



**FIRE** crews extinguish flames Tuesday after Russia struck a residential building in Kostiantynivka, Ukraine.

## TRUMP: NO U.S. TROOP ROLE IN UKRAINE

President rules out sending a force and says Kyiv is unlikely to regain Crimea.

BY DARLENE SUPERVILLE  
AND AAMER MADHANI

WASHINGTON — President Trump on Tuesday offered his assurances that U.S. troops would not be sent to help defend Ukraine against Russia after seeming to leave open the possibility the day before.

Trump also said in a morning TV interview that Ukraine's hopes of joining NATO and regaining the Crimean peninsula from Russia are "impossible."

The Republican president, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky and other European leaders held hours of talks at the White House on Monday aimed at bringing an end to Russia's war against Ukraine. While answering questions from journalists, Trump did not rule out sending U.S. troops to participate in a European-led effort to defend Ukraine as part of security guarantees sought by Zelensky.

Trump said after his meeting in Alaska last week with Russian President Vladimir Putin that Putin was open to the idea of security guarantees for Ukraine.

But asked Tuesday on Fox News Channel's "Fox & Friends" what assurances he could provide going beyond his term that American troops would not be part of the forces defending

## Maker of voting machines had 'slush fund,' feds allege

BY REBECCA ELLIS  
AND RICHARD WINTON

An election technology firm allegedly overbilled Los Angeles County for voting machines used during the 2020 election and funneled the extra cash into a "slush fund" for bribing government officials, federal prosecutors say in a criminal case against three company executives.

Smartmatic, a U.K.-based voting system company, had bribery embedded as part of its business model,

prosecutors allege in a Florida federal corruption case against company co-founder Roger Alejandro Piñate Martinez and two other company officials.

Prosecutors do not indicate who benefited from the alleged pot of Los Angeles County taxpayer money.

Dean Logan, the county's top voting official, has acknowledged regularly meeting with Piñate, a Boca Raton resident who was charged last year with bribery and money laundering in the Philippines.

That's where executives

are charged with inflating the price of voting machines and using the surplus money to bribe a top election official who could help them land contracts worth \$182 million for the 2016 election.

To secure political favors in Venezuela, Smartmatic employees are accused of fashioning a similar fund to buy a longtime elections official a home with a pool in 2019 as they tried to get a more solid footing in the country, according to an Aug. 1 motion in the Philippine corruption case.

[See Smartmatic, A7]

## How state plans to boost EVs with no federal help

Restoring subsidies is key among several strategies identified by California officials.

BY TONY BRISCOE

From President Trump's first day back in office, he vowed to unravel California's sway over the nation's auto emission standards by eliminating the state's zero-emission mandates. He made good on that promise in the first several months of his second term.

After a series of controversial congressional votes in May, Trump signed legislation that in effect nullified several of California's auto emission standards, including the state's landmark regulation to ban selling new gas-only cars statewide by 2035.

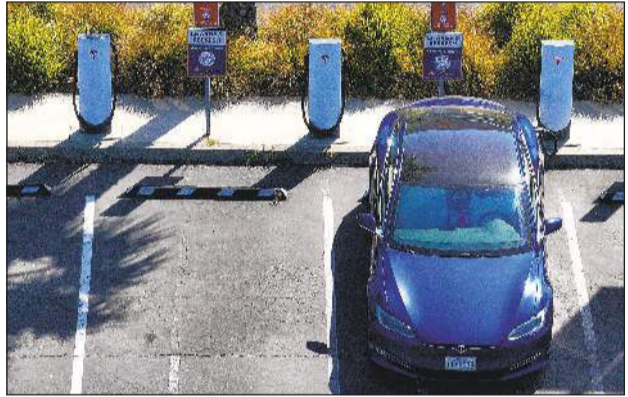
The "One Big Beautiful Bill," which Trump signed into law in July, will end federal tax credits for zero-

emission vehicles — up to \$7,500 for car buyers — on Sept. 30. Because electric vehicles generally cost more than their gas-powered counterparts, government incentives were critical in encouraging Americans to buy cleaner cars. There is already a slump in statewide sales of electric vehicles.

Without the federal rebates and subsidies to support widespread adoption of electric vehicles, California will almost surely fall short of its greenhouse gas reduction targets and remain in violation of federal air quality standards. Unless, that is, Sacramento steps in, in a big way.

Gov. Gavin Newsom in June signed an executive order reaffirming California's commitment to its emissions goals, and in effect sending state agencies back to the drawing board in light of a newly antagonistic federal government. Their task: to reassert California's climate leadership and iden-

[See EV, A8]



JUSTIN SULLIVAN Getty Images

**AN ELECTRIC** vehicle at a Tesla station in Sausalito. There has been a statewide slump in EV sales.

## THE BEST AND WORST FREEWAYS IN SOUTHLAND

From the easy, breezy 261 to the imperfect 10, The Times ranks them based on speed, crashes and other factors

By Terry Castleman and Shelby Grad

Yes, there was a time when Southern California loved its freeways.

In 1970, British writer and critic Reyner Banham lovingly described them as a "special way of being alive," bringing "on a state of heightened awareness that some locals find mystical." Joan Didion declared they were "the only secular communion Los Angeles has." Stores used to sell a popular postcard showing a handsomely landscaped cloverleaf interchange with the headline "Dig those crazy freeways."

But that was a long time ago, before multihour commutes, freeway chases, road rage, "carmageddon" and the annual Thanksgiving jam on the 405. These days, almost no one "digs" freeways. They tend to judge freeways based on how much pain and stress they bring.

We set out to rank Southern California's freeways and highways once and for all.



Though no metric is perfect, our approach combines some of the most important data points on freeways — average speed of cars, delays, lost productivity and fatalities — to approximate the worst and best stretches of road in Southern California. We also selected specific stretches of freeway to measure, and those may or may not line up with your commute. We used a year of data from 2022, which is the most recent available. For all these reasons, our rankings are subjective, but they represent our best attempt to examine the freeway system.

Our analysis of Caltrans Performance Measurement System data prioritized and gave similar weighting to four main factors:

- Average speed: The number of vehicle miles of travel divided by vehicle hours of travel, or Q, is a common metric in traffic studies.

[See Freeways, A6]

## Laughter is dying down in cinemas

Comedy no longer rules the box office. But, funnily enough, the genre has hope.

BY SAMANTHA MASUNAGA

For Hollywood, the state of big-screen comedies has been so grim you almost have to laugh.

There are genres that have dominated the cineplex in recent years — special effects-heavy blockbusters, family films and scream-in-your-seat horror movies.

But comedies? Not so much after the COVID-19 pandemic.

A recent spate of theatrical funnies is trying to change that. This month, studios have released one comedy after another, starting with Paramount Pictures' reboot of "The Naked Gun," starring Liam Neeson and Pamela Anderson, and Walt Disney Co.'s more-than-20-years-later sequel "Freakier Friday," which reunited Jamie Lee Curtis and Lindsay Lohan.

So far, "The Naked Gun" has grossed \$73 million worldwide, while "Freakier Friday" brought in \$86 million. Both received solid reviews from critics — "The Naked Gun" notched a 87% approval rating on aggregator Rotten Tomatoes, while "Freakier Friday" got a 74%.

Next up is Searchlight Pictures' "The Roses," a remake of "The War of the Roses," and Neon's "Splitsville," an original film about messy marriages starring Dakota Johnson.

It's an unusual cadence for a genre that fell out of favor with studios over the last decade or so as onscreen laughs largely moved to streaming. But bringing au-

[See Comedies, A11]

## Ancestral land returned to tribe

A church turns over a half-acre plot to the San Gabriel Band of Mission Indians.

BY NOAH HAGGERTY

On July 10, a church signed the deeds transferring a half-acre of land hosting a community center in the heart of San Gabriel — less than a mile down the

road from the Mission San Gabriel Arcángel — to an Indigenous tribe's nonprofit.

On paper, it was a relatively ordinary transaction (except maybe for the \$0 price tag); however, for the San Gabriel Band of Mission Indians based in Los Angeles and Orange counties, it was anything but: For the first time in centuries, a piece of their ancestral territory belongs to them.

"There were books when my daughters were in gram-

mar school and high school that stated we were extinct," said Art Morales, an elder and historian in the tribe. To Morales, persevering through that long, painful history is what makes the agreement so significant: The tribe is "basically on the map now."

The lot, previously owned by the Presbytery of San Gabriel — a unit of the Presbyterian Church (USA), one of the largest Presbyterian de-

[See Land, A14]



JULIANA YAMADA Los Angeles Times

**ART** Morales, left, is shown with other members of the San Gabriel Band of Mission Indians on Monday.

### Menendezes to face parole board

The brothers could get a decision this week in their long pursuit of freedom. **CALIFORNIA, B1**

### Not all is right in Dodgers' outfield

Dave Roberts is critical of Teoscar Hernández, then meets with Mookie Betts. **SPORTS, B10**

### Graffiti Towers remain in limbo

A bankruptcy sale of the tagged downtown buildings continues to drag on. **BUSINESS, A9**

**Weather**  
Sunny.  
L.A. Basin: 90/68. **B6**

**Markets** ..... **A11**  
**Opinion Voices** ..... **A12**

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# Tribe receives ancestral plot of land in San Gabriel

[Land, from A1] nominations in the nation — hosts offices, a kitchen and a community space, as well as an outdoor patio and green space.

Now, under the ownership of the tribe, led by the Gabrieleno Tongva Tribal Council, the space will host cultural ceremonies, government meetings, programming for tribal youths and a community food bank.

Unlike tribes with federal recognition, the hundreds without it have no direct legal means to negotiate with the U.S. government for reservations. Instead, they often set up nonprofit organizations to acquire land through agreements with private organizations or states.

In California, many tribes have found it difficult to secure federal recognition. They had to survive through three different occupying governments: Spain, Mexico and the U.S.

The U.S. government negotiated numerous agreements with California tribes that it has repeatedly failed to uphold — often because the state got in the way. Additionally, in the late 19th century, a federal effort to send surveyors throughout the state to create reservations for California mission tribes began in San Diego but lost steam by the time it reached Los Angeles.

The result is that to this day, tribes without land — including the San Gabriel Band of Mission Indians until last month — have had to find a venue (often local parks) and get all the proper permissions and permits any time they wanted to hold a public gathering.

“Everything is very labor-intensive on our part just so that we can actually engage in our culture,” said Kimberly Johnson, secretary for the tribe. “This breaks that barrier, and folks know they can go at any time and be together. I think, right now, people need each other more than anything.”

Long before the lot was a community center, it sat in Siban’gna.

Siban’gna was a village of the First Peoples in the region. Nestled along the river,



JULIANA YAMADA Los Angeles Times

**MONA** Recalde brought up the return of land with the Presbytery of San Gabriel.

it was home to a few hundred individuals. Dome-shaped homes covered in tule, called *ki*, dotted the landscape.

In 1771, Spanish priests tasked with establishing church footholds in the region decided to build what would become the San Gabriel Mission near the village. “When the padres came through ... they used the words ‘a land of abundance.’ They use words like ‘water flowing’ and ‘food’ and ‘happiness,’ ” Johnson said.

To execute the mission project, they exerted control of the Native communities and forced Indigenous people — many of whose descendants now refer to themselves as Gabrieleno, a term derived from the mission — into labor to construct and maintain the mission.

After the United States took over in the 19th century, it began using a different method of control: Redlining maps made it impossible for residents in low-rated areas to obtain mortgages and discouraged businesses from investing in the areas where Indigenous people lived.

Indeed, the San Gabriel Band of Mission Indians’ newly recovered land received the lowest possible rating at the time. In the as-

essment, the neighborhood was described as “a menace to this whole section,” noting “pressure is being exerted to confine the popula-

tion and keep it from infiltrating into other districts.”

Now, more than 250 years after the Spanish first settled in current-day Los An-

geles, the San Gabriel Band of Mission Indians — one of several Gabrieleno tribes acknowledged by the state — has finally gained a toehold back.

“To be able to connect to a land that our ancestors walked is very powerful,” Johnson said. “The land that we lived on — and had a village on — that we worked on, we were then told, ‘It’s illegal for you to own that land.’ So to see it come full circle back to us again, it’s very healing.”

When the Presbytery of San Gabriel began exploring options for the former community center site, Mona Recalde, who runs community outreach for the tribe and is deeply involved with the church, asked whether it would consider a land return.

“When Mona asked ... for just about everybody in the Presbyterian, it was an instantaneous recognition of how much sense this made,” said Wendy Tajima, executive presbyter, or spiritual leader, of the church.

For Tajima, it seemed like a way to make good on the

promise of land acknowledgment — the church, instead of just paying lip service regarding previous land grabs, could actually ameliorate some of the harm Christian institutions such as the mission caused in the past.

The tribe hopes other religious institutions (including the Mission San Gabriel Arcángel just down the street) will follow the presbytery’s lead.

The church and the tribe held a ceremony commemorating the agreement at the tribe’s new Gabrieleno Tongva Tribal Center at Siban’gna on Aug. 2.

As Presbyterian ceremonies gave way to the Gabrielenos’, an emotional Tajima couldn’t help but feel the tribe’s deep-rooted connection to the land rekindling in real time.

When the tribe “started to burn the sage ... that’s when it hit me,” she said. “This was a public witness of the first time that they could practice their traditions. They could be who they are and not have to ask anybody else.”

## Officer held by ICE opts to leave country

By PATRICK WHITTLE

**OLD ORCHARD BEACH, Maine** — A Maine police officer arrested by immigration authorities has agreed to voluntarily leave the country, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement said Monday.

ICE arrested Old Orchard Beach Police Department reserve Officer Jon Luke Evans, of Jamaica, on July 25, as part of the agency’s effort to step up immigration enforcement. Officials with the town and police department have said federal authorities previously told them Evans was legally authorized to work in the U.S.

An ICE representative reached by telephone told the Associated Press on Monday that a judge has granted voluntary depart-



Old Orchard Beach Police

**OFFICER** Jon Luke Evans receives his badge in Old Orchard Beach.

ture for Evans and that he could leave as soon as that day. The representative did not provide other details about Evans’ case.

Evans’ arrest touched off a dispute between Old Orchard Beach officials and ICE. Police Chief Elise Chard has said the department was notified by federal

officials that Evans was legally permitted to work in the country, and that the town submitted information via the Department of Homeland Security’s E-Verify program prior to Evans’ employment. Assistant Secretary of Homeland Security Tricia McLaughlin then accused the town of “reckless reliance” on the department’s E-Verify program.

E-Verify is an online system that allows employers to check if potential employees can work legally in the U.S.

The town is aware of reports that Evans plans to leave the country voluntarily, Chard said Monday.

“The town reiterates its ongoing commitment to meeting all state and federal laws regarding employment,” Chard said in a statement. “We will continue to rely on the I-9 Employment Eligibility Verification form

and the E-Verify database to confirm employment eligibility.”

ICE’s detainee lookup website said Monday that Evans was being held at the Donald W. Wyatt Detention Facility in Central Falls, R.I. However, a representative for Wyatt said Evans had been transferred to an ICE facility in Burlington, Mass. ICE officials did not respond to requests for comment on the discrepancy.

ICE officials said in July that Evans overstayed his visa and unlawfully attempted to purchase a firearm. WMTW-TV reported Monday that Evans’ agreement to a voluntary departure means he will be allowed to leave the U.S. at his own expense to avoid being deported.

Whittle writes for the Associated Press.

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