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What's News

Business & Finance

- ◆ **Stripe and buyout firm** Advent International made a joint takeover bid for PayPal in a deal that would value the fintech company at around \$53 billion. **B1**
- ◆ **JPMorgan Chase**, Goldman Sachs and the five biggest banks on Wall Street are on pace to have their best trading years ever, after a second-quarter boom in activity. **B1**
- ◆ **The S&P 500 rose** Wednesday, gaining 0.4%. The Nasdaq was 0.6% higher and the Dow added 0.3%. **B9**
- ◆ **Warren Buffett didn't** donate this year to the Gates Foundation, ending a two-decade run in which the famed investor gifted Berkshire Hathaway shares to the philanthropy. **B1**
- ◆ **The global economy** has less capacity to cushion the blow from a reduction in energy supplies moving through the Strait of Hormuz as the U.S. and Iran resume hostilities, the IMF said. **A7**
- ◆ **China's AI heavyweight** DeepSeek is preparing for an IPO as early as the second quarter of next year to bankroll its costly research and fuel growth. **B1**
- ◆ **United Airlines raised** its annual profit outlook on the back of strong revenue trends that are easing the pain of volatile fuel prices. **B2**
- ◆ **Johnson & Johnson** raised its forecast for the year after recording higher sales in the latest quarter, helped by strength in several of its cancer drugs. **B2**
- ◆ **SpaceX shares traded** below their \$135 IPO price for the first time, a sign of waning enthusiasm. **B3**

Worldwide

- ◆ **Trump is leaning** toward expanding U.S. military operations in Iran after days of briefings from top aides. **A1**
- ◆ **Todd Blanche**, who is seeking confirmation as attorney general, told a Senate panel that a \$1.8 billion "anti-weaponization fund," which critics saw as a money pot for Trump allies, is dead. **A1**
- ◆ **Trump said ICE officers** should continue using traffic stops to arrest immigrants, after he was caught off guard by an agency decision to halt most such stops. **A3**
- ◆ **The Trump administration** is considering placing a bond of \$100,000 on some green card seekers applying at U.S. consulates abroad. **A3**
- ◆ **Goldman Sachs lawyer** Kathryn Ruemmler was grilled by members of Congress over her correspondence with sex offender Jeffrey Epstein. **A4**
- ◆ **Dr. Erica Schwartz**, Trump's nominee to lead the CDC, promised to uphold "unwavering scientific integrity" at the agency during her Senate confirmation hearing. **A4**
- ◆ **Ukraine's Zelensky** ousted his defense minister, who drew support for his efforts to promote modern technology to outsmart Russia. **A8**
- ◆ **The U.S. Air Force** for the first time successfully fired an air-to-air missile from a new jet-powered combat drone built by Anduril. **A3**
- ◆ **Argentina will meet Spain** in the World Cup final on Sunday after scoring a 2-1 win against England. **A14**
- ◆ **Died: Pat Oliphant**, 90, political cartoonist. **A2**

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Acting Attorney General Todd Blanche testifies Wednesday before a Senate panel as he tries to secure the job permanently.

Blanche Gets Grilled by Senators On Payout Fund, Trump IRS Deal

Attorney general pick faces questions over status of the IRS agreement

By SADIE GURMAN AND RICHARD RUBIN

WASHINGTON—Todd Blanche tried to ease concerns over a settlement between President Trump and the Internal Revenue Service that has become a sticking point for key Republican senators whose support he needs to be confirmed as attorney general. Blanche said that a \$1.8 billion so-called "anti-weaponization fund"—which critics saw as a money pot for Trump allies—is dead and that the Justice Department would accept legislation to prevent its resurrection. "It is a moot issue," Blanche, now the acting attorney general, told senators Wednesday during his confirmation hearing before the Senate Judiciary Committee. "The weaponization fund is dead. It is not moving forward."

Emerging from the hearing room, Sen. John Cornyn (R., Texas) said he wasn't persuaded. "The argument was that the weaponization fund is dead, and what he confirmed is that it's not," he said. Trump named Blanche acting attorney general in April after firing Pam Bondi. Since then, Blanche has moved quickly, taking steps that have pleased the president and mollified some right-wing critics. The fund and a related order Blanche signed giving Trump, a Republican, sweeping legal protections from government actions have remained a potential hurdle for Sens. Cornyn and Thom Tillis (R., N.C.), who haven't promised Blanche their votes. A defection by either would leave the committee deadlocked and keep Blanche from advancing to a full Senate vote needed to secure the job permanently.

"I want to stick a fork in this turkey," said Tillis, referring to the fund. He has said he wants to vote for Blanche but wouldn't do so unless he gets a vote on legislation that would end the fund for good. Tillis later said that he wanted Trump to endorse legislation killing the fund as a way to get Republicans on board. Blanche said the Justice Department would help lawmakers write it. "We do not object to that path," he said. The administration backed off the fund in June after pushback from lawmakers, in-

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AI Anger Has Tech Executives Fearing for Their Lives

SAN FRANCISCO—A security guard at Anthropic rushed to stop the man sneaking into the lobby of the world's most valuable AI startup. The man had entered by following closely behind a badge-swiping employee. He showed the guard an envelope marked with the name of a top Anthropic executive.

By Lindsay Ellis, Zusha Elinson and Tina Li

The executive was "going to be killed," he told the guard, and he needed to warn them, according to records of the April 15 incident obtained by The Wall Street Journal. The encounter, which took place five days after an attempted firebombing of OpenAI Chief Executive Sam Altman's house, ended without violence or an arrest. But for executives at Anthropic—and across the AI industry—the threat was far from past. In recent months, a gathering storm of opposition to AI has given rise to a surge of violent rhetoric, threats against people and property, and a serious attempt at harm. The phenomenon has executives at tech companies large and small reconsidering their personal security arrangements and how they talk about their products to a public that is increasingly wary of the technology and the societal changes it is ushering in. Police in San Francisco have responded to multiple

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Odd Place for a Familiar Face



COIN FLIP: Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent unveiled designs for a new gold-colored \$1 coin with President Trump's image, a rare and controversial move. **A3**

Strangers Unite for One Goal: Drink 1 Million Beers

An offhand comment at the pub led to a 'herculean effort'; no Baby Guinness

By NATASHA DANGOOR

LONDON—When Marcus Wright reached the summit of a Swiss mountain this spring, he did what all serious hikers do: pulled a cold beer from his backpack. Before taking the first sip, however, he snapped a photo and sent it to a group chat. He wasn't sharing the view with friends or family. He was logging intake. The 31-year-old consultant has a higher summit to climb: collectively drinking one million beers with one thousand (mostly) strangers. Wright was added to the 1 Million Beers chat last year by a friend who said he "needed his help with something." The

mission: Take a photo of every beer you drink, accompanied by its number in the group's tally. Wright, who lives in Düsseldorf, Germany, currently tops the charts for the number of beers drunk, averaging 4.1 a day. "When I check the leaderboard it's always nice to see I'm still on top," said Wright. "Although it's probably a bit concerning." A connoisseur of the craft, he's logged more than 1,500 distinct varieties of beer. The group was formed, as might be expected, over pints at a London pub. Aidan Smith, a 29-year-old working in finance, was watching a cricket match last August with 20 friends. Please turn to page A12

President Is Leaning To Escalation in Iran

By ALEXANDER WARD AND LAURENCE NORMAN

WASHINGTON—President Trump is leaning toward expanding U.S. military operations in Iran after days of briefings from top aides, U.S. officials said. Options include stepping up airstrikes, sending ground forces to seize Iranian islands near the Strait of Hormuz and bombing a fortified site that could be used for covert nuclear work. Trump hosted a Situation Room meeting Tuesday evening to discuss the potential seizure of Kharg Island and

other territory along the strait using U.S. troops, as well as the potential bombing of a tunnel complex at Pickaxe Mountain, a nuclear-linked site the U.S. has yet to target. Expanding airstrikes against more targets in Iran, including energy sites, also remains a possibility. The discussion was one of multiple formal and informal conversations Trump has held in recent days with senior officials including Vice President JD Vance, Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth, Secretary of State

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◆ **Iran, U.S. face shrinking options**..... **A7**

Pressure Builds Over Israel's Treatment Of Palestinian Inmates

Reports and interviews detail alleged violence, medical neglect and starvation

By FELIZ SOLOMON AND ANAT PELED

As Hamas fighters swarmed into Israel on Oct. 7, 2023, the power suddenly went out in a remote prison in the Negev Desert. When the lights briefly came back on a few hours later, a new era of hard-line policies had begun. In the wake of Hamas's attack—which left some 1,200 in Israel dead and around 250 as hostages—the thousands of Palestinians held at Lavi prison in the Negev and other prisons across Israel now faced harsher conditions. Thousands more joined them,

swept up in raids amid the ensuing war. Auditors from Israel's Ministry of Justice and United Nations agencies later found that detainees were subjected to beatings, particularly during transfers and searches, and starvation. Autopsies of some Palestinians who died in custody showed signs of physical assault, medical neglect and malnutrition. Doctors and rights groups described instances of sexual violence. In addition to those re-

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◆ **Many Democrats vote to halt Israel military aid**..... **A6**