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VENEZUELA BOAT STRIKE

Lawmakers hear from admiral

No ‘kill them all’ order in attack, but video alarms Democrats

STEPHEN GROVES AND LISA MASCARO
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — A Navy admiral told lawmakers Thursday there was no “kill them all” order from Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth but grave questions and concerns remain as Con-



Bradley

gress scrutinizes an attack that killed two survivors of an initial strike on an alleged drug boat in international waters near Venezuela. Adm. Frank Bradley “was very clear that he was given no order, to give no quarter or to kill them all,” said Sen. Tom Cotton, who heads

the Senate Intelligence Committee, as he exited a classified briefing.

While Cotton, R-Ark., defended the attack, Democrats who were also briefed and saw video of the survivors being killed questioned the Trump administration’s rationale and said the incident was deeply concerning.

“The order was basically: Destroy the drugs, kill the 11 people on the boat,” said Washington Rep. Adam Smith, the top Dem-

ocrat on the House Armed Services Committee. Smith, who demanded further investigation, said the survivors were “basically two shirtless people clinging to the bow of a capsized and inoperable boat, drifting in the water.”

Bradley was joined at the Capitol by Gen. Dan Caine, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, for briefings at a potentially crucial moment in the unfolding congressional investigation into how Hegseth handled the operation. There are questions

about whether the strike may have violated the law.

Meanwhile, a Pentagon inspector general’s report made public Thursday criticized the use of unapproved messaging apps and devices across the Defense Department. The report said Hegseth put U.S. troops at risk by sharing sensitive plans about an upcoming military strike in Yemen on his

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HOLIDAY SHOPPING



ADAM BETTCHER, ASSOCIATED PRESS

Shoppers browse through stores at Mall of America for Black Friday deals, Nov. 28, in Bloomington, Minn.

Solid start to season

Consumers were more selective of what they bought, retailers say

ANNE D’INNOCENZIO
Associated Press

NEW YORK — The nation’s shoppers may feel gloomy about the economy, but they certainly were in the mood to shop over the five-day Thanksgiving weekend that wrapped up on Cyber Monday.

As Wall Street analysts and retailers sift through the data from the weekend — the unofficial start to the season and a good barometer of shoppers’ financial health and the strength of the economy — the figures show that shoppers went online and in stores to scour for deals on everything from TVs to clothing. But all that economic uncertainty did affect spending. Shoppers were very focused and selective, some malls reported.

Of course, the weekend looks a lot different from 15 years ago, when shoppers camped out in the wee hours of the morning and fought in store aisles for doorbusters like TVs. Shoppers are still heading to stores, but the biggest growth is online,



ANGELINA KATSANIS, ASSOCIATED PRESS

A man takes a photo of Rockefeller Center in front of Saks Fifth Avenue on Black Friday in New York on Nov. 28.

which now accounts for 30% of total holiday sales. That’s up from 15% in 2012, according to the National Retail Federation, the nation’s largest retail trade group.

Adobe Analytics reported Tuesday that so-called Cyber Week — the five-day period from Thanksgiving to Cyber Monday — brought in \$44.2 billion online overall, up 7.7% year-over-year, bolstered by record spending online during Black Friday.

On Cyber Monday, consumers

spent \$14.25 billion, up 7.1% and making it again the year’s biggest online shopping day.

National Retail Federation’s CEO Matt Shay said Tuesday that shoppers wall off the winter holidays from all the economic noise, building a moat around the season.

“The holidays is really very much an emotional purchase,” Shay said. “Families plan for it. They invest in it. And as a component of the holidays, the five-day Thanksgiving weekend is really

the psychological kickoff of the holidays.”

Based on the group’s survey of shoppers from the weekend, Shay called the period a “very solid beginning” to the holiday season.

The group still expects sales over November and December of between \$1.01 trillion and \$1.02 trillion. That would be up 3.7% to 4.2% more than last year.

Software company Salesforce reported that for Cyber Week — it measures from Nov. 25 through Monday — global online sales increased to \$336.6 billion, up 7% compared with the year-ago period. U.S. online sales increased to \$79.6 billion, up 5% year for that week, compared with the year-ago period.

The Mall of America in Bloomington, Minnesota, reported on Tuesday that more than 235,000 people visited the iconic center on Black Friday, making it the busiest Black Friday on record in the mall’s history. The traffic number was up 8.5% compared with the same day on 2024 and nearly 2% above pre-pandemic 2019, the mall said.

Mastercard SpendingPulse, which tracks in-person and online spending, reported Saturday

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DATA CENTERS

GA panel: Slow down new growth

Legislators say utilities should be able to delay new centers

DAVE RESS
Richmond Times-Dispatch

RICHMOND — Virginia utilities should be able to tap the brakes on new data centers and other big power users if they don’t have the power plants on hand to supply them, a General Assembly panel said.

State law requires electric utilities to supply power to anyone when and where they want it.

But with Virginia already needing to import electricity from other states and proposed data centers seeking still more power — more than twice as much as Dominion Energy produces and imports on the hottest days of the summer — that’s becoming a challenge. It is on track to send power bills soaring as Dominion and the state’s electric cooperatives scramble to buy

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Winter weather advisory in effect for SW Virginia

BEN ORNER
The Roanoke Times

The National Weather Service is forecasting between 3 and 4 inches of snow to fall in the Roanoke and New River valleys from Thursday night into Friday afternoon.

Most of the accumulation will occur between midnight and 7 a.m., according to a forecast published by the NWS Blacksburg office Thursday afternoon. But snow could begin as early as 9 p.m. Thursday in the mountains.

Narrow bands of heavy snow could lead to localized higher amounts, forecasters noted. The storm is moving from the southwest.

A forecast map released Thursday afternoon shows 3.3 inches accumulating in Roanoke and 4 inches in Blacksburg.

A winter weather advisory will be in effect for Southwest Virginia from Thursday night to

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