

The Washington Post

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Democracy Dies in Darkness

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A Haitian asylum seeker had spent two years in U.S. detention until an Ohio couple tried to do something about it



MATT MCCLAIN/THE WASHINGTON POST

WAITING FOR SAFE HAVEN

BY ELI SASLOW
IN CLEVELAND HEIGHTS, OHIO

Ansyly Damus, right, meets with Gary Benjamin and his wife, Melody Hart, at the Geauga County Sheriff's Office in Chardon, Ohio. The former ethics professor from Haiti had spent more than two years in detention after requesting asylum at the U.S. border.

They had decided to welcome him even if the United States would not, so Melody Hart and her husband, Gary Benjamin, arrived at the courthouse late last month with gifts for an immigrant they'd never met. They carried outfits for him in three sizes and a new winter coat to guard against the Ohio cold. They brought instruction manuals to help him learn English, a booklet of hymns to sustain his spirit and bottles of champagne in case he walked out of the courtroom free after being detained by the U.S. government for 25 months. They also brought a charter bus filled with 32 friends from Cleveland Heights, Ohio, a group consisting mostly of retirees, church members and community

activists. Together they traveled four hours into Michigan to witness the latest court hearing in the ongoing saga of Ansyly Damus, a Haitian ethics professor who had come to the California-Mexico border in the fall of 2016 to seek asylum. Rather than enter the country illegally, Damus had followed U.S. protocol by presenting himself to Border Patrol and saying he feared for his life. Then he had been handcuffed and flown to a detention facility with empty beds in Ohio, where he'd spent the past two years waiting for a final resolution in his case. The government had denied Damus parole because it considered him a flight risk with no meaningful connections in Ohio, but now the courtroom was filled

DAMUS CONTINUED ON A6

Scale of Russian operation detailed

EVERY MAJOR SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORM USED

Report finds Trump support before and after election

BY CRAIG TIMBERG
AND TONY ROMM

A report prepared for the Senate that provides the most sweeping analysis yet of Russia's disinformation campaign around the 2016 election found the operation used every major social media platform to deliver words, images and videos tailored to voters' interests to help elect President Trump — and worked even harder to support him while in office. The report, a draft of which was obtained by The Washington Post, is the first to study the millions of posts provided by major technology firms to the Senate Intelligence Committee, led by Sen. Richard Burr (R-N.C.), its chairman, and Sen. Mark R. Warner (Va.), its ranking Democrat. The bipartisan panel hasn't said whether it endorses the findings.

It plans to release it publicly along with another study later this week. The research — by Oxford University's Computational Propaganda Project and Graphika, a network analysis firm — offers new details on how Russians working at the Internet Research Agency, which U.S. officials have charged with criminal offenses for interfering in the 2016 campaign, sliced Americans into key interest groups for targeted messaging. These efforts shifted over time, peaking at key political moments, such as presidential debates or party conventions, the report found. The data sets used by the researchers were provided by Facebook, Twitter and Google and covered several years up to mid-2017, when the social media companies cracked down on the known

REPORT CONTINUED ON A14

Britain asks: How did you afford that mansion?

New tool aims to combat foreign investments fueled by crime

BY JEANNE WHALEN

LONDON — Until quite recently, Zamira Hajiyeva was living the high life, according to British authorities. She had a \$15 million townhouse in London's tony Knightsbridge neighborhood, a golf club in the English countryside and a gold-plated shopping habit at Harrods.

That was before a British court this year asked the 55-year-old from Azerbaijan an impertinent question: How did she afford

those purchases? That query is at the heart of a bold British push to try to reverse what the government thinks is a flood of foreign investment stemming from overseas corruption and criminality. For more than a decade, ultra-rich people from the former Soviet Union, China and the Middle East have turned to London mansions, New York high-rises, and chic properties in Vancouver, Miami and Paris to store their cash. The phenomenon has turned the real estate markets of North American and European cities into the savings accounts of wealthy foreigners — some of whom face allegations of corruption or crime back home. Regulators on both sides of the

BRITAIN CONTINUED ON A15

Ruling injects anxiety into health-care system

ACA is now so integrated that scrapping it would 'affect almost everyone'

BY AMY GOLDSTEIN

The ruling by a federal judge in Texas striking down the Affordable Care Act has injected a powerful wave of uncertainty about recent changes woven into the U.S. health-care system that touch nearly all Americans and the industry that makes up one-sixth of the economy. The opinion, if upheld on appeal, would upend the health insurance industry, the way doctors and hospitals function, and the ability of millions of Americans to access treatments they

need to combat serious diseases. Parts of the law that would need to be unwound include no-charge preventive services for older Americans on Medicare, allowing parents to keep children on their plans through age 26, a variety of efforts to rein in prescription drug costs and even requirements that some restaurants post calorie counts. "It affects almost everyone in America," said Tim Jost, a specialist in health law and a professor emeritus at Washington and Lee University. The court decision also sets up an awkward juggling act for the Republican Party, balancing President Trump's gleeful tweets over the court's decision against a perception that the GOP is threatening insurance that covers nearly 20 million Americans

INSURANCE CONTINUED ON A4

Bat trackers aim to curb a deadly virus



BONNIE JO MOUNT/THE WASHINGTON POST

About 50,000 fruit bats dwell in this cave in Uganda's Queen Elizabeth National Park. CDC scientists placed GPS devices on 20 of them to determine their flight patterns.

Scientists working in Uganda say spying on creatures' nightly trips may halt disease's spread

BY LENA H. SUN
IN QUEEN ELIZABETH NATIONAL PARK, UGANDA

By day, some of the most dangerous animals in the world lurk deep inside this cave. Come night, the tiny fruit bats whoosh out, tens of thousands of them at a time, filling the air with their high-pitched chirping before disappearing into the black sky. The bats carry the deadly Marburg virus, as fearsome and mysterious as its cousin Ebola. Scientists know that the virus starts in these animals, and they know that when it spreads to humans it is lethal — Marburg kills up to 9 in 10 of its victims, sometimes within a week. But they don't know much about what happens in between. That's where the bats come in. No one is sure where they go each night. So a team of scientists from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention traveled here to track their move-

VIRUS CONTINUED ON A5

IN THE NEWS



JONATHAN NEWTON/THE WASHINGTON POST

Redskins rally Dustin Hopkins's 36-yard field goal kept Washington's playoff hopes alive with a win at Jacksonville. **D1**

Life lessons The first community school in Fairfax County offers students and families social services and other help. **B1**

THE NATION
The White House and Democratic congressional leaders are at an impasse over negotiations to avoid a partial shutdown of the federal government. **A3**

THE WORLD
The leaders of Britain, France and Germany have tried to curb President Trump's worst instincts toward nationalism and isolationism but have been politically weakened at home by those same forces. **A3**

In Cameroon, where English-speaking separatists are fighting the

French-speaking government, journalists covering the violence find themselves behind bars on a surprising charge: fake news. **A12**

THE ECONOMY
A patent application filed by Amazon offered a vision of how doorbell cameras could be equipped with new tech that would allow them to gather data and identify people considered to be "suspicious." **A11**

THE REGION
The D.C. Council on Tuesday could pass new laws restricting the ability of gun owners to

modify weapons and require police to seize guns while enforcing protective orders in domestic disputes. **B1**

THE WEEK AHEAD
MONDAY
Former FBI director James B. Comey appears at a closed-door deposition before the House Judiciary and House Oversight panels.

TUESDAY
Michael Flynn, the former national security adviser who pleaded guilty to lying to the FBI about Russian contacts, faces sentencing. **Housing starts** for November are estimated at 1,222,000 units on an

annual basis.
WEDNESDAY
Fed Chairman Jerome H. Powell holds a news conference on interest rate policy.
House Speaker Paul D. Ryan (R-Wis.) gives a farewell speech.

THURSDAY
Jobless claims for the week ended Dec. 15 are estimated at 221,000.

FRIDAY
Third-quarter GDP is expected to increase by 3.5 percent.
Durable-goods orders for November are seen rising 1.5 percent.
Personal income for November is expected to rise 0.3 percent.

INSIDE



STYLE
Unknownable man Special counsel Robert S. Mueller III is omnipresent and absent, inescapable but elusive. **C1**
Fashion fumble Prada used tchotchkes evoking Sambo. Critic Robin Givhan asks how this even happened. **C1**

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