complex is pictured. TVA has cut down its executive team and eliminated roles not directly related to power generation and transmission.

Change in air at TVA

BY DANIEL DASSOW
STAFF WRITER

Jeremy Fisher, who was chief business officer at the Tennessee Valley Authority until Monday, is not just departing the nation's largest public utility. His role will be eliminated and his duties reassigned to other executives.

The departure continued a pattern both of turnover and cost cutting as the federal utility faces rising demand for electricity and pressure from the Trump administration to be a model for its energy policies.

Fisher was among the top five executives at TVA and made \$1.3 million in

Utility eliminates top executive position. Experts say turnover could be good

total compensation last year. He joined TVA in 2000 as a desktop support specialist while he was a student at the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga, according to his LinkedIn profile.

In a filing to the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission, TVA did not provide a reason for Fisher's departure or say his role would be eliminated.

The utility announced Fisher's departure alongside the resignation of TVA board Chair Bill Renick in an update to investors in TVA debt.

The decision not to fill Fisher's place was driven partly by a desire to save money as TVA wraps up a three-year effort to cut nearly \$1 billion in planned spending.

"This role will be eliminated and its functions realigned to other areas of the business as we continue to drive savings and efficiencies in our operations," TVA spokesperson Scott Fiedler said in an email.

See TVA › A5

Domestic security boss stands by remarks

BY MICHAEL GOLD
AND MADELEINE NGO
NEW YORK TIMES NEWS SERVICE

WASHINGTON — Kristi Noem, the homeland security secretary, repeatedly declined to apologize Tuesday for suggesting that two U.S. citizens killed by federal immigration agents in Minneapolis, Renee Good and Alex Pretti, were domestic terrorists.

Asked by Democratic and Republican senators about comments she made in the immediate aftermath of both shootings that Good and Pretti had appeared to commit acts of domestic terrorism, Noem did not retract her remarks. She said repeatedly that her characterizations came from immigration officers in Minneapolis.

"I was getting reports from the ground, from agents at the scene," Noem said at a Senate Judiciary Committee hearing. "And I would say that it was a chaotic scene."

Sen. Dick Durbin of Illinois, the top Democrat on the panel, scoffed in apparent disbelief. "You believe calling the victims of violence 'domestic terrorists' is a way to calm the scene?" he asked.

It was the first time Noem was pressed by lawmakers about her description of Good and Pretti as domestic terrorists. She faced sharp criticism from senators in both parties over the fatal shootings and her department's handling of high-profile immigration enforcement operations across the country.

As Noem testified, there were at least three people in the hearing room who have said they were unlawfully arrested by federal agents, including Marimar Martinez, a U.S. citizen who was shot five times by a Border Patrol agent in Chicago last year.

At one point, Sen. Richard Blumenthal, D-Conn., urged Noem to answer questions about Martinez's shooting, including whether it was "wrong." Noem declined to answer specific questions, saying she did not know the details of Martinez's case.

The four-hour hearing reflected the partisan divide in Congress over the Trump administration's immigration crackdown. Democrats denounced immigration agents'

See REMARKS › A6

Polls close in three states in first primaries of midterms

BY KELLEN BROWNING
NEW YORK TIMES NEWS SERVICE

Polls have closed in most areas of the three states kicking off the primary election cycle in 2026, with contests in Texas, North Carolina and Arkansas set to offer an early glimpse at which direction voters want their parties to take with the midterms coming in November.

Most attention will be on the expensive and high-profile clashes in Texas, where first results in a combative Senate primary are trickling in, and a host of Democratic House members are fight-

For final results, visit timesfreepress.com.

ing to maintain their seats after Republicans redrew districts in an effort to oust them. But results in some races are likely to be delayed after a judge in Dallas County — the state's second-most populous — ordered polling locations to remain open for an additional two hours after finding that "mass confusion" over an Election Day rule change had hindered voters.

See PRIMARIES › A6



TAMIR KALIFA/THE NEW YORK TIMES

James Talarico, a state representative running for the Democratic nomination for Senate, speaks during a campaign stop in Round Rock, Texas.

Advice	B4	Entertainment	A2	Sports	C1	TODAY	HIGH 78	THURSDAY	HIGH 82	FRIDAY	HIGH 84	See B8 for full weather reports
Business	A7	Obituaries	B2-3	Sports Agate	C2	LOW 57	LOW 59	LOW 62	LOW 62	LOW 62	LOW 62	
Classified	C4	Politics	A4	Television	D4	Mostly cloudy	Partly cloudy					
Comics & Puzzles	D2-3	Public Notices	C4	World	A3							
Editorials	B6-7	Region	B1									