

SPORTS

GOING TO THE NEXT LEVEL?

Alexander, Nixon boys eye area soccer titles this season.

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NEWS

MAN INDICTED

Mexican citizen indicted for smuggling cocaine into Laredo.

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SPORTS

RACING PAST THE COMPETITION

Alexander dominates Laredo ISD meet, setting new city records along the way.

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CRIME

Alaniz discusses 'unique' cold case trial

By David Gomez Jr. LAREDO MORNING TIMES

Webb County District Attorney Isidro "Chilo" Alaniz announced a murder charge a week and a half ago, nearly a decade after the killing of Janette Escamilla Jaramillo — a rare development in a cold case for the Laredo area.

Alaniz and Laredo Police Chief Miguel Rodriguez said the cold case of Escamilla differs from others because, while the

police department has its share of cold cases, most remain unsolved due to a lack of evidence or other reasons.

"We don't see too many cold cases in Webb County," Alaniz said. "That's not to say there aren't any cold cases, but unfortunately, in any community — including Laredo — there are a lot of unresolved murders. Laredo has its share of cases that are unresolved, and those are considered cold — and that is unique.

"This is a unique situation that we come here almost 10 years later and announce a murder charge against a person. From my recollection, this will be one of the first, if not the first, cold case trials that there is a trial for in Webb County."

At the announcement regarding the new evidence and reopened cold case that will head to trial made March 14, LPD Investigator Joe Baeza informed the victim's daughters of the

Cold continues on A3



Isidro "Chilo" Alaniz is sworn in for his fifth term as Webb County District Attorney on Wednesday, Jan. 1, 2025.

Jose De La Rosa/Laredo Morning Times



Jose De La Rosa/Laredo Morning Times

The 2025 Scripps Regional Spelling Bee is held Saturday, March 22, 2025, at the Guadalupe and Lilia Martinez Fine Arts Center Theater at Laredo College. Pictured is first-placer winner Alejandro Martinez.

With 'tomahawk,' Martinez wins back-to-back regional spelling bees

By Jose De La Rosa LAREDO MORNING TIMES

Alejandro Martinez, an eighth grader at Raul Perales Middle School, clinched his second consecutive victory at the Scripps Regional Spelling Bee on Saturday.

The win marked not only his back-to-back triumph in the region but also his final opportunity to compete before aging out of the competition.

Alejandro secured the top spot with flawless spellings of the words "senecio" and "tomahawk,"

sealing his return ticket to the prestigious Scripps National Spelling Bee in Washington, D.C.

This year's competition once again showcased his resilience, hard work and determination, striking an emotional chord as it closed a chapter in his illustrious local spelling bee journey.

"Being able to win again is amazing," Alejandro said. "I know it's my last year, and I'm really happy to have had the opportunity to compete for multiple years and go to Washington again. That is something truly special to me. I thank God for everything

he's allowed me to do and for giving me these opportunities to achieve."

The competition, organized by the Literacy Volunteers of Laredo and the Laredo Morning Times, featured spellers from various schools across the region. It began at 9 a.m. at the Guadalupe and Lilia Martinez Fine Arts Center Theatre at Laredo College, culminating in a showdown by noon.

Alejandro reflected on how much he has grown since his national debut last year. He tied for 60th among 245 competitors in

Bees continues on A3

CITY

City's 270th birthday celebration set for May 17

Laredo to feature downtown bash with cake, mariachi and a call for citywide support

By David Gomez Jr. LAREDO MORNING TIMES

Laredo's 270th birthday celebration is set to kick off on May 17.

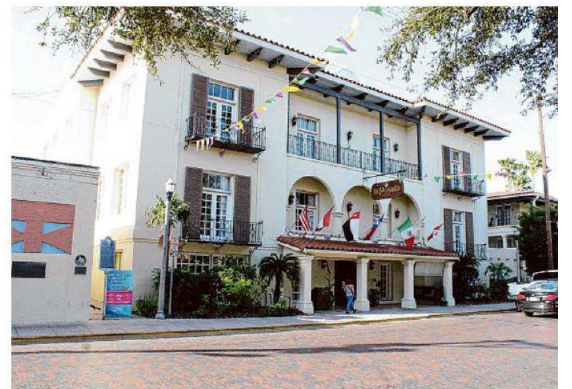
It is rare for a city in the United States to be older than the nation itself, but Laredo is one of them. Founded in 1755, the Laredo Heritage Foundation plans to celebrate the city's birthday downtown with hopes of making it bigger than last year's event.

Andrea Ordonez, Webb County Heritage Foundation member and Republic of the Rio Grande Museum manager, will announce the final details of the birthday celebration soon, but for now, she hopes it will be as big as last year's event.

The foundation is coordinating with the city of Laredo's Convention and Visitors Bureau, Parks and Recreation Department, and The Outlet Shoppes at Laredo.

"We're probably going to add more later, but for now, this is who we have," Ordonez said. "We're

City continues on A3



David Gomez Jr./Laredo Morning Times

Photo of La Posada Hotel on March 18, 2025 in downtown Laredo.

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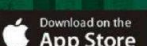
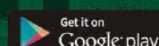
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DAILY ROUNDUP

AROUND THE WORLD



Doug Ford, Premier of Ontario, left and Prime Minister Mark Carney arrives to take part in the First Minister Meeting at the National War Museum in Ottawa on Friday, March 21, 2025.

Canadian PM Carney, opponent kick off their election campaigns

By Rob Gillies
ASSOCIATED PRESS

TORONTO — New Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney and his Conservative opponent kicked off their election campaigns Sunday against the backdrop of a trade war and annexation threats from U.S. President Donald Trump.

Carney announced there will be a five-week election campaign before the vote on April 28.

The governing Liberals had appeared poised for a historic election defeat this year until Trump declared a trade war. Trump has repeatedly said that Canada should become the 51st U.S. state and he acknowledged Friday that he has upended Canadian politics.

Trump's almost daily attacks on Canada's sovereignty have infuriated Canadians and

led to a surge in Canadian nationalism that has bolstered Liberal poll numbers.

The governing Liberals had appeared poised for a historic election defeat this year until Trump declared a trade war. Carney has said the government in a time of crisis needs a strong and clear mandate.

"The next election will be one of the most consequential in our lifetimes," he posted on social media overnight.

The election campaign for 343 seats or districts in the House of Commons will last 37 days. While other parties are running, the Liberals and the Conservatives are the only two that have a chance to form government. The party that commands a majority in Parliament, either alone or with the support of another party, will form the next government and its leader will be prime minister.

Carney replaced Justin Trudeau, who announced his resignation in January, but remained in power until the Liberal Party elected a new leader on March 9 following a leadership race by the governing party.

The opposition Conservatives hoped to make the election about Trudeau, whose popularity declined as food and housing prices rose and immigration surged. But after decades of bilateral stability, the vote is now expected to focus on who is best equipped to deal with Trump.

Trump put 25% tariffs on Canada's steel and aluminum and is threatening sweeping tariffs on all Canadian products — as well as all of America's trading partners — on April 2.

Pierre Poilievre, the leader of the Conservatives, is Carney's main challenger. The

party and Poilievre were heading for a huge victory in Canada's federal election this year until Trump's near-daily trade and annexation threats derailed them.

Poilievre said he will stand up to Trump but Alberta Premier Danielle Smith, a conservative ally, said in an interview Poilievre would be "very much in sync" with the "new direction in America."

"I will insist the president recognizes the independence and sovereignty of Canada. I will insist he stops tariffing our nation," Poilievre said as he launched his campaign.

Poilievre said he doesn't respect "the treatment that he has meted out to our country."

"I know a lot of people are worried, angry and anxious. And with good reason as a result of the president's unacceptable threats against our country," he said.

WORLD

Expelled ambassador to wear sanction as 'badge of dignity'

CAPE TOWN, South Africa — The South African ambassador who was expelled from the United States and declared persona non grata by the Trump administration was welcomed home at an airport Sunday by hundreds of supporters who sang songs praising him.

Crowds at Cape Town International Airport surrounded Ebrahim Rasool and his wife Rosieda as they emerged in the arrivals terminal in their hometown, and they needed a police escort to help them navigate their way through the building.

"A declaration of persona non grata is meant to humiliate you," Rasool told the supporters as he addressed them with a megaphone. "But when you return to crowds like this, and with warmth ... like this, then I will wear my persona non grata as a badge of dignity."

"It was not our choice to come home, but we come home with no regrets."

Rasool was expelled for comments he made on a webinar that included him saying that the Make America Great Again movement was partly a response to "a supremacist instinct."

Rasool said on his return home it was important for South Africa to fix its relationship with the U.S. after President Donald Trump punished the country and accused it of taking an anti-American stance even before the decision to expel him.

The U.S. president issued an



Nardus Engelbrecht/Associated Press

Expelled South Africa Ambassador Ebrahim Rasool speaks to journalist following his arrival, at Cape Town International Airport in Cape Town, South Africa, Sunday, March 23, 2025.

executive order last month cutting all funding to South Africa, alleging its government is supporting the Palestinian militant group Hamas and Iran, and pursuing anti-white policies at home.

"We don't come here to say we are anti-American," Rasool said to the crowd. "We are not here to call on you to throw away our interests with the United States."

They were the ex-ambassador's first public comments since the Trump administration declared him persona non grata over a week ago, removed his diplomatic immunities and privileges, and gave him until this Friday to leave the U.S.

It is highly unusual for the U.S. to expel a foreign ambassador.

Rasool stands by the comments cited by Rubio

Rasool was declared persona non grata by U.S. Secretary of

State Marco Rubio in a post on X on March 14. Rubio said Rasool was a "race-baiting politician" who hates the U.S. and Trump.

Although Rubio didn't directly cite a reason, his post linked to a story by the conservative Breitbart news site that reported on a talk Rasool gave on a webinar organized by a South African think tank. In his talk, Rasool spoke in academic language of the Trump administration's crackdowns on diversity and equity programs and immigration and mentioned the possibility of a U.S. where white people soon would no longer be in the majority.

"The supremacist assault on incumbency, we see it in the domestic politics of the U.S.A., the MAGA movement, the Make America Great Again movement, as a response not simply to a supremacist instinct, but to very clear data that shows great demographic shifts in the U.S.A.

in which the voting electorate in the U.S.A. is projected to become 48% white," Rasool said in the talk.

On Sunday, he said he stood by those comments, and characterized them as merely alerting intellectuals and political leaders in South Africa that the U.S. and its politics had changed.

"It is not the U.S. of Obama, it is not the U.S. of Clinton, it is a different U.S. and therefore our language must change," Rasool said. "I would stand by my analysis because we were analyzing a political phenomenon, not a personality, not a nation, and not even a government."

Pressure over genocide case against Israel

He also said that South Africa would resist pressure from the U.S. — and anyone else — to drop its case at the International Court of Justice accusing Israel of genocide against Palestinians in Gaza. The Trump administration has cited that case against U.S. ally Israel as one of the reasons it alleges South Africa is anti-American.

The Breitbart story Rubio cited when announcing Rasool's expulsion was written by South African-born senior editor-at-large Joel Pollak, who is Jewish and an ally of the Trump administration.

Pollak is also a contender to be the new U.S. ambassador to South Africa, according to South African media.

Some of the supporters welcoming Rasool, who is Muslim, home to Cape Town waved Palestinian flags and chanted "free Palestine."

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TODAY IN HISTORY

Today is Monday **March 24** the 83rd day of 2025. There are 282 days left in the year.

Today in history:

On **March 24, 1989**, the supertanker Exxon Valdez (vahl-DEEZ') ran aground on a reef in Alaska's Prince William Sound and began leaking an estimated 11 million gallons of crude oil.

Also on this date:

In **1882**, German scientist Robert Koch announced in Berlin that he discovered the bacillus responsible for tuberculosis.

In **1921**, the Women's Olympiad, the first international women's sporting event, began in Monte Carlo, Monaco.

In **1980**, Catholic Archbishop Oscar Arnulfo Romero of El Salvador was shot to death by a sniper as he celebrated Mass in San Salvador.

In **1999**, NATO launched airstrikes against Yugoslavia, marking the first time in its 50-year existence that it attacked a sovereign country.

In **2015**, Germanwings Flight 9525, an Airbus A320, crashed into the French Alps, killing all 150 people on board; investigators said the jetliner was deliberately downed by the 27-year-old co-pilot, Andreas Lubitz.

In **2016**, a U.N. war crimes court convicted former Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadžić of genocide and nine other charges for orchestrating a campaign of terror that left 100,000 people dead during the 1992-95 war in Bosnia; Karadžić received a sentence of 40 years in prison, later increased to life.

Today's Birthdays: Chef and TV presenter Mary Berry is 90. Musician Carol Kaye is 90. Fashion and costume designer Bob Mackie is 86. Singer Nick Lowe is 76. Golf Hall of Famer Pat Bradley is 74. Fashion designer Tommy Hilfger is 74. Actor Kelly LeBrock is 65. TV personality Star Jones is 63. Actor Lara Flynn Boyle is 55. Actor Jim Parsons is 52. Actor Alyson Hannigan is 51. Football Hall of Famer Peyton Manning is 49. Actor Jessica Chastain is 48. Basketball Hall of Famer Chris Bosh is 41. Dancer Val Chmerkovskiy is 39.

Hey, LMT

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OUR MASTHEAD

The Laredo Morning Times masthead topped with the seven flags logo is symbolic of Laredo's historic link with seven countries -- that of France, 1685-1690; Spain, 1519-1685, 1690-1821; Mexico, 1821-1836; Republic of the Rio Grande, January 1840-late fall 1840; Republic of Texas, 1836-1845; Confederacy, 1861-1865; and United States, 1845-1861, 1865-present.



COLD

From page A1

possibility of unwanted attention, including national attention.

Alaniz said the DNA evidence provided prosecutors with what they needed to formally charge Sergio Mendez, 42. He added that this marked the official start of the case against Mendez for the murder of Escamilla. He said advancements in technology played a role in reopening the case.

Escamilla's body was discovered April 20, 2016, at Seven Flags Park un-



David Gomez Jr./Laredo Morning Times

Webb County District Attorney Isidro Alaniz shake the hand of Janette Escamilla Jaramillo's mother on March 14, 2025, at the Laredo Police Department.

derneath a skate ramp near West Guerrero Street and McDonell Avenue. She was believed to have

been strangled.

Surveillance video taken from a business in the 4500 block of San Bernar-

do Avenue at about 12:30 a.m. showed Escamilla, 33, who had just left work around midnight, walking with an unidentified suspect. However, law enforcement was unable to identify a suspect in the death until Friday.

Alaniz said cold cases like this are complex and challenging, but Mendez is presumed innocent until proven guilty. He added that the goal of the DA's office is to bring justice to Escamilla's family.

Alaniz also said Webb County doesn't see too many cold cases, but that doesn't mean there aren't any. He mentioned that

the city and county share the burden of unresolved cases, and Rodriguez wants to reassure families with cold cases that authorities are still working on them.

"We're still working, and we're not giving up," Rodriguez said. "This doesn't necessarily have to be a homicide — for cases involving sexual assault, we're still moving forward and trying to bring justice to those victims."

Rodriguez said cases like this are rare, and he is glad they are few and far between. However, he wants to send a clear message to the community

that victims should continue to report crimes and bystanders should report any unusual activity so there is a record on file if a situation escalates.

Alaniz has been the Webb County—Zapata District Attorney since 2009, and according to his profile on the Webb County website, he has modernized the DA's office, improved prosecution techniques and skills, increased legal protections for victims of domestic violence and child abuse, and successfully prosecuted organized financial crimes and money laundering cases.

BEES

From page A1

Washington — an experience that shaped both his mindset and preparation.

"I learned from my last trip to Washington not to waste too much time," Alejandro said. "Whenever you have time, take advantage of it. Also, just be more determined and make a commitment. Last year, I was very committed, but not as committed as this year. This year, I was pushing for it because I really wanted to make it to Washington and hopefully do excellently over there."

Alejandro's preparation this season was intense, involving hours of study over school breaks and weekends.

"I used my winter break and spring break just studying, studying, studying — using all the time I had," he said.

Alejandro's mother, Florinda Cuellar, was all smiles in the audience, brimming with pride over her son's achievement. She said her son's success came down to his grit and dedication — traits he has embod-



Jose De La Rosa/Laredo Morning Times

The 2025 Scripps Regional Spelling Bee is held Saturday, March 22, 2025, at the Guadalupe and Lilia Martinez Fine Arts Center Theater at Laredo College. Pictured is first-placer winner Alejandro Martinez.

ied since his very first spelling bee as a second grader, when he misspelled the word "bacon."

"It's a lot of work, a lot of time and a lot of deter-

mination and dedication," Cuellar said. "It becomes an extra academic sport you join. It's not physical — it's mental, and it takes a lot."

Cuellar noted how

special this win was, not only because of Alejandro's performance on the regional stage but also because it comes in the 100th year of the Scripps National Spell-

ing Bee, where he'll meet and interact with spellers and champions from previous editions.

In addition to his trophy and an all-expenses-paid trip to Washington, along with several other prizes, Alejandro received a gift certificate from LULAC Council #7 and a subscription to Encyclopedia Britannica Online. Other sponsors included Gamez Law Firm, PNC Bank, McDonald's of Laredo, Laredo College and Stat Specialty Hospital.

The competition's second-place winner was Victoria Salazar, a seventh grader at Louis J. Christen Middle School. Third and fourth places went to Diego Covarrubias, a sixth grader at United Day School, and Mylee Cox, a fifth grader at Charles Borchers Elementary School, respectively.

As he looks forward to this year's national competition, Alejandro offered a bit of wisdom for aspiring spellers in the region as a departing competitor.

"Do not get discouraged," Alejandro said. "When you first start out, you're not expected to win first place right

away. It takes time. It takes steps. You will hear 'ding, ding, ding' over and over until, finally, one day or one year, you achieve what you wanted to achieve."

For his mother, Alejandro's triumph serves as a testament to his perseverance and an inspiration to others.

"He wants to inspire others by showing that if you're dedicated, take time and are passionate about something — whatever it is — you can persevere in it," Cuellar said. "He's doing it again by going back-to-back. All of this is special and of course, I'm very proud of him."

With this latest victory, Alejandro sets his sights on the 2025 Scripps National Spelling Bee, which will be held May 27-29 in Washington, D.C. There, he hopes to improve upon last year's performance with newfound focus and determination.

Regardless of the outcome, Alejandro's journey has already cemented his legacy in the Laredo spelling bee community, serving as a model for young spellers and a source of pride for Laredoans.

CITY

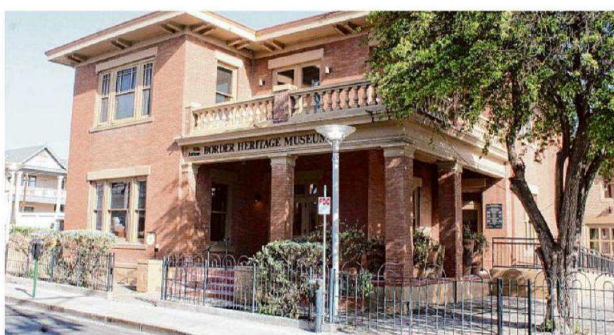
From page A1

actually asking businesses that are not just downtown this year but in other parts of the city too because we want everyone to join in the celebration."

Last year, roughly 27 organizations and businesses participated in the event and want to recreate it again this year. As for details, the event will kick off at 10 a.m. at San Agustín Plaza.

"The celebration will start at 10 in the morning where we will be cutting a cake and have mariachi, and we're going to have a welcome and all that good stuff," Ordonez said. "That's what we have planned for right now, but I am hoping we have further information in the next several weeks."

Ordonez does not expect it to keep people away from the free admission to



David Gomez Jr./Laredo Morning Times

Photo of the Webb County Border Heritage Museum on March 18, 2025 in downtown Laredo.


the Republic of the Rio Grande Museum, and she hopes turnout is as packed this year as it was in 2024.

"Last year we had a lot of people at the museum," Ordonez said. "I don't think we ever had that many people, and we had them on the day of the birthday celebration. I hope people come out again and support us."

Something Ordonez hopes to prevent this year is restaurants running out

of food or tableware, as some downtown eateries did last year. According to Ordonez, one restaurant became so overwhelmed with customers that it had to close earlier than expected after running out of food.

Also in the works is the 175th anniversary celebration of the Laredo Police Department's founding, which is expected to occupy most of the Webb County Heritage Museum and take place on April 11.



Notice of Destruction of Special Education Records 2025

Records for students who received Special Education services 2017-2018 school year will be destroyed in accordance with state law unless a parent/guardian or eligible (adult) student notifies the school district otherwise by July 25, 2025.

Attention Parents/Guardians, Former Students, Eligible (Adults) Students:

Special Education Records which have been collected by the Laredo Independent School District (LISD) related to the identification, evaluation, educational placement, or the prevention of Special Education in the district, must be maintained under state and federal laws for a period of seven years after Special Education services end when the student no longer is eligible for services, graduates, completes his or her educational program at age 22, or moves from the district. This notification is to inform parent/guardian and former students of LISD's intent to destroy the Special Education records of students who received Special Education services from 2017-2018 school year. These records will be destroyed in accordance with the state law unless the parent/guardian or eligible (adult) student notifies the school district otherwise.

After seven years, the records are no longer useful to the district. The parent/guardian or eligible (adult) student may request a copy of the records in writing or in person at the following address:

Laredo Independent School District Department of Special Education
2400 San Bernardo Ave. 2nd Floor
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Request for copies must be received by Friday, May 30, 2025. For more information, call (956)273-1513, (956)273-1514 or (956) 273-1523.

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Mexican citizen indicted for smuggling cocaine

By Cesar G. Rodriguez
LAREDO MORNING TIMES

A Mexican citizen who tried smuggling over \$498,000 in cocaine has been indicted in a Laredo federal court, according to authorities.

On March 4, a grand jury charged Mauricio Sebastian Valdez-Rivas with conspiracy to import cocaine and importation of

cocaine. He has pleaded not guilty to the allegations.

If convicted, Valdez-Rivas could face a mandatory minimum of 10 years and up to life in federal prison as well as up to \$10 million in fines.

Authorities had also arrested his son-in-law Manuel Alejandro Lopez-Martinez. His case was dismissed on March 5.



Mauricio Sebastian Valdez-Rivas

2020 Honda CR-V bearing Nuevo Leon license plates.

The case dates back to Feb. 7, when Valdez-Rivas and Lopez-Martinez arrived at the Juarez-Lincoln International Bridge in a

2020 Honda CR-V bearing Nuevo Leon license plates.

Authorities detected anomalies within the front bumper of the vehicle during a pre-primary X-ray scan, according to an arrest affidavit.

U.S. Customs and Border Protection officers referred the vehicle to secondary inspection, where both claimed they were traveling from Monterrey, Nuevo Leon, Mexico to San Antonio.

Valdez-Rivas claimed ownership of the vehicle and provided CBP officers with the "Tarjeta de Circulacion" with his name on it as proof of ownership, authorities said.

During the inspection, CBP officers discovered a trap door behind the front license plate of the vehicle. CBP officers then extracted 15 bundles of cocaine from the compartment.

The bundles weighed approximately 37 pounds and had an estimated street value of \$498,940, according to CBP.

Homeland Security Investigations special agents and task force officers took over the case. Valdez-Rivas opted not to provide a statement.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Andrew P. Hakala-Finch is prosecuting the case.

CRIME BRIEFS

Woman arrested in relation to water pump, solar lamp theft

A woman has been arrested in relation to the theft of a water pump and a solar lamp in Rio Bravo, according to the Webb County Sheriff's Office.

Deputies responded to a burglary of a habitation report at about 7 p.m. Jan. 25 in the 1500 block of Centeno Lane in Rio Bravo.



Brenda Gualito Lopez

The caller stated that a male and a female tried stealing a water pump worth about \$4,000 and stole a solar lamp worth about \$50, according to court documents. The water pump was left behind by the fence line.

Authorities would identify the suspects as John Henry

John Henry Romero, 34, and Brenda Gualito Lopez, 38. Romero was detained near the 1400 block of Orquidia Lane. He was arrested at the scene on charges of theft, a Class A misdemeanor, and burglary of habitation, a second degree felony.



John Henry Romero

Lopez could not be located. On March 6, Lopez was located and served with warrants on

the same charges as Romero.

Border Patrol agents apprehend 6 migrants, seize handgun

U.S. Border Patrol agents apprehended six migrants at the Interstate 35 checkpoint, authorities said Wednesday.

Laredo North agents arrested the migrants after a K-9 unit alerted to possible contraband within a tractor-trailer.

Authorities then discovered the migrants in the cab of the tractor. Agents also seized a handgun found in a blue backpack.

The driver is expected to face human smuggling charges.

The people who were in the country illegally will be charged with improper entry by a migrant into the United States.

Border Patrol encourages the community to report suspicious activity by calling 1-800-343-1994.

- By Cesar G. Rodriguez

Laredo retirees donate books to Freedom Elementary students

COURTESY OF UISD

About 650 students from Freedom Elementary each received a free book, thanks to the generous donation from the Laredo Area Retired School Employees Association.

LARSEA members transformed the school's library into a veritable book fest by laying out hundreds of books — ranging from Dr. Seuss books to books about animals and the environment — on the tables grouped by grade.

As students entered the library on March 19, their eyes widened with surprise as they approached the carefully arranged display.

"Can I pick a book just for me?" softly whispered a first-grader. A fourth-grader showed off his book about football to his

impressed friends. "I got a chapter book!" exclaimed another student.

The LARSEA chapter has collected 3,000 books since January. The books, which are new or gently used, go to schools throughout the community and places like Casa Misericordia, Bethany House, the Children's Advocacy Center and Sacred Heart Children's Home.

There are 300 members in the Laredo chapter, and they report their community hours to the state, which has determined that their volunteer efforts are worth in the millions of dollars. If you are interested in donating books to LARSEA or joining the organization, please call 956-251-7585.

Aaron Aguilar, a third-grader, said he was thankful to LARSEA and then showed off his selec-



Courtesy/UISD

The Laredo Area Retired School Employees Association donated books to Freedom Elementary.

tion: Fox in Socks by Dr. Seuss.

"This is my favorite book," Aaron said. "I feel

that the students will be happy with what they got and they will be happy for the rest of their third

grade and probably more," he added.

He loves to read books about all different sub-

jects, especially snakes. He said that his friends picked books about dinosaurs and Dog Man.

Laura Nanez, immediate past president of the Laredo Chapter and District 1 Foundation Liaison, said the members of the organization loved watching the children's faces light up as they held their books. The effort is good for the retired educators, too.

"As retired teachers, we want to share the love of reading. As a former language arts teacher at Cigarroa, I instilled the love of reading in my students," Nanez said, adding the organization gives out scholarships. "Some of these students might not have a book at home.

"Even though we are retired, we have a lot to contribute to the community."

TAMIU's Dr. Anyanwu honored in College Station with CATE award

COURTESY OF TAMIU

A Texas A&M International University faculty member's exemplary and innovative work prompted his selection as one of only three statewide recipients of the Chancellor's Academy of Teacher Educators Award of The Texas A&M University System.

Dr. Kele Anyanwu — associate professor of Educational Programs, College of Education — was notified of his selection by TAMIU provost and vice president for Academic Affairs, Dr. Claudia San Miguel.

The award recognizes and honors both individuals and university teams who are making noteworthy and exemplary contributions to quality, innovation and continuous improvement in teacher preparation.

Anyanwu was presented with his award by Chancellor John Sharp and members of the A&M System Board of Regents at the Chancellor's Century Council 2025 Annual Meeting at the George H.W. Bush Presidential Library and Museum in College Station last week.

San Miguel said Anyanwu's contributions to teacher preparation at TAMIU have been impressive.

"Dr. Anyanwu's impressive work with Mixed Reality Simulation replicates real-world



Courtesy/TAMIU

TAMIU professor Dr. Kele Anyanwu was named one of only three statewide recipients of the Chancellor's Academy of Teacher Educators Award of The Texas A&M University System.

classroom challenges that allow the professor to take corrective action in real time to enhance students' learning and preparedness," San Miguel observed. "This is a bold and innovative approach with measurable impact that truly affirms his CATE Award selection.

Dr. James O'Meara, dean of TAMIU's College of Education, concurred. "Dr. Anyanwu's innovative approach provides a safe space for rehearsing teaching practices and is making a real difference. We're tremendously proud of him and the impact he is having," O'Meara said.

Anyanwu joined TAMIU in 2023. He holds his Ed.D. in Curriculum and Instruction, Instructional Technology, and an M.S. in Instructional Technology, from the University of Houston. He earned a B.Sc. in chemistry/microbiology from the University of Nigeria.

Cameras placed at Cheyenne Park

By Maria Ruiz
LAREDO MORNING TIMES

The Laredo Auto Theft Task Force deployed a mobile surveillance camera this week focused on Cheyenne Park.

The surveillance was deployed just a week after a fatal shooting following a standoff in the 3900 block of Bannock Lane. Fernando Machado, 27, allegedly fired more than 100 gunshots in a "premeditated" attack at the residence, killing his ex-girlfriend Frida Castillo, 20, and critically injuring her mother

and brother.

The cameras, according to Laredo Police Department investigator and public information officer Joe Baeza, were placed after residents raised concerns about suspicious behavior in the area.

"Some of the residents were concerned over the reported activities after dark," he said.

Baeza said the cameras will remain in place as needed, noting that surveillance equipment like this is "all over the place."

"They'll assess as needed," he said.

Laredo holds MMR vaccine event

COURTESY OF THE LAREDO PUBLIC HEALTH DEPARTMENT

The city of Laredo Public Health Department held a precautionary MMR vaccination event, where unvaccinated community members took proactive steps in protecting themselves and others from preventable diseases.

The city of Laredo sponsored the event, highlighting its adherence to public health and the well-being of its residents.

"The realization of this event reflects our ongoing dedication of working to protect Laredo from preventable diseases," the city

of Laredo said in a statement.

The event provided MMR vaccines to eligible individuals, reinforcing the community's commitment to stopping the spread of illness, specifically measles, mumps and rubella.

While Laredo currently has no reported cases of measles, Laredo Public Health said its epidemiology and immunizations teams remain prepared to stop potential outbreaks and organized the initiative as a preventive measure to keep the community safe and ensure residents have access to essential immunizations.

UISD has 203 students receive College Board National Recognition

COURTESY OF UISD

A total of 203 United ISD high school students earned the coveted 2024-25 award from the National Recognition Program of the College Board.

The program identifies academically outstanding Hispanic/Latino, African American/Black, first-generation or indigenous high school students.

To be eligible for this award, students must meet the following requirements:

Juniors

- **Assessment Criteria** — Students must meet one of the following requirements: Must be in the top 10% among PSAT 10 and PSAT/NMSQT test takers in 11th grade in their state for their award program OR have received a 3+ score on at least 2 distinct AP Exams by the end of 10th grade.

- **GPA Criteria:** Students must have a 3.3 (87-89%) GPA or higher.

- **Program Criteria:** Students who identify as African American or Black, Hispanic American or Latino, Indigenous, First-Generation, or attend school in a rural or small town.

Sophomores

- **Assessment Criteria** — Students must meet one of the following requirements: Must be in the top 10% among PSAT 10 and PSAT/NMSQT test takers in their state for their award program OR have received a 3+ score on at least 2 distinct AP Exams in 8th or 9th grade.

- **GPA Criteria:** Students must have a 3.3 (87-89%) GPA or higher.

- **Program Criteria:** Students who identify as African American or Black, Hispanic American or Latino, Indigenous, First-Generation, or attend school in a rural or small town.

The College Board does not accept modifications to these requirements.

“On behalf of our Board of Trustees, I would like to congratulate these exceptional high school students for going above and beyond their academic pursuits,” said United ISD Director of Advanced Academics Mario Rosales. “May they continue to be educational role models for their peers and we wish them continued success in the future.”

This is the fifth year of the National Recognition Programs. More than 180,000 students from all 50 states were eligible to apply for the College Board National Recognition Programs, which grant students with academic honors that can be included on college and scholarship applications. Colleges and scholarship

programs identify students awarded National African American, Hispanic, Indigenous, first-generation, and/or Rural/Small Town Recognition through College Board’s Student Search Service.

“The National Recognition Programs were created to take a tangible step toward addressing the systemic barriers to higher education faced by underrepresented students,” Arielle Ford, Director, Strategic Engagement and Programs, said during her Forum presentation.

The origin of the recognition programs is the National Hispanic Recognition Program, which the College Board launched 40 years ago to increase access to higher education for academically competitive Latino students by awarding them academic honors that can be included on college and scholarship applications. Research showed that awarded students who also opted into Student Search Service had improved college enrollment and received additional funding.

The first program’s success led the College Board to expand the Recognition Programs in 2019 to include African American Recognition, Indigenous Recognition, and Rural/Small Town Recognition. Three cohorts have since received honors from the expanded programs. This year, 90,000 students earned honors from the National Recognition Programs.

“This work is about building connections between students and higher ed institutions,” Ford said. “It’s also about growing awareness and exposing students to schools that they may not have otherwise been aware of. We want these programs to create pathways to college for underrepresented students and we want awardees to explore a diverse set of college options.”

In addition to receiving academic honors that can be included in college and scholarship applications, awardees will also receive personalized outreach from colleges if they opt into Student Search. Search allows institutions to find awardees and conduct intentional, tailored outreach to students, encouraging them to apply to colleges and specific scholarships based on their Recognition Program honor. Students can also receive information about scholarships they qualify for and receive invitations to pre-college recruitment events.

The following students received the NRP award:



United ISD

United ISD celebrates 203 high school students awarded the 2024-25 College Board National Recognition for academic excellence.



United ISD

United ISD celebrates 203 high school students awarded the 2024-25 College Board National Recognition for academic excellence.



United ISD

United ISD celebrates 203 high school students awarded the 2024-25 College Board National Recognition for academic excellence.



United ISD

United ISD celebrates 203 high school students awarded the 2024-25 College Board National Recognition for academic excellence.

Alexander High School (81)

- Diego Armenta
- Natalia Arreazola
- Christopher Brown
- Marisa Buenrostro
- Sofia Buitron
- Ameli Cantu
- Carolina Cantu
- Mia Castaneda
- Maura Castellanos
- Andrea Castro
- Andrea Cazares
- Santiago Chapa
- Miranda Chavez
- Katia Cisneros

- Jacqueline Costilla
- Alejandro Cruz
- Gustavo Cuellar
- Angelina Cuevas
- Gabrielle Del Angel
- Sophia Duarte
- Alexa Equihua
- Isabella Flores
- Alejandro Galvan
- Tabatta Garcia
- Cordelia Garcia
- Emilio Garcia
- Fernanda Garza
- Johan Gonzalez
- Nerissa Gonzalez
- Ofelia Gonzalez

- Regina Gonzalez-Parra
- Regina Gutierrez-Verboonen
- Angela Guzman
- Kevin Hinojosa
- Arad Inurreta
- Alan Jackson
- Emily Jolomna
- Chloe Kim
- Alexandra Leal
- Wei Liang
- Stephanie Lozano
- Jesus Marina
- Robert Martinez
- Maria Martinez
- Mauricio Martinez

- Ximena Martinez
- Valeria Minarro
- Ashley Nieto
- Arthur Nolen
- Oded Oviedo-Villarreal
- Alondra Paez
- Victor Pescador
- Judith Puig
- Anastasia Quach
- Isabella Ramirez
- Vivian Ramirez
- Juan Ramirez
- Destiny Rodriguez
- Bianca Salazar
- Dylan Salinas
- Alejandra Samano
- Alexia Sanchez
- Nicolas Sanchez
- Niurka Sandoval
- Julietta Santoyo
- Briseis Saucedo
- Larissa Silva Brandao
- Hailey Solano
- Ivanya Soto
- Emiliano Torres
- Mia Trevino
- Alejandro Valdez
- Jacqueline Varela
- Paloma Vazquez
- Sergio Vela
- Saul Vielma
- Arturo Villarreal
- Charles Yelderman
- Christina Zertuche
- Alina Zhou
- Mateo Zuniga

L.B. Johnson High School (13)

- Andrea Benavides
- Samuel Charles
- Jamie Coss
- Alejandro Diaz
- Valeria Fierro
- Carlos Mendoza
- Jessenia Mota
- Osvaldo Pedroza
- Adriana Perez
- Mareva Reyna
- Fiorella Samaniego
- Rolando Vitela
- Abdiel Zapata

United High School (84)

- Alexandra Acevedo
- Athena Aguilera
- Delilah Aguirre
- Andrea Alcaraz
- Jonathan Alviar
- Erika Avila
- Samantha Baker
- Diego Barbarena
- Lucy Batey
- Ian Batres
- Julian Benavides
- Derrick Caballero
- Emmanuel Caracheo
- Leticia Cardenas
- Sophia Castaneda
- Nicolas Castellanos-Brito
- Jena Castillo
- Ashley Castillo
- Miguel Castillo
- Fabiola Cavazos
- Karina Ceballos
- Keira Cedillo
- Gabriela Colon
- Eliborio Cortez
- Olivia Costabella
- Henry Dang
- Bobbi Daniels
- Isabella De La Garza
- Sayuri Duron
- Mariam Ezquivel
- Mario Flores
- Domingo Flores
- Abygail Galindo
- Aylin Garcia
- Andrew Garza
- Rodrigo Garza
- Damian Garza
- Jorge Gomez
- Marcus Gonzalez
- Emiliano Gonzalez

Board continues on A6



Notificación de Child Find

¿Conoce usted a un niño o un estudiante entre las edades de 0-21 años que demuestra retraso de desarrollo, de aprendizaje, problemas de comportamiento o problemas médicos?

Si usted sospecha discapacidad, puede llamar para más información o hacer una referencia a Child Find a los teléfonos (956) 273-1505 o (956) 273-1500.

**Laredo Independent School District
Department of Special Education Services
2400 San Bernardo Ave. 2nd Floor
Laredo, Texas 78040**

El Distrito Escolar Independiente de Laredo por ley prohíbe la discriminación en función de raza, color de la piel, ciudadanía, discapacidades, religión o edad en programas



Notice of Child Find

Do you know a child or a student between the ages of 0-21 years old who shows signs of developmental delay, learning, behavioral or medical problems?

Do you suspect a disability?

For more information or to make a referral to Child Find, call (956) 273-1505 or (956) 273-1500

**Laredo Independent School District
Department of Special Education Services
2400 San Bernardo Ave. 2nd Floor
Laredo, Texas 78040**

It is the policy of the Laredo Independent School District not to discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, gender, religion, limited English proficiency, or handicapping condition in its programs.

Nu metal, moshing coming to downtown Laredo event

By Maria Ruiz
LAREDO MORNING TIMES

Calling all Laredo head-bangers: The sounds of nu metal and dad rock are making a triumphant return to the downtown area this April, with post-1990s alternative rock music taking over the House of Whiskey.

San Antonio-based Puro Emo Presents is heading back to the Gateway City to rewind the clock and deliver the classic tunes that defined the subgenre of heavy metal's fusion with alternative rock.

Leading the charge is Emo Eric, the headlining DJ, who will spin tracks from genre pioneers like Korn, as well as hits from Breaking Benjamin, System of a Down, Slipknot, Three Days Grace and more.

The event is scheduled for April 5, with music kicking off at 10 p.m. and running until 2 a.m. It promises a night of thrashing, moshing and circle pits as fans celebrate the golden age of metal.

Rock enthusiasts can join the action for a cover charge of \$5 for those 21 and older or \$7 for minors.



The House of Whiskey is located at 920 Iturbide St. in Laredo, Texas.

Courtesy/House of Whiskey

A new museum tells stories of Medal of Honor recipients

By Jamie Stengle
ASSOCIATED PRESS

ARLINGTON, Texas — A new museum devoted to telling the stories of those who have received the nation's highest military honor is opening this coming week in Texas.

The National Medal of Honor Museum is set to open Tuesday in Arlington, just west of Dallas. It highlights the lives and service of Medal of Honor recipients from the Civil War to the global war on terrorism. Over 3,500 people have received the Medal of Honor, which is awarded by Congress for risking one's life in combat beyond the call of duty.

Jack Jacobs, a retired U.S. Army colonel who was awarded the Medal of Honor for his actions during the Vietnam War, said he wants museum visitors



Tony Gutierrez/Associated Press

Jack Jacobs, a retired U.S. Army colonel who was awarded the Medal of Honor for his actions during the Vietnam War, poses for a photo in front of one of his quotes, seen on the top left rear of the wall, on display at the National Medal of Honor Museum in Arlington, Texas, Thursday, March 13, 2025.

to realize the recipients aren't "spectacular supermen," but regular people who "embody the kinds of values that are really important."

"Really grand things,

not just in combat, but in everyday life ... are all accomplished by ordinary people who come to the conclusion that something has to be done and they are going to do it," Ja-

cobs said.

When his unit was ambushed by the Viet Cong on March 9, 1968, Jacobs took charge after his commander was seriously wounded. Despite being

wounded in the head by shrapnel and bleeding heavily, Jacobs reorganized the company and repeatedly ran through enemy fire to rescue the wounded, saving the lives of a U.S. adviser and 13 soldiers.

Jacobs, now 79, said he lost a lot of friends in the battle.

"You really do wear the award for all of the people who can't wear the award," he said.

The museum's focus is on telling the life stories of the recipients, said Alexandra Rhue, the museum's senior vice president of engagement. "Here you met the people first and then you learn what they did," Rhue said.

The recipients featured in the museum include those from various branches of the military, conflicts and geographic locations, as well as differ-

ent ethnicities and races.

Chris Cassidy, the museum's president and CEO, said he hopes the exhibits inspire visitors.

"Everybody needs courage in some form or fashion," he said. "So that's our aim: to inspire people through the stories of Medal of Honor actions, to bring a little courage into your own life."

Several of the recipients, including Jacobs, appear in videos in an exhibit where their images answer visitors' questions. There are over 60 recipients who are still living.

A celebration Saturday ahead of the opening will feature musical performances, fireworks and a drone show.

The museum is nestled amongst Globe Life Field, where the Texas Rangers play, and AT&T Stadium, home of the Dallas Cowboys.

At least 7 killed in Ukraine after Moscow launches drone attack

By Samya Kullab
ASSOCIATED PRESS

KYIV, Ukraine — At least seven people were killed after Russia launched a barrage of drones across Ukraine overnight on Sunday, according to local Ukrainian officials and emergency services.

The attacks, including on the capital, Kyiv, came ahead of ceasefire negotiations in Saudi Arabia in which Ukraine and Russia are expected to hold indirect U.S.-mediated talks on Monday to discuss a pause in long-range attacks targeting energy facilities and civilian infrastructure.

The Ukrainian delegation is expected to meet with U.S. officials in Saudi Arabia a day ahead of the indirect talks, Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said. Ukraine is planning to send technical teams to discuss the details of the partial ceasefire.

Speaking on "Fox News Sunday," Trump's special envoy Steve Witkoff said he expected "some real progress" at the talks in Saudi Arabia, "particularly as it affects a Black Sea ceasefire on ships between both countries, and from that you'll naturally gravitate into a full-on shooting ceasefire."

Asked about concerns that Russian President Vladimir Putin may be looking beyond Ukraine and could press further into Europe, even if Russia is awarded territory within Ukraine now, Wit-



Iryna Rybakova/Associated Press

In this photo provided by Ukraine's 93rd Kholodnyi Yar Separate Mechanized Brigade press service, a soldier operates an FPV drone in a shelter in Kramatorsk direction, Donetsk region, Ukraine, Saturday, March 22, 2025.

koff said he has been asked his opinion on what Putin's motives are on a large scale.

"I simply have said that I just don't see that he wants to take all of Europe. This is a much different situation than it was in World War II. In World War II there was no NATO. You have countries that are armed there. I take him at his word in this sense. And I think the Europeans are beginning

to come to that belief, too. But it sort of doesn't matter. That's an academic issue. ... The agenda is stop the killing, stop the carnage, let's end this thing."

Asked whether he was convinced that Putin wanted peace, Witkoff said: "I feel that he wants peace."

Residential buildings hit by debris

Russia launched 147 drones across Ukraine

overnight, according to the Ukrainian Air Force. Ukrainian air defenses shot down 97, and 25 others didn't reach targets due to Ukrainian countermeasures. The attacks struck the Kharkiv, Sumy, Chernihiv, Odesa and Donetsk regions, as well as the capital, Kyiv.

Three people, including a 5-year-old child, were killed and 10 others were injured in a drone attack on Kyiv, the city's military

administration said. Extended sounds of explosions were heard across the Ukrainian capital in the early hours as the air raid blared for over five hours. Russian drones and debris from shot-down drones, which were flying at lower altitudes to evade air defenses, fell on residential buildings.

Residents in Kyiv surveyed the damage done to their homes and neighborhoods on Sunday

morning. Many were disparaging of the upcoming ceasefire talks, pointing to the burned out properties destroyed in the drone attack, saying these were more indicative of Russia's true intentions.

In an old multistory building on Kyiv's left bank that was damaged in the overnight attack, Dmytro Zapadnya, 37, said he had no faith in Russia upholding any ceasefire agreement.

"There is no point in signing anything (with Russians), because it will not be worth the cost of paper where you put this signature. Well, the only thing that is not very pleasant is that now the United States seems to have little understanding of our situation," he said.

Elsewhere, four people were killed in Russian attacks on Ukraine's Donetsk region, regional Gov. Vadym Filashkin said, including three who died in a strike on the frontline town of Dobropillya.

'New solutions are needed'

In a statement on social media, Zelenskyy said attacks such as the one in Kyiv were a daily occurrence for Ukraine.

"This week alone, more than 1,580 guided aerial bombs, almost 1,100 strike drones and 15 missiles of various types were used against our people," he said. "New solutions are needed, with new pressure on Moscow to stop both these strikes and this war."

BOARD

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BUSINESS

China's premier says US relations at 'an important juncture'

BEIJING — China's Premier Li Qiang said Sunday that Beijing and Washington should choose dialogue instead of confrontation, as the two countries are locked in rising friction over trade tariffs and efforts to combat illegal fentanyl trade.

Li was speaking during a meeting with U.S. Senator Steve Daines, a strong supporter of President Donald Trump, who is the first member of Congress to visit Beijing since Trump took office in January. The meeting also involved the leaders of several American businesses, including FedEx Corp. CEO Raj Subramaniam, Boeing Co.'s senior vice president Brendan Nelson, Qualcomm's CEO Cristiano Amon and Pfizer's CEO Albert Bourla.

Li said relations between the countries "have come to an important juncture" and Chinese President Xi Jinping noted the two countries could become partners and friends that contribute to each other's success during a call with Trump in January.

"Our two sides need to choose dialogue over

confrontation, win-win cooperation over zero-sum competition," he said.

China hoped that the U.S. would work together to promote the steady and sustainable development of the China-U.S. relations, he added.

China's official Xinhua news agency reported Li also said there's no winner in a trade war. He said China welcomes foreign companies, including those from the U.S., to share development opportunities in the country. It will work to resolve reasonable demands of businesses and treat domestic and foreign firms equally, the report quoted him saying.

During the first Trump administration, Daines served as a go-between when tariffs were also a major issue. Ahead of the trip to China, his office said he is coordinating closely with the White House and will be "carrying President Trump's America First agenda."

Since he arrived in the Chinese capital on Thursday, he has talked with Chinese Vice Premier He Lifeng to voice Trump's ongoing call for Beijing to stop the flow of



Ng Han Guan/Associated Press

Chinese Premier Li Qiang, right, greets UL Solutions CEO Jennifer Scanlon from a delegation led by U.S. Senator Steve Daines before a meeting held in the Fujian Room at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing, China, Sunday, March 23, 2025.

fentanyl precursors from China. Additionally, he met with Vice Foreign Minister Ma Zhaoxun.

Just months into Trump's second term, relations between the world's two largest economies have deteriorated. Washington slapped 20% tariffs on Chinese imports, with Beijing hitting back with 15% duties

on U.S. farm goods.

Trump is planning to impose "reciprocal" tariffs by increasing U.S. duties to match the tax rates that other countries charge on imports "for purposes of fairness." These reciprocal tariffs are expected to be announced on April 2.

Earlier Sunday, Li said at the China Develop-

ment Forum that his country may see unexpected shocks, mainly from external factors. He said the government, when necessary, will introduce new policies to ensure the local economy runs smoothly. The forum is a government-sponsored event that invites senior officials and business leaders, includ-

ing top executives from outside China.

Facing rising economic fragmentation and instability, Li said it has become even more crucial for every country to open up its markets, calling for entrepreneurs to help maintain economic globalization proactively.

"We are not against competition, but we should advocate for fair competition under internationally recognized rules, rather than zero-sum games or deliberate suppression of vicious competition by other countries," he said.

The U.S. has also criticized China for not doing enough to stop the export of precursor materials for fentanyl, a highly potent opiate blamed for tens of thousands of deaths in the U.S.

Beijing responded with a report detailing its efforts to control the illegal trade in fentanyl, specifically the ingredients for the opioid that are made in China. The report said China is committed to cooperation but opposes the U.S. imposition of unreasonable pressure on China on the pretext of responding to fentanyl-related issues.

2 months in, news industry faces challenges from all directions

By David Bauder
AP MEDIA WRITER

NEW YORK — During the first Trump administration, the biggest concern for many journalists was labels. Would they, or their news outlet, be called "fake news" or an "enemy of the people" by a president and his supporters?

They now face a more assertive President Donald Trump. In two months, a blitz of action by the nation's new administration — Trump, chapter two — has journalists on their heels.

Lawsuits. A newly aggressive Federal Communications Commission. An effort to control the press corps that covers the president, prompting legal action by The Associated Press. A gutted Voice of America. Public data stripped from websites. And attacks, amplified anew.

"It's very clear what's happening. The Trump administration is on a campaign to do everything it can to diminish and obstruct journalism in the United States," said Bill Grueskin, a journalism professor at Columbia University.

"It's really nothing like we saw in 2017," he said. "Not that there weren't efforts to discredit the press, and not that there weren't things that the press did to dis-

credit themselves."

Trump supporters say an overdue course correction is in order

Supporters of the president suggest that an overdue correction is in order to reflect new ways that Americans get information and to counter overreach by reporters. Polls have revealed continued public dissatisfaction with journalists — something that has been bedeviling the industry for years.

Tension between presidents and the Fourth Estate is nothing new — an unsurprising clash between desires to control a message and to ask probing, sometimes impertinent questions. Despite the atmosphere, the Republican president talks to reporters much more often than many predecessors, including Democrat Joe Biden, who rarely gave interviews.

An early signal that times had changed came when the White House invited newcomers to press briefings, including podcasters and friendly media outlets. The AP was blocked from covering pool events in a dispute over Trump's renaming of the Gulf of Mexico, setting off a flurry of First Amendment concerns among press advocates

and leading the administration to assert that the White House, not the press, should determine who questions him.

Two months before the administration took office, former White House press secretary Ari Fleischer, who served under Republican President George W. Bush, had urged that changes be made.

"It's time to bring that (briefing) room in line with how readers and viewers consume the news in 2025," Fleischer said in an interview. "They don't get their news from The Washington Post, The New York Times and the three networks anymore. They get their news from a myriad of sources."

In practice, some newcomers have refreshingly tried to shed light on issues important to conservatives, instead of hostile attempts to play "gotcha" by the mainstream media, Fleischer said. There were also softballs, like when the Ruthless podcast asked press secretary Karoline Leavitt if reporters who questioned border policy were "out of touch." The conservative Real America's Voice network tried to knock Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy off stride by asking why he wasn't wearing a suit in

the Oval Office.

While the White House Correspondents' Association has protested the AP's treatment and efforts to uphold tradition, it has been largely toothless. For more extensive discussions, the president and his team generally favor interviews with outlets that speak to his supporters, like Fox News.

The Trump team's rapid response efforts to fight the 'fake media'

The White House has also established a "Rapid Response 47" account on X to disseminate its views and attack journalists or stories it objects to. The feed's stated goals are supporting the president and "holding the Fake Media accountable."

Leavitt, 27, hasn't hesitated to go toe to toe with reporters, often with a smile, and TikTok collects some of those moments.

"We know for a fact there have been lies that have been pushed by many legacy media outlets in this country about this president, and we will not accept that," she said at her first press briefing. It stood in contrast to Trump's 2017 press secretary, Sean Spicer, who got into an angry confrontation with the press about the

size of the president's inauguration crowd on his first day in the White House, and never truly recovered from it.

Showing the spread of the administration's disciplined approach, the Defense Department also has a rapid response account that says it "fights fake news." The Pentagon has evicted several news organizations from long-held office space, leading some reporters to worry about access to fast, reliable information during a military crisis.

"Strategically, he likes to use the press as a pawn — it is one of the institutions that he can demonize to make himself look good," said Ron Fournier, a former Washington bureau chief for the AP.

Trump has active lawsuits going against news outlets that displease him, such as CBS News for the way "60 Minutes" edited an interview with 2024 election opponent, Democratic Vice President Kamala Harris, or The Des Moines Register, for what turned out to be an inaccurate pre-election poll of Iowa voters.

The new FCC chairman, Brendan Carr, has signaled an activist stance, with investigations open against CBS for the "60 Minutes" case, ABC News for how

it fact-checked the Trump-Harris debate and NBC on whether it violated federal "equal time" provisions by bringing Harris onto "Saturday Night Live."

Even with all the change, many newsrooms are confronting the challenge

Fleischer welcomes a newly aggressive attitude toward the press. He believes many journalists were more activists than reporters during Trump's first term. He wondered why journalists were not more aggressive in determining whether Biden's advancing age made him fit for the presidency.

"I think that the press is either in denial, or they acknowledge that they have lost the trust of the people but they won't change or do anything about it," he said. "They just don't know how to do their jobs any differently."

Press advocates worry about the intimidation factor of lawsuits and investigations, particularly on smaller newsrooms. What stories will go unreported simply because it's not worth the potential hassle? "It has a very corrosive effect over time," Grueskin said.

And it has been only two months.

New Mexico legislators OK increase on future oil royalty rates

By Morgan Lee
ASSOCIATED PRESS

SANTA FE, N.M. — The state Legislature has endorsed a bill that would raise royalty rates for new petroleum development on prime pieces of land in New Mexico, on one of the world's most prolific oil production areas.

A 37-31 vote on Thursday sent the bill from the Statehouse to Democratic Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham for consideration.

The proposal would increase the top royalty rate for oil and gas development from 20% to 25% on New Mexico's state trust lands with implications for the energy industry in

the Permian Basin, which overlaps southeastern New Mexico and western Texas. The area accounted for 46% of U.S. oil production in 2023, according to the Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas.

New Mexico deposits royalty payments from oil and gas development in a multibillion-dollar investment trust that benefits public schools, universities and hospitals.

"We have a legal duty to maximize the return on these assets," said Democratic state Rep. Matthew McQueen of Galisteo, a co-sponsor of the bill.

Legislative approval was the culmination of a yearslong effort backed

by Public Lands Commissioner Stephanie Garcia Richard to increase top-tier royalty rates. A year ago, Garcia Richard put a hold on lease sales indefinitely for coveted tracts while advocating for the rate increase.

Proponents say neighboring Texas already charges up to 25% on state trust land amid intense competition to drill in the Permian Basin. The royalty changes in neighboring New Mexico would not go into effect in Texas.

Opponents say the rate change threatens to penalize petroleum producers and public beneficiaries, noting that oil production is significantly taxed in other ways and hinges on volatile com-

modity prices.

In a news release, Garcia Richard said the goal is "to make as much money as possible for school kids and our public institutions."

"Raising the oil and gas royalty rate on premium state lands was always the right thing to do," she said.

Garcia Richard, a Democrat, terms out of office as land commissioner in 2026 and this week announced her candidacy for lieutenant governor.

New Mexico is the No. 2 state for oil production behind Texas.

Efforts by New Mexico to save and invest portions of a financial windfall from local oil production are paying dividends

as state government income on investments is forecast to surpass personal income tax collections.

The state's land grant permanent fund currently distributes about \$1.2 billion a year to beneficiary schools, universities and hospitals as well as the state general fund.

New Mexico state government relies heavily on a financial windfall linked to oil production amid increasing concerns about the connection between climate change and natural disasters including wildfires.

A coalition of environmental groups praised the passage of bills this week that would underwrite local clean energy

and environmental sustainability projects and related job training.

But Albuquerque-based attorney Gail Evans of the Center for Biological Diversity vowed to press forward with a lawsuit against the state seeking compliance with the "pollution control clause" in the New Mexico Constitution on behalf of Native Americans who live near oil wells.

"Our legislators didn't even take the tiny step of ensuring our kids are protected from dangerous oil and gas pollution when they're at school," said Evans, alluding to a stalled bill to restrict oil and gas operations within a mile (1.6 kilometers) of school property.

Surviving Tuskegee Airmen remembers struggle for recognition

By Mead Gruver and Thomas Peipert

ASSOCIATED PRESS

AURORA, Colo. — With members of a trail-blazing Black Air Force unit passing away at advanced ages, efforts to remain true to their memory carry on despite sometimes confusing orders from President Donald Trump as he purges federal diversity, equity and inclusion programs.

Col. James H. Harvey III, 101, is among the last few airmen and support crew who proved that a Black unit — the 332nd Fighter Group of the Tuskegee Airmen — could fight as well as any other in World War II and the years after.

He went on to become the first Black jet fighter pilot in Korean airspace during the Korean War, and a decorated one after 126 missions. He was one of four Tuskegee Airmen who won the first U.S. Air Force Gunnery Meet in 1949, a forerunner of today's U.S. Navy "Top Gun" school.

"They said we didn't have any ability to operate aircraft or operate heavy machinery. We were inferior to the white man. We were nothing," Harvey said. "So we showed them."

Shortly after Trump's January inauguration, the Air Force removed new recruit training courses that included videos of the Tuskegee Airmen.

The removal drew bipartisan outrage and the White House's ire over what Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth described as "malicious implementation" of Trump's executive order.

The Air Force quickly reversed course.

Announcing the reversal, Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. David Allvin



101-year-old Col. James H. Harvey III, one of the last surviving Tuskegee Airmen, sits for a portrait in Aurora, Colo., Wednesday, March 12, 2025.

said in a statement that the initial removal was because the service, like other agencies, had to move swiftly to comply with Trump's executive order with "no equivocation, no slow-rolling, no foot-dragging."

The videos were shown to troops as part of DEI courses taken during basic military training. Some photos of Tuskegee Airmen were also among tens of thousands of images in a Pentagon database flagged for removal.

"I thought there was progress in that area, but evidently there isn't," said Harvey, who blamed Trump for contributing to what he sees as worsening prejudice in the U.S.

"I'll tell him to his face. No problem," he said. "I'll tell him, 'You're a racist,' and see what he has to say about that. What can they do to me? Just kill me, that's all."

The Tuskegee Airmen unit was established in 1941 as the 99th Pursuit Squadron based at the

Tuskegee Institute in Alabama. The 99th became the 332nd Fighter Group, which by war's end destroyed or damaged more than 400 enemy aircraft in North Africa and Europe during the war and sank a German destroyer in action.

Of the 992 Tuskegee Airmen trained as pilots starting in 1942, 335 were deployed, 66 were killed in action and 32 who were shot down became war prisoners.

In 1949, two months after the airmen's gunnery meet victory in the propeller-driven class, the U.S. Air Force integrated Black and white troops and the Tuskegee Airmen were absorbed into other units.

It took the Air Force almost half a century to recognize 332nd's last achievement: Its success in aerial bombing and shooting proficiency in the gunnery meet at what is now Nellis Air Force Base in Nevada.

For decades, the winners were listed as "un-

known" and their trophy was missing.

"We won them all,"

Harvey said. "We weren't supposed to win anything because of the color of our

skin."

Harvey trained during World War II but was not deployed to combat before the war ended. In Korea, he flew the F-80 Shooting Star jet fighter and earned medals including the Distinguished Flying Cross.

He retired as a lieutenant colonel in 1965 and received an honorary promotion to colonel in 2023.

Trump in 2020 promoted another of the last surviving Tuskegee Airmen, Charles McGee, to brigadier general. McGee died in 2022 at age 102.

Harvey still regards the Air Force Gunnery Meet as his biggest accomplishment, one the Air Force finally recognized in 1993.

Their missing trophy was found in a museum storeroom not long after.

"We were good, and they couldn't take it away from us," Harvey said. "We were good. And I'll repeat it until I die."

Thomas Peipert/Associated Press

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