

## Dnipro Mourns As Dozens Die In Russia Strike

### In Apartments' Rubble, Signs of Tactical Shift

By MEGAN SPECIA  
and NICOLE TUNG

KYIV, Ukraine — More than 24 hours after a heavy-duty missile built to sink ships exploded in a dense Ukrainian cityscape of homes and shops, the lights of emergency workers played across the rubble on Sunday, in search of life.

Death was easy to find. As smoke and dust rose into the Dnipro sky, a light dusting of snow began to accumulate on five victims who had been pulled from the rubble and laid out in body bags in a small grassy area next to the destroyed building. They were five of 30 confirmed killed in a Russian strike on a civilian neighborhood — 79 were injured — and at least 30 people remained unaccounted for.

Even some of those pulled from the debris that was once their homes seemed to have only an uncertain grasp on life.

"I have no words, I have no emotions, I feel nothing except a great emptiness inside," one 23-year-old woman, Anastasiia Shvets, wrote on social media.

An image of Ms. Shvets from the scene of the attack struck a chord with Ukrainians across the country. It shows a young woman clutching a stuffed animal and a golden Christmas garland as she stands in the ruins and waits to be rescued.

Ms. Shvets somehow emerged with only a small head wound and bruises on her legs. But her parents, she wrote on a verified account on Instagram, were still missing. And her partner, who was serving in the Ukrainian military, was killed in action four months ago.

The strike on Saturday at an ordinary, nine-story residential building led to one of the largest losses of civilian lives far from the front line since the beginning of the war, and it prompted renewed calls for Moscow to be charged with war crimes. In an address to Ukrainians on Sunday night, President Volodymyr Zelensky said it was also critical to punish "those who grease the Russian  
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CLODAGH KILCOYNE/REUTERS

Rescuing a woman from an apartment building in Dnipro, Ukraine, that was destroyed by a Russian missile on Saturday.

## SUBDUED SERMON REFLECTS DEFEATS ON VOTING RIGHTS

### BIDEN AT KING CHURCH

#### Efforts Thwarted in Year Since a Fiery Speech to Black Allies

By PETER BAKER

ATLANTA — When he came to the capital of the South to honor the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. last year, President Biden delivered a call to nonviolent arms for voting rights, equating opponents to segregationists and vowing to rewrite Senate rules to defeat them. "I will not yield," he declared. "I will not flinch."

A year later, Mr. Biden returned to Atlanta on Sunday with little to show for it. He may not have flinched, but he did not succeed, either. None of the sweeping voting rights measures he championed passed the Democratic-controlled Congress last year, and the prospects of any passing a newly elected Republican-controlled House seem vanishingly small.

And so a leader who arguably owes his presidency to the critical and timely support of Black voters in 2020 was left to offer only vague exhortations of hope and no concrete policy plans or legislative strategies. He assured an audience at Dr. King's fabled Ebenezer Baptist Church that its side in the struggle would, indeed, overcome someday.

"At this inflection point, we know there's a lot of work that has to continue on economic justice, civil rights, voting rights and protecting our democracy, and I'm remembering that our job is to redeem the soul of America," Mr. Biden told the appreciative crowd, which included Dr. King's sister, Christine King Farris, and one of his allies, Andrew Young.

"Look, I get accused of being an inveterate optimist," the president added. "Progress is never easy. But redeeming the soul of the country is absolutely essential."

Speaking from a church pulpit, Mr. Biden eschewed the open partisanship of his speech last year, when he spoke at a university and compared Republicans to George Wallace, the Alabama governor who stood in a doorway rather than let Black students enter a white university; Bull Connor, the public safety commissioner of Birmingham, Ala., who used police dogs and fire hoses on civil rights protesters; and Jefferson Davis, the president of the Confederacy that went to war to defend slavery.

The analogy went over poorly at the time with Republicans, who insisted that the limits they had imposed in many states were intended to secure election integrity and argued that they opposed Democratic-sponsored legislation because it was federal overreach.  
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## A Romance Author's Twist: Faking Her Death

By ELLEN BARRY

Late Monday morning, two police officers drove up a gravel driveway to a mobile home in Benton, Tenn., a tiny town in the foothills of the southern Appalachians, to question Susan Meachen, a 47-year-old homemaker and author of romance novels.

She had been expecting them. For a week, she had been the focus of a scandal within the online subculture of self-published romance writers, part of the literary world sometimes known as "Romancelandia."

The police wanted to talk to Ms. Meachen about faking her own death. In the fall of 2020, a post announcing she had died had appeared on her Facebook page, where she had often described her struggles with mental health and complained of poor treatment at

### Drama in a Book World as Her Online Fans Learn the Truth

the hands of other writers.

The post, written by her daughter, led many to assume she had died by suicide. It sent fans and writers into a spiral of grief and introspection, wondering how their sisterhood had turned so poisonous.

But she wasn't dead. Last week, to the shock of her online community, Ms. Meachen returned to her page to say she was back and now "in a good place," and ready to resume writing under her own name. She playfully concluded: "Let the fun begin."

Other writers, seeing this, were

not in the mood for fun. Describing deep feelings of betrayal, they have called for her to be prosecuted for fraud, alleging that she faked her death to sell books or solicit cash donations. They have reported her to the F.B.I. cyber-crimes unit and the local sheriff and vowed to shun her and her work. Some have questioned whether she exists in real life.

Ms. Meachen does exist. In a series of interviews, she said the online community had become a treacherous place for a person in her mental state, as she struggled to manage a new diagnosis of bipolar disorder.

"I think it's a very dangerous mix-up, especially if you have a mental illness," she said. "I would log on and get in, and at some point in the day my two worlds would collide, and it would be hard  
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## Colleges Face Major Changes In Recruitment

By STEPHANIE SAUL

MIDDLETOWN, Conn. — In 1964, hoping to erase its image as a privileged cloister for white rich families, Wesleyan University contacted 400 Black high school students from around the country to persuade them to apply.

The outreach led to the enrollment of what became known as Wesleyan's "vanguard" class — one Latino and 13 Black students — which helped establish the university's commitment to diversity.

Nearly 60 years later, such recruitment practices face an existential threat. In cases against Harvard and the University of North Carolina, the Supreme Court is widely expected to overturn or roll back affirmative action in college admissions. Many education experts say that such a decision could not only lead to changes in who is admitted, but also jeopardize long-established strategies that colleges have used to build diverse classes, including programs that are intended to reach specific racial and ethnic groups for scholarships, honors programs and recruitment.

Those rollbacks could then help spur colleges to end other admissions practices that critics say have historically benefited the  
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## Plotting Openly, Rioters in Brazil Breached Security With Ease

By JACK NICAS  
and SIMON ROMERO

BRASÍLIA — As the bus made its way from Brazil's agricultural heartland to the capital, Andrea Barth pulled out her phone to ask fellow passengers, one by one, what they intended to do once they arrived.

"Overthrow the thieves," one man replied.

"Take out 'Nine-Finger,'" said another, referring to Brazil's leftist president, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, who lost part of a finger decades ago in a factory accident.

"You might escape a lightning strike," another man said, as if confronting Mr. Lula himself. "But you won't escape me."

As the passengers described their plans for violence, more than a hundred other buses bulging with supporters of Jair Bolsonaro, the far-right former president, were also descending on Brasília, the capital.

A day later, on Jan. 8, a pro-Bolsonaro mob unleashed mayhem that shocked the country and was broadcast around the world. Rioters invaded and ransacked Brazil's Congress, Supreme Court and presidential offices, intending, many of them said, to spur military leaders to topple Mr. Lula, who had taken office just a week earlier.

The chaotic attack bore an un-



ADRIANO MACHADO/REUTERS

Many of those who attacked Brazil's government on Jan. 8 announced their plans on social media.

settling resemblance to the Jan. 6, 2021, storming of the U.S. Capitol: hundreds of right-wing protesters, claiming an election was rigged, stomping through the halls of power.

Each episode rattled one of the world's largest democracies, and almost two years to the day after

the U.S. attack, last Sunday's assault showed that far-right extremism, inspired by antidemocratic leaders and fed by conspiracy theories, remains a grave threat.

Mr. Lula and judicial authorities have moved swiftly to reassert control, arresting more than 1,150

rioters, clearing the encampments that gave them refuge, searching for their funders and organizers and, on Friday, opening an investigation into how Mr. Bolsonaro may have inspired them.

But questions continue to swirl about how a relatively small band  
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## Despite Recount of 2020 Ballots, County's Deniers Cling to Doubts

By TRIP GABRIEL

WILLIAMSPORT, Pa. — On the 797th day after the defeat of former President Donald J. Trump, a rural Pennsylvania county on Monday began a recount of ballots from Election Day 2020.

Under pressure from conspiracy theorists and election deniers, 28 employees of Lycoming County counted — by hand — nearly 60,000 ballots. It took three days and an estimated 560 work hours, as the vote-counters ticked through paper ballots at long rows of tables in the county elections department in Williamsport, a place used to a different sort of

nail-biter as the home of the Little League World Series.

The results of Lycoming County's hand recount — like earlier recounts of the 2020 election in Wisconsin, Georgia and Arizona — revealed no evidence of fraud. The numbers reported more than two years ago were nearly identical to the numbers reported on Thursday.

Mr. Trump ended up with seven fewer votes than were recorded on voting machines in 2020. Joseph R. Biden Jr. had 15 fewer votes. Overall, Mr. Trump gained  
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The Nets are a supremely talented team. So why are they so joylessly watch? Sports of The Times. *PAGE D5*

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Auburn and other universities have prohibited the app on their Wi-Fi networks, bringing a geopolitical fight front and center. But some students find other ways to gain access. *PAGE B1*

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