"All the News That's Fit to Print"

The New York Times

THE WEATHER
Today, clouds, some sun, breezy, high 71. **Tonight,** cloudy, a shower or two, low 50. **Tomorrow,** showers and a thunderstorm, breezy, warm, high 68. Weather map is on Page B8.

VOL. CLXXV .... No. 60,844 © 2026 The New York Times Company SATURDAY, APRIL 4, 2026 Prices in Canada may be higher $4.00



ARASH KHAMOOSHI FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

A U.S. strike on a bridge intended to connect Tehran to the Caspian Sea left eight dead on Thursday, according to Iran state media.

American Combat Jet Shot Down Above Iran; One in Crew Is Rescued

For Military, Trump Seeks $1.5 Trillion

By TONY ROMM

WASHINGTON — With the United States at war with Iran and embroiled in conflicts around the world, the White House asked Congress on Friday to approve about $1.5 trillion for defense in the 2027 fiscal year. If enacted, that amount would set military spending at its highest level in modern history.

The request, which arrived as part of President Trump's new budget, would amount to a roughly 40 percent increase from what the United States spent on the Pentagon this fiscal year. The administration coupled the proposal with a call for $73 billion in cuts spread across many domestic agencies, including the elimination of key federal health, housing and education programs, some of which serve minority groups and the poor.

The ideas sum to a fiscal blueprint that could add trillions of dollars to the brimming federal debt, if Congress opts to translate the president's full vision into law without other changes to the nation's balance sheet. But such an outcome seemed highly unlikely, given that Republicans united with Democrats only months earlier to reject the president's last proposal for dramatic spending cuts.

This year, Mr. Trump urged Congress to approve most of the new defense money — more than $1.1 trillion — as part of its regular work to fund the government and to enact the remaining $350 billion using the same special legislative tactic that allowed Republicans to clinch their tax cuts in 2025. Such a move could also enable G.O.P. leaders to boost funding for the president's mass deportations despite Democrats' objections.

In the days before releasing his plan, the president and his aides framed the proposed increase for defense in urgent terms, citing a need to restock munitions and other supplies as the war with Iran continued. At one point, Mr. Trump indicated at a private lunch that military spending needed to be a national priority, even at the expense of federal safety-net programs and other

Continued on Page A5

Another From Plane Unaccounted For

This article is by ***Eric Schmitt****,* ***Helene Cooper*** *and* ***Thomas Fuller****.*

WASHINGTON — American forces rescued an airman whose warplane was shot down over Iran on Friday, but the uncertain fate of a second crew member prompted a risky search operation on Iranian soil, U.S. and Israeli officials said.

The loss of the warplane, an F-15E Strike Eagle, is the first known instance of an American combat aircraft going down over Iran since the war began more than a month ago.

Iran's ability to shoot down the fast and agile F-15E came three days after the leaders of the Pentagon claimed "an increase in air superiority" over the skies in Iran. The downing of the jet suggested that Iran, whose military and air defenses have been heavily bombed, still had some command of its airspace. An American helicopter was hit during the search-and-rescue operation but managed to escape safely.

A second U.S. Air Force combat plane crashed near the Strait of Hormuz about the same time the F-15E was shot down over Iran, according to two U.S. officials who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss operational matters. The lone pilot in the second plane, an A-10 Warthog, was rescued.

Continued on Page A6



IRIB (ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN BROADCASTING), VIA REUTERS

A photo provided by Iran state media claims to show part of a downed F-15E Strike Eagle. The red tail stripe is consistent with the tail section of an F-15E.

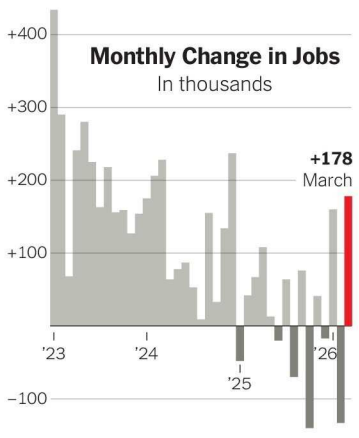
U.S. Reports Strong Job Growth For March, Beating Predictions

By LYDIA DePILLIS

The labor market put in a strong showing in March, as wintry weather receded, strikes concluded and businesses started looking beyond the huge changes of President Trump's first year in office.

The Labor Department reported on Friday that employers had added 178,000 jobs last month, substantially more than economists had expected, bringing the average over the past three volatile months to a healthy 68,000 positions. The unemployment rate dropped to 4.3 percent, leveling off after a gradual rise, as the work force contracted slightly.

The numbers were collected before the energy price shock caused by the U.S.-Israeli war with Iran tightened its grip on the global economy, however. Forecasters have estimated that persistently higher oil prices will slow job creation and raise unemployment in a year when they had expected the economy to regain some vigor.



Note: Data is seasonally adjusted.

THE NEW YORK TIMES

"A lot of people thought this was going to be the year that finally we put political uncertainty behind us and the labor market was going to reaccelerate," said Guy Berger, chief economist at Homebase, a scheduling and payroll platform. "And it's still too early for gas

Continued on Page A15

Bondi Wanted a Graceful Exit, But Trump Wanted Her Gone

Fealty and Flattery Are No Guarantees of Job Security

By GLENN THRUSH and TYLER PAGER

WASHINGTON — Attorney General Pam Bondi had a pretty good idea her days were numbered.

President Trump had complained too freely, too frequently, to too many people about her inability to prosecute the people he hates. She was falling short of Mr. Trump's unyielding, unrealistic demands for retribution against his enemies. She had made mistake upon mistake in her handling of the Epstein files. Her critics were in the president's ear.

Last month, Ms. Bondi told a friend that Mr. Trump's willingness to fire Kristi Noem from her post as homeland security secretary meant she might be in jeopardy too.

But Ms. Bondi had not expected Mr. Trump, the man responsible for elevating her to one of the most powerful positions in the country, to drop the curtain quite so soon, according to four people familiar with the situation.

On Wednesday, the 60-year-old Ms. Bondi, downcast but determined, joined Mr. Trump for a glum crosstown drive to the Supreme Court, where they watched arguments in the birthright citizenship case. In the car, Mr. Trump told her it was time for a change at the top of the Justice Department.

Ms. Bondi hoped to save her job or, at the very least, buy a little more time — until the summer — to give herself a graceful exit.

She ended up with neither, and grew emotional Wednesday in conversations with friends and colleagues after she realized she was out. The next morning, Mr. Trump made it official, and fired

Continued on Page A12

The Mystifying Drunken Episodes of Teetotalers

A Rare Condition That Upends People's Lives and Reputations

By KATE MORGAN

In 2019, Mark Mongiardo, then a high school athletic director, was pulled over in Sullivan County, N.Y., after a dinner with the boys' golf team. He'd eaten a hot dog and some fries, washed down with a soda.

He hadn't had a sip of alcohol, but the officer who stopped Mr. Mongiardo for using his phone while driving smelled it anyway. A breathalyzer test showed Mr. Mongiardo's blood alcohol content was .18 percent, more than twice the legal driving limit.

It was his second drunken driving offense in two years, but these episodes of unexplained intoxication had begun decades earlier.

Ever since the start of his career as a gym teacher and coach in the early 2000s, Mr. Mongiardo, now 43, had been repeatedly pulled aside and warned that players and colleagues smelled alcohol on him. In 2016, he failed a surprise urine test and was required to attend counseling. He left that school district because he "could feel a reputation starting to form," he said. Two weeks into another job, he got his first D.W.I.

Problems began to arise at home, too. He recalled one Christmas dinner where he struggled to piece together a full sentence or even pick up his fork. "There was no alcohol being served, and suddenly Mark's drunk," he said. "My

Continued on Page A16



How the generation raised on smartphones is imagining life without them. By Matthew Shaer

A New Approach for the Magazine

You'll find a collection of new content this weekend in The New York Times Magazine, which has been redesigned for a more dynamic presentation. Even as it retains its commitment to deep reporting, the magazine will feature more visual journalism, more history and humor, more essays and photography. The new approach is intended to create an environment of experimentation rather than imposing a fixed editorial lineup each week.

China Aims for the Moon as NASA Takes Note

A Rival for Artemis in a New Space Race

By SELAM GEBREKIDAN and JOY DONG

HONG KONG — More than half a century after the United States put humans on the moon, it is once again locked in a space race. This one is with China.

NASA sent astronauts toward the moon's orbit this week, a milestone toward grander ambitions. Both the United States and China want to build outposts around the moon's south pole and hope to tap frozen water, hydrogen and helium there. Both countries plan to build nuclear reactors to power lunar bases from which they can launch missions into deep space.

It is a new frontier, and whoever gets there first will have a big say in setting the rules.

NASA's program, known as Artemis, has hit repeated snags. The United States wants to be back on the moon by 2028, two years ahead of China's target, but even NASA acknowledges that it may not win.

"They may be early," Jared Isaacman, the NASA administrator, said last week. "And recent history suggests we might be late."

China is pursuing its lunar ambitions with a singular, formidable focus. Its program has several advantages over its American rivals.

Experts say China's edge lies in its centralized control, which allows it to plan and fund projects for decades at a time. Its robotic space missions have already gone where the United States has not.

China is the only nation to land on and retrieve samples from the far side of the moon, the hemisphere that always faces away from Earth. This summer, China's seventh robotic mission, Chang'e 7, will explore the lunar south pole.

It helps China that its immedi-

Continued on Page A9



GREG BAKER/AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE — GETTY IMAGES

A board featuring China's astronauts at a launch center in the Gobi Desert. The program's first goal is a moonwalk by 2030.

INTERNATIONAL A4-9

Kidnapping Syrian Minority
A Times investigation found that abductions of Alawite women and girls were more common and more brutal than the government has said. PAGE A7

Foreign Aid Eviscerated
President Trump clawed back money Congress had approved for programs that had bipartisan backing. PAGE A9

SPORTS B6-10

N.C.A.A. Win for Las Vegas
An influx of fans who want to follow March Madness from a gambler's paradise is a lift for the city. PAGE B6

TRAVEL C7-9

36 Hours in Raleigh, N.C.
This Southern capital has plenty to entertain weekend visitors. PAGE C9

OBITUARIES B11-12

A Champion of Orangutans
Biruté Galdikas, 79, was a prominent researcher of great apes. PAGE B12



NATIONAL A10-17

An Exodus From the House
As the midterm election cycle gets underway, lawmakers, particularly Republicans, are departing at one of the highest rates since the 1930s. PAGE A11

Fight to Fund Muslim Schools
As Islamic private schools try to join Texas' new voucher program, top Republicans have vowed to stop what they call "radical" indoctrination. PAGE A14

E.P.A. Targets Microplastics
The agency said that it would try to curb levels of microplastics and drugs in the drinking water of hundreds of millions of Americans. PAGE A16

BUSINESS B1-5

Rethinking the A.I. Job Threat
Artificial intelligence hasn't disrupted the labor market, economists say, but they are increasingly convinced that it will — and that policymakers are not prepared to respond. PAGE B1

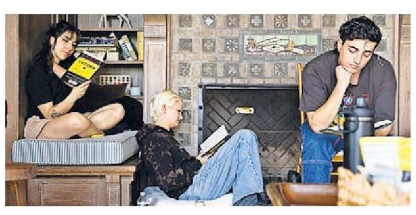
Remarks Haunt Trump in Court
Judges have cited attacks on the news media made by the president and his appointees when ruling against the government in at least three lawsuits involving news organizations. PAGE B1

OPINION A18-19

Michelle Goldberg PAGE A19

ARTS C1-6

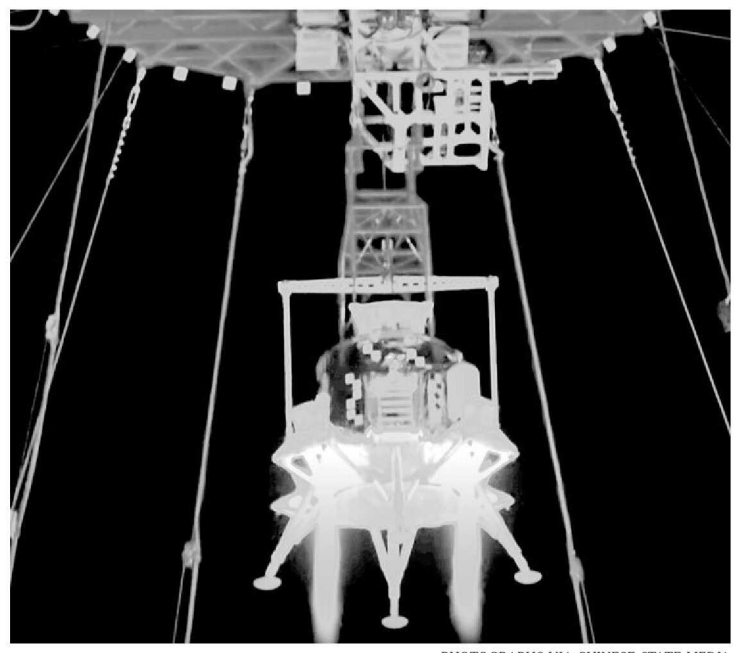
16 Strangers Reading Aloud
What happens when you shrink down a book club to two days and then each person takes turns narrating the story? Welcome to Page Break. PAGE C1



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China Aims for Moon With NASA Looking Over Its Shoulder





PHOTOGRAPHS VIA CHINESE STATE MEDIA

NASA is paying close attention to the preparations that the Chinese space agency is making for its crewed lunar missions. China's moonbound astronauts will be fitted with spacesuits called Wangyu, left, and land on the moon in a lander called Lanyue, right.

From Page A1

ate ambition is leaner. Chinese astronauts plan to land on the relatively accessible near side of the moon. That's where Neil Armstrong took "one small step for a man, one giant leap for mankind" in 1969.

American astronauts are aiming for the moon's south pole.

A recent program overhaul could speed Artemis along. The new plan includes more launches to test components, gain confidence and lower risks, Mr. Isaacman said. After returning astronauts to the moon, NASA plans to launch missions every six months and sustain a presence there.

"This time the goal is not flags and footprints," Mr. Isaacman said. "This time the goal is to stay."

China is pursuing similar goals through two programs that will likely merge: Crewed missions under the military's purview, and civilian robotic missions.

Both programs rely on components built mainly by the China Aerospace Science and Technology Corporation, an enterprise that combines industry and military expertise. That means they share key technologies.

NASA relies more heavily on private vendors.

Yuqi Qian, a lunar geologist at the University of Hong Kong who works on China's lunar missions, said that because China's first crewed mission is treading some of the same ground covered by Apollo missions long ago, scientists have more freedom to experiment. Chinese exploration programs will keep moving at a cadence set years earlier, regardless of what Artemis does, he said.

"There is actually no burden on the Chinese side," Dr. Qian said in an interview. "We are doing this more freely."

"I don't think China regards this as a race," he added.

Here's what we know about China's crewed lunar mission, and how its components compare with their NASA counterparts.

Kenneth Chang and Alastair Pike contributed reporting.

The Launcher

China plans to use a government-built rocket, the Long March 10, for the moon landing. It is about as tall as a 30-story building and has seven engines at its base, the section known as the first stage.

In initial tests, Chinese scientists fired up the rocket's engines while it was tethered in place. Then, in February, they fired five of the seven engines and launched the first stage to a height of just over 65 miles.

It splashed down in the sea, where scientists retrieved it.

China is behind the United States on rocket technology, a gap that has slowed its bid to compete with SpaceX's Starlink satellite network in low-earth orbit. China does not have a reusable rocket to match SpaceX's Falcon 9.

Parts of the Long March 10 may eventually become reusable, but that matters less for lunar missions, which are less frequent than launches to put satellites in orbit.

The American launcher — the Space Launch System — is a marked improvement on the system that first sent astronauts to the moon. It is a powerful and complicated rocket cobbled together from components made by NASA and multiple contractors.

The rocket has not been used many times, but on Wednesday, it blasted off for its first crewed mission against a backdrop of a clear blue sky. It was a big win for NASA and more frequent launches in the new Artemis plan are expected to work out any remaining kinks.

"It's a big celebration in launch control for the rocket guys," Amit Kshatriya, the NASA associate administrator, said after the launch.

"The rocket guys can go out and play now," he said.

The Spacecraft

China is developing a new spacecraft called the Mengzhou or "Dream Boat" that can carry up to seven astronauts. It is designed for both lunar missions and trips to the Chinese space station, about 280 miles above Earth.

The spacecraft will carry astronauts to a lunar orbit. Once there, it will rendezvous with a lander that will take the astronauts to the moon's surface. China is planning to conduct the moon mission with two launches, in part because it does not have a big enough launcher.

China will test the Dream Boat's ability to rendezvous and dock with the Chinese space station later this year. Similar in-orbit meetups have already been tested in robotic missions to the moon.

Dream Boat passed its most recent test, in February, when it demonstrated its ability to abort within the first minutes of a launch. The spacecraft successfully detached from a rocket under maximum pressure conditions, according to government media.

The American spacecraft, Orion, was first tested in 2014 and is farther along in its development. Orion is carrying the four astronauts on the Artemis II mission, which is scheduled to orbit the moon. NASA will test its life support and environmental control systems during this mission.

The Lander

Anyone who has watched footage of the Apollo 11 mission will remember the lander — a scientific wonder that looked like a janky assemblage of golden foil and flimsy metal.

China's version of the lunar lander, called Lanyue or "Embracing the Moon," incorporates decades of improvements.

According to the mission design, after the astronauts hop aboard in orbit, the lander will head to the lunar surface. There, it will serve them as a temporary home, data center and energy source.

For the astronauts' return, the lander will take off and rendezvous with the spacecraft in the moon's orbit.

China tested a prototype in August, navigating to a surface that was built to imitate the moon's craters and bumps.

The U.S. does not have a lander yet, in part because of the complexity of its planned mission. SpaceX is developing its version, Starship, and will test it again in April. Blue Origin is developing another lander.

NASA plans to launch a mission called Artemis III next year that will test the landers' operation closer to Earth. The agency will go with whichever lander is ready first, according to Lori Glaze, a NASA official.

The Spacesuits

Chinese astronauts will be fitted with spacesuits called Wangyu or "Gazing into the Cosmos" for their spacewalks.

Wangyu suits will be slimmer versions of the spacesuits used on the Chinese space station. They will have an anti-glare visor, a camera on each side of the helmet and a control consol on the chest.

The suits' design will echo traditional armor to make the astronauts look "more spirited and imposing," one official told government media. The spacesuits are expected to undergo more testing this year.

The United States will upgrade its suits to make them more flexible and provide greater protection from the harsh environment on the moon. NASA has contracted for spacesuits that can support astronauts for up to eight hours outside their vehicle.

Trump's Clawbacks Have Eviscerated Once-Bipartisan Initiatives for Foreign Aid

By CATIE EDMONDSON



ADAM DEAN FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Rohingya refugees after crossing into Bangladesh fleeing violence in 2017. Funding aimed at addressing atrocities by Myanmar's military junta was cut entirely.

WASHINGTON — A U.S. government initiative to help island nations in the Pacific counter China lost $92 million, more than half of its budget. Funding aimed at preventing and responding to atrocities committed by Myanmar's military junta was cut entirely.

When President Trump moved to claw back vast sums of foreign aid funding last year — first by winning party-line approval from the G.O.P.-controlled Congress to cancel the spending, then by unilaterally doing so without giving lawmakers time to object — his administration did not say which programs it planned to defund.

New data reviewed by The New York Times presents the clearest picture yet of where the administration chose to make the spending cuts. It was mostly by taking a meat ax to programs that once enjoyed bipartisan backing on Capitol Hill, as well as slashing almost 90 percent of U.S. economic aid to Africa, by far the hardest hit by Mr. Trump of any region across the globe.

The Trump administration has framed the cuts as a pillar of its efforts to raze what it calls wasteful spending antithetical to U.S. interests abroad. Russell T. Vought, the White House budget director, testified before the Senate Appropriations Committee last year that the rescissions package he was asking Congress to approve targeted "many foreign aid programs" that "use benevolent-sounding titles to hide truly appalling activity that is not in line with American interests."

Economic and development-assistance funding was severely affected: $4.2 billion of the $7.8 billion lawmakers approved was ultimately canceled. And out of the 104 directives lawmakers had written into the spending bill to fund the State Department and other foreign aid programs, only two survived.

About half of the funding that was preserved and will be spent — a total of $2.4 billion — is going to Jordan, after Republican senators fought to exempt programs aiding the Middle East ally.

In the package Mr. Vought sent to Capitol Hill, he described economic assistance funds as having broadly "been used to fund radical gender and climate projects," rather than to meet economic development needs.

A senior administration official pointed to grant funding for Myanmar that had gone to Freedom House, the pro-democracy nonprofit, and Internews Network, a nonprofit news organization, calling them "radical leftist NGOS." Internews Network had been scrutinized by conservative media in part for a guide it published for Spanish-language journalists encouraging them to "adopt practices endorsed by transgender activists" in their coverage.

Terminated funding meant to help island nations in the Pacific counter the Chinese government, the official said, had been used to finance "radical climate" projects, rather than to counter Beijing's influence.

New data presents the clearest look yet of where cuts were made by the administration.

Opponents of the rescissions package in both parties had called on the Trump administration to redirect funding away from recipients it viewed as radical, and to not terminate the money altogether.

"I certainly agree that the taxpayers of the United States should not be paying for things like promoting vegan food in Zambia," Senator Susan Collins, Republican of Maine and the chairwoman of the Appropriations Committee, said at a hearing examining the cuts.

She added: "However, these and other controversial and questionable projects were the product of the misguided priorities of the Biden administration. Unless the current administration plans to continue these controversial projects that it has identified, which I very much doubt, those projects alone cannot be used to justify the proposed rescissions."

Instead, Mr. Trump took aim at programs that had long enjoyed bipartisan constituencies, including those aimed at violence against children and combating infectious diseases. The programs to support the Burmese, especially the Rohingya people fleeing ethnic cleansing, had been championed by Senator Mitch McConnell of Kentucky during his long tenure as Republican leader.

While writing the foreign aid funding bill, Mr. McConnell pressed to reinsert $121 million for Myanmar, including for atrocities prevention and accountability programs. In doing so, he turned the funding faucet back on, but did not restore the money that Mr. Trump had already canceled.

"The Chinese are in there just operating effectively, and we — because of not honoring contracts and some of the other things we were doing to try to be helpful — are completely getting outmaneuvered," Mr. McConnell told Secretary of State Marco Rubio at a hearing last May.

Aid to Venezuela and Cuba — two nations with strong G.O.P. allies on Capitol Hill — was largely preserved, while Africa fared the worst. Lawmakers had approved $1.5 billion for economic and development aid programs in Africa, but only $186 million was ultimately spent.

Funding for programs in Eastern Europe and Central Asia fared far better, with $712 million of the $770 million lawmakers allocated going out the door. That funding was protected in part by the determination of a few key Republican members to preserve funding for Ukraine.

Senator Thom Tillis, Republican of North Carolina, had given a long speech warning that he and other lawmakers had "no earthly idea what specific cuts would occur" once they had approved the package. He said he had sought to shield the aid to Ukraine.

"This happens to be a program that some believe, if it's cut, could harm some of the nonmilitary aid that we're providing Ukraine," Mr. Tillis said last summer, when the Senate was considering approving Mr. Trump's requested spending cuts.

"I've been told," he said at the time, "that that will not be one of the cuts, and so I'm willing to move forward and vote on this bill on the assumption that that comes to pass."

With those programs protected, administration officials had to cut more deeply into other areas in order to reach the top-line number they wanted to slash.

Senator Patty Murray of Washington, the top Democrat on the Appropriations Committee, had warned about that dynamic as Republicans pushed the rescissions package through the House and Senate on party-line votes last summer.

Republicans "preserve funding for Jordan, Egypt and a few university partnerships. What about our allies in the Indo-Pacific?" Ms. Murray said in a floor speech. "I'm sure my colleagues were told their priorities won't be impacted, but Director Vought cannot keep that promise given the scale of these cuts. The math simply does not add up."

Ms. Murray argued that if lawmakers put together their own package of spending reductions rather than approve one written by the administration, "we actually know what is being cut."

"Doesn't that sound a lot better than just passing this Pandora's box and finding out later what got cut?" she asked.

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