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U.S. TO 'RUN' VENEZUELA

AFTER OPERATION TO OUST MADURO, TRUMP SAYS HE WILL TAP NATION'S OIL RESERVES

By Regina Garcia Cano, Konstantin Toropin & Eric Tucker
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

CARACAS, Venezuela — Hours after an audacious military operation that plucked leader Nicolás Maduro from power and removed him from the country, President Donald Trump said Saturday that the United States would run Venezuela at least temporarily and tap its vast oil reserves to sell to other nations.

The dramatic action capped an intensive Trump administration pressure campaign on the South American nation and its autocratic leader and months of secret planning resulting in the most assertive American action to achieve regime change since the 2003 invasion of Iraq.

Legal experts immediately raised questions about whether the operation was lawful. Venezuela's vice president, Delcy Rodríguez, demanded in a speech that the U.S. free Maduro and called him the country's rightful leader, before Venezuela's high court ordered her to assume the role of interim president.

Speaking to reporters hours after Maduro's capture, Trump revealed his plans to exploit the leadership void to "fix" the country's oil infrastructure and sell "large amounts" of oil to other countries.

Maduro and his wife, seized overnight from their home on a military base, were first taken aboard a U.S. warship on their way to face prosecution for a Justice Department indictment accusing them of participating in a narco-terrorism conspiracy.

A plane carrying the deposed leader landed around 4:30 p.m. Saturday at an airport in New York City's northern suburbs. Maduro was escorted off the jet, gingerly making his way down a stairway before being led across the tarmac surrounded by federal agents. Several agents filmed him on their phones as he walked.

He was then flown by helicopter to Manhattan, where a convoy of law enforcement vehicles, including an armored car, was waiting to whisk him to a nearby U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration office.

Supporters of Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro embrace in downtown Caracas, Venezuela, on Saturday after President Donald Trump announced that Maduro had been captured and flown out of the country. **CRISTIAN HERNANDEZ / AP**

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ADDITIONAL COVERAGE

■ Democrats raise concerns about lack of congressional approval for action. **A4**

■ Venezuelans left wondering who will lead the country. **A5**

■ Leaders around the world react to Maduro's ouster. **A6**

For some of these San Diego Natural History Museum scientists, their latest expedition into the rugged canyons of Baja Sur marks a return, more than a decade after their investigation began.

Jon Rebman, curator of botany at the San Diego Natural History Museum, hikes through the Sierra de las Cacachilas in late October, documenting plant species as part of a collaboration between U.S. and Mexican scientists. **ANA RAMIREZ / U-T PHOTOS**

UNLOCKING AN UNDERSUNG REGION'S BIODIVERSITY

By Maura Fox
UNION-TRIBUNE

Sulphur butterflies glide across Zorrillo Canyon, hundreds of them, moving back and forth against the cerulean sky. It's nothing short of a fairy wonderland for the scientists below.

At least, that's how Jon Rebman, curator of botany at the San Diego Natural History Museum, describes it as he begins the hike into the canyon on a late October morning.

Rebman is four days into a weeklong expedition in the Sierra de las Cacachilas mountain range in Baja Sur, just outside of La Paz, part of a collaborative effort with Mexican and U.S. scientists to track the region's biodiversity.

He and his botany team — along with dozens of other scientists from the NAT and Mexico studying mammals, insects and reptiles — have explored the nearby mountaintops and canyon washes, all while camping at Rancho Cacachilas, an eco-tourism destination the museum partners with to conduct its research.

For many of the scientists, it's a return; this year's expedition serves as a follow-up to an investigation into the Sierra launched more than a decade ago in 2013. Until that first expedition, little was known about Las Cacachilas' biodiversity and opportunity for study.

"It was like a black hole," Rebman says. "This entire Sierra had almost no historical collection."

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A Xantus's hummingbird drinks nectar from a plant in the Sierra de las Cacachilas as U.S. and Mexican scientists track the region's biodiversity. The hummingbird exists only in Baja Sur.

On Monday, paid parking will debut at Balboa Park

By David Garrick
UNION-TRIBUNE

San Diego officials and frequent Balboa Park users are scrambling to prepare for a watershed moment in the park's long history: Monday's launch of a complex paid parking system with varying fees and discounts.

In a flurry of recent activity, the city has been installing payment kiosks, erecting informational signs, compiling the license plate numbers of park volunteers and establishing a website for frequent-user permits and city-resident discounts.

Officials have also finalized plans for expanded tram service from the one free lot that will remain — the 951-space lower Inspiration Point — and painted 150 of those spots orange for possible use by students at San Diego High.

Many park leaders continue to predict the new parking fees will notably suppress attendance at the park's museums and other attractions, while also reducing membership in clubs focused on bridge, lawn bowling and other activities.

Some are also complaining that parking discounts for city residents — which the City Council has said are a high priority — cost $5 for residency verification, come with two-day delays and are hard to figure out and cumber-

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Appeals court rejects Calif. ban on openly carrying guns

By Laurel Rosenhall
THE NEW YORK TIMES

A federal appellate court ruled Friday that California cannot ban people from openly carrying firearms because the prohibition was an unconstitutional violation of the Second Amendment.

The split decision by a three-judge panel of the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals said the state's ban ran afoul of a 2022 Supreme Court ruling that required courts to evaluate gun laws based on the country's "historical tradition of firearm regulation."

Because openly carrying weapons was "a historical practice" in the 18th century, it cannot be outlawed by today's lawmakers, Judge Lawrence VanDyke wrote in the court's 2-1 majority opinion.

"The historical record makes unmistakably plain that open carry is part of this nation's history and tradition," VanDyke

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STEVEN P. DINKIN A PATH FORWARD

The pivot or the precipice — Why agility matters in 2026

If I can be so bold, I'm ready to announce the 2026 "Word of the Year" (typically a year-end tradition). The word is "agility" — the ability to navigate the inevitable challenges — personal and professional — coming your way. If last year taught us anything, it's that digging in only leads to disappointment. Things rarely go as planned.

In case you're wondering, the 2025 "Word of the Year" selections included "slop" (low-quality, unwanted digital content produced in high volumes by AI), from Merriam-Webster, and "6-7" (a word that doesn't seem to have a meaning), from Dictionary.com.

The corporate world has long recognized the need to be nimble, especially when the stakes are high. In his book, "No Rules Rules," Reed Hastings, founder and chairman of Netflix, recounts the company's shift from mail-order DVDs to streaming. Business was flourishing, but Hastings could see that a digital future lay ahead; he chose to "self-disrupt" before a competitor could swoop in.

He did this, in part, by creating a culture that empowers people to act, rather than being process-driven and slow to change.

Blockbuster, which distributed DVDs and videotapes through retail stores nationwide, didn't pivot — and didn't survive.

Closer to home, one of my favorite stories of agile leadership is told by Garry Ridge, former CEO of San Diego-based WD-40 Company and author of the best-selling book, "Any Dumbass Can Do It." WD-40 tried and failed 39 times before perfecting its formula for a water displacement (WD) product that protects metal from rust and corrosion. Their willingness to pivot (combined with dogged perseverance) paid off: WD-40 Multi-Use Product can be found in 8 out of 10 U.S. homes.

At the National Conflict Resolution Center, we encountered unexpected challenges throughout 2025, as did the businesses, organizations and communities we serve.

We explored ways to navigate the uncertainty in a webinar last month, hosted by NCRC's Director of External Relations Ashley Virtue. The webinar, called "The Nimble Navigator: Leading with Agility in an Unpredictable World," featured leaders from the nonprofit, corporate and public sectors. The panelists spoke candidly with Virtue about rapid-fire change: how it's affected their organizations and teams, and what they do to lead with agility.

I came away with three insights that will inform NCRC's approach to the new year, as headwinds continue. I think of them as three pillars: clarity, humanity and velocity.

Pillar 1: Clarity: To be an agile organization, everyone needs to know what you stand for — the mission and values (and the non-negotiables, no matter the circumstances). When the "why" is clear, people can make decisions without asking for permission. It was undoubtedly clear at Netflix.

Panelist Autumn Saxton-Ross, from National Recreation and Parks Association, talked about the importance of staying true to your values during times of upheaval. Saxton-Ross said, "We always center our mission — we're here for our members." She added, "Centering sometimes means separating personal beliefs from professional obligations, in service of others."

Pillar 2: Humanity: Agile organizations are human-centered. That means being intentional about listening to colleagues, clients and communities, and responding with empathy, to build trust and strengthen relationships. When people feel safe and supported, they are far less likely to buckle under pressure.

Panelist Burgundi Allison, from Annie E. Casey Foundation, described this as "the way you show up for others." Allison believes it's important to understand how personal experiences in the moment are impacting people in their professional roles. But, she said, "It really starts with me. I have to be transparent about where I am and give the same grace to my team."

Pillar 3: Velocity: While clarity and humanity matter, so does motion — doing something and getting results, good or not so good. The most agile thing you can do is decide, even if you have less than 100% of the information. It's the age-old clash between good and perfect; in an agile organization, progress is paramount.

Panelist Peter Kim, from ThermoFisher Scientific, said that 2025 was "noisy" — every event seemed unprecedented. When you can't anticipate what's going to happen, he said, what matters is how you respond.

An agile leader needs to pivot quickly, which can be frustrating when there's a plan in place that people are eager to execute. Kim's advice? "Don't get so attached to a plan."

Kim's comment got me thinking about the traditional New Year's resolution, which asks us to make a rigid promise to a pre-determined outcome. In an uncertain climate, the only resolution worth making is a promise to be agile.

Steven P. Dinkin is president of the National Conflict Resolution Center (NCRC), a San Diego-based organization that is working to create innovative solutions to challenging issues, including intolerance and incivility. To learn about NCRC's programming, visit ncrconline.com.

The Rev. Scott Santarosa from Our Lady of Guadalupe in front of the Pope Francis Center in Logan Heights. **ALEXANDRA MENDOZA / U-T**

Logan Heights parish to open immigrant resource center

By Alexandra Mendoza
UNION-TRIBUNE

SAN DIEGO — A Logan Heights parish is opening a new immigrant resource center to address what it views as the community's "urgent and changing needs" in response to the Trump administration's continued mass deportation campaign.

The Pope Francis Center is described as a "welcoming and supportive space" that will connect immigrants with available resources from government and nonprofit groups, as well as offer spiritual and emotional support, such as counseling and escorts to court hearings and other appointments.

The center will work with the American Bar Association's Immigration Justice Project in San Diego and other local organizations to provide legal services.

The center is the latest effort by Our Lady of Guadalupe to serve its large immigrant congregation and others in the community.

The parish used to run an off-site migrant shelter at a separate location nearby for more than a year. Many of the migrants were asylum seekers who had recently arrived at the U.S.-Mexico border and wanted to settle in San Diego County. Around this time last year, the shelter was at capacity.

That all changed when, on his first day in office, President Donald Trump scrapped the CBP One appointment system that migrants were told to use to schedule appointments to be vetted at the border. Migrants largely stopped crossing, and the shelter closed its doors.

It was then that the Jesuit parish began to ponder the community's emerging needs, said the Rev. Scott Santarosa of Our Lady of Guadalupe. Responding to the Trump administration's plans of mass deportation became the priority, he said.

The Pope Francis Center is set to open Monday, steps away from Our Lady of Guadalupe. Decades ago, the site was a convent. It was once considered a possible location for a shelter for migrant women and children, but the idea was put on hold when the situation changed at the border.

The center is named after the late Pope Francis, an advocate for immigrants and refugees who was also a Jesuit. Santarosa has a framed photo in his office from his second meeting with Francis in Rome in 2016. He fondly remembers the pope's warmth.

"We wanted the center to embody a kind of warmth and welcome," he said, "and I think the image on the logo kind of captures that with his arm open."

The center follows the launch of the Faithful Accompaniment in Trust and Hope, or FAITH, program. Since August, religious leaders and volunteers have accompanied immigrants to court hearings and check-in appointments with Immigration and Customs Enforcement at the Edward J. Schwartz federal building in downtown San Diego. Volunteers will also begin offering to accompany people to their green card appointments at the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services building.

The effort to provide spiritual support began after reports surfaced of immigrants being arrested at those sites. FAITH started as a month-long pilot program with about 80 to 100 volunteers but has since grown into a year-round program with 465 volunteers, Santarosa said.

"The common inspiration between FAITH and the center is this desire to be attentive to what the needs are," said Santarosa.

Brinkley Johnson, the center's founding manager, said that people who reach out to the parish for help are either longtime community members — most of whom might have mixed-status families — or recent arrivals who may not be affiliated with the church, or even be Catholic. Still, they have heard about the church's efforts to provide assistance.

The Immigration Justice Project will initially offer legal screenings, orientations, advice, referrals and pro se assistance for those looking to represent themselves, said interim director Laura Flores.

"As this is a new collaboration, we will be working to assess the needs in the first three months and work collaboratively to develop services to meet those needs," Flores said in a statement. "We are grateful to Our Lady of Guadalupe's dedicated staff and community who have worked diligently to bring the Pope Francis Center into fruition for our immigrant community in 2026. Through our collaboration, IJP continues advancing its mission of ensuring access to justice for immigrants."

The two-story building will have offices, counseling rooms, meeting rooms, a childcare area and a chapel. Santarosa said that people who would rather not come in person can call to request information or contact the office through its website.

He expects the services to be funded by charitable donations.

Book shares tales of traveling world with a mobility scooter

By Madison Beveridge
U-T COMMUNITY PRESS

SAN DIEGO — Point Loma resident Cary Lowe and his wife, Trish, have traveled the world — but not in a way one might expect. Their unusual perspective is the focus of Lowe's recently released book, "On Two Legs and Three Wheels," a memoir of the couple's travels with a three-wheeled mobility scooter.

"On Two Legs and Three Wheels" tells two dozen stories of travel triumphs and tribulations over the past 20 years after Trish lost mobility in her legs because of multiple sclerosis.

Reliant on the three-wheeled scooter but motivated to continue living life to the fullest, Trish and Cary began navigating the world with a new outlook.

"I wrote this book not only for the people who are disabled but for their traveling companions," Cary Lowe said. "These stories demonstrate that you can go places and do things that you might not think you can do."

Lowe's writing career began as an op-ed writer for publications in Southern California. In 2020, he wrote his first book, "Becoming American," about his journey from being the child of Holocaust survivors in post-war Europe to becoming an American lawyer, academic and political activist.

Inspired by the ability to share experiences and lend insight to others, Lowe began writing "On Two Legs and Three Wheels" shortly after completing his first book.

"I thought a lot of people would find our experiences interesting, both older people and those with disabilities," he said. "I figured there were a lot of people who ... want to keep traveling despite getting older or developing disabilities.

"While we were traveling, we noticed that we saw very (few) people on wheelchairs or in mobility scooters. This really surprised us."

Relating a lack of mobility aids to cultural differences and accessibility, Lowe was determined to share positive travel experiences in hopes of prompting a shift in how people view limited mobility.

"Disabled people are discouraged from being out and about," he said. "In most places, these mobility aids are just not available. In many countries, they don't even seem to exist. You would be surprised at how different some other countries are ... when it comes to this concept.

"This was a motivator when writing the book. Not only should people be inspired to travel, but I want to cultivate a broader audience of people in other places who are even more so discouraged by the surrounding social pressures."

Traveling across the United States, Europe, tropical islands and deserts, Cary and Trish used everything — planes, trains, cars, buses, ships.

"At all times, things will pop up and you must not take it too personally," Cary Lowe said. "One of the most challenging trips we took was in Alaska. We rode via train for two days from Anchorage to Denali and then Fairbanks. We then got on a bus for another two days. Trish's scooter was tucked under the bus the whole ride. When we finally got off and were near the Arctic Ocean, they had never even seen a scooter like hers."

Early in their planning for the trip to Alaska, the couple pondered taking a cruise.

"Most people would not think to undertake a trip like this. They would have settled for something simpler like a cruise," Lowe said. "We ended up being the only ones in the land travel group that had any restrictions. But everyone was so supportive and it ended up working out great."

The ability to adapt and be change-makers in spaces unequipped for mobility aids opened a world of opportunity, he said.

"Whether it is in the U.S. or abroad, we have been struck by how readily people will accommodate and go out of their way to help," Lowe said. "Even if a place is not physically able to accommodate, the people will. There have been instances of people carrying (Trish) on her scooter into a bus or restaurant. It is very remarkable."

On a trip to Paris, the pair was faced with frustration upon realizing the subways were not disabled-accessible. As an alternative, the couple rode public buses and, despite initial disappointment, they were met with exceptional accommodations along the way.

"At the Eiffel Tower, there was a very long line," Lowe said. "They took us to a special elevator and there was no line. We zipped right up. The same thing happened at the Louvre. You find things like that and it really makes the travel experience delightful."

Above all, Lowe said he hopes "On Two Legs and Three Wheels" will spark the same sense of ability and interest in those who read it. Whether or not a person has mobility issues, Lowe said he's certain that anyone can gain something from being a bit more aware.

"It is great to have had impacts on people that we have encountered along the way," he said. "I want to open people's eyes to the obstacles we face. It is a matter of adapting and being flexible."

"On Two Legs and Three Wheels" is available at bit.ly/3YN92nQ and for more information about Lowe, visit carylowewriter.com.

Trish and Cary Lowe visit the Arctic Circle in Alaska. **COURTESY CARY LOWE**

Today in history

SUNDAY, JAN. 4

ON THIS DATE

1853: New Yorker Solomon Northup regained his freedom after being kidnapped in Washington, D.C., and forced into slavery in 1841; he would later tell his story in his memoir, "Twelve Years a Slave."
1896: Utah was admitted as the 45th U.S. state after The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints officially ended the practice of polygamy.
1948: Burma marked its independence from Great Britain.
1965: President Lyndon B. Johnson delivered his State of the Union address in which he outlined the goals of his "Great Society" initiative.
1974: President Richard Nixon refused to hand over tape recordings and documents subpoenaed by the Senate Watergate Committee.
1999: Europe's new currency, the euro, got off to a strong start on its first trading day, rising against the dollar on world currency markets.
2006: Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon suffered a significant stroke; his official powers were transferred to his deputy, Ehud Olmert. (Sharon remained in a coma until his death in January 2014.)
2007: Nancy Pelosi was elected the first female speaker of the House as Democrats took control of Congress.
2010: The Burj Khalifa, the tallest structure in the world at 2,717 feet tall, opened in Dubai, United Arab Emirates.

TODAY'S BIRTHDAYS

Actor Dyan Cannon is 89. Guitarist John McLaughlin is 84. Author-historian Doris Kearns Goodwin is 83. Country singer Patty Loveless is 69. Singer Michael Stipe (R.E.M.) is 66. Actor Julia Ormond is 61. NFL running back Derrick Henry is 32. Singer-actor Coco Jones is 28. NBA center Victor Wembanyama is 22.

The Associated Press