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Middle East conflict

Trump vows to sink Iranian ships approaching a U.S. blockade of Strait of Hormuz

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By NPR Staff

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A woman walks past a wall mural along a roadside in Tehran, Iran, on Sunday. Atta Kherani/AP Photo/Amr Nassef

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President Trump says the U.S. military began a blockade of Iranian ports on Monday, drawing threats of retaliation from Iran, after talks between the U.S. and Iran failed to reach an agreement over the weekend.

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"Right now we have a blockade," Trump said Monday. "They're doing no business."

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In a social media post earlier, he reiterated his threat to Iranian ships that tried to interfere. "Warning: If any of these ships come anywhere close to our BLOCKADE, they will be immediately ELIMINATED," he wrote.

It was the latest tactic to pressure Iran to reopen the Strait of Hormuz – by blockading the strait outright.

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As the 10 a.m. ET start time of the blockade approached, the United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations Centre issued a notice saying: "maritime access restrictions are being enforced via affecting Iranian shipping points and coastal areas, including locations along the Arabian Gulf, Gulf of Oman, and the Arabian Sea east of the Strait of Hormuz."



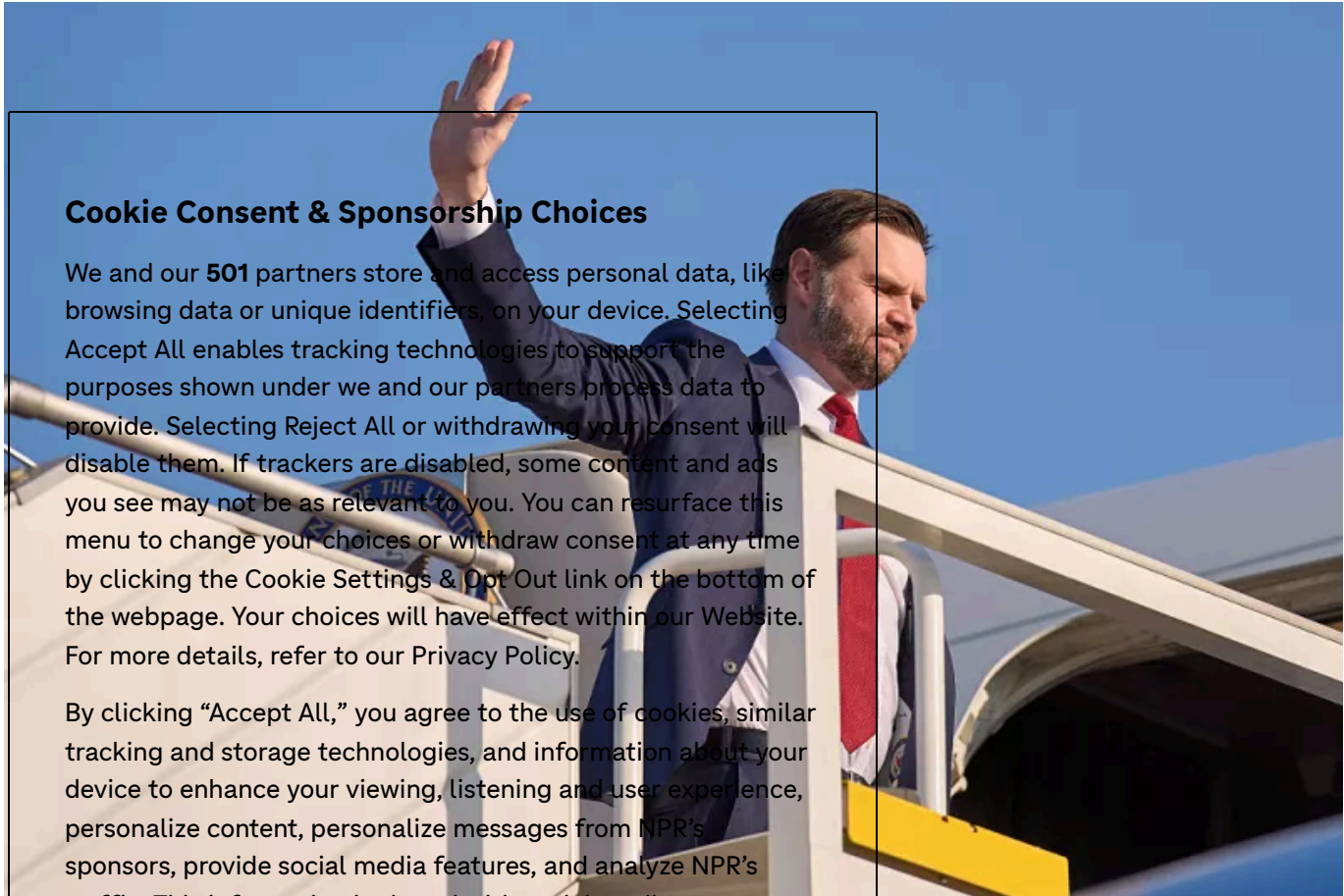
MIDDLE EAST CONFLICT

A Hezbollah commander describes battling Israel in Lebanon

Israel and Hezbollah also continued to trade strikes on Monday, as efforts were underway for Israeli and Lebanese officials to meet in Washington for ceasefire

talks.

Meanwhile, French President Emmanuel Macron announced preparations for a "peaceful multinational mission aimed at restoring freedom of navigation" in the Strait of Hormuz. He said he would be convening a conference on these plans "in the coming days" together with Britain.



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Vice President Vance waves while boarding Air Force Two as he leaves Islamabad on Sunday. Vance spent 21 hours on the ground in Islamabad and stated that an agreement was not made with Iran.

Jacquelyn Martin/Getty Images

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The U.K. won't join Trump's Hormuz blockade, joins France to form "peaceful multinational mission" instead

British Prime Minister Keir Starmer said Monday that the United Kingdom will not join President Trump's blockade of Iranian ports in the Strait of Hormuz. Starmer said his focus was to keep the waterway open

Speaking to BBC Radio, Starmer said that he would not go into operational matters but that the United Kingdom's efforts would be aimed at reopening the strait. He said that this could include marshaling diplomatically and politically as well as minesweeping in the strait.

He said that this was the only way to get energy bills down for people in the U.K. who, according to him, were paying the price of the war in Iran.

France and Britain would co-organize a conference of "countries prepared to contribute alongside us to a peaceful multinational mission aimed at restoring freedom of navigation" in the Strait of Hormuz.

"This strictly defensive mission, separate from the warring parties to the conflict, is intended to be deployed as soon as circumstances permit," Macron posted on X.

Starmer called it "a coordinated, independent, multinational plan to safeguard international shipping when the conflict ends."

Iran warns that warships will be met with a strong response

Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard warned that moving U.S. military ships close to the Strait of Hormuz is considered a violation of the ceasefire that Iran and the U.S. reached last week and will be dealt with firmly.

It said the U.S. moves are "unlawful and amount to piracy," according to Iranian state media.

Nearly 20% of the global supply of oil and gas normally moves through the Strait of Hormuz. It's also a key passageway for other goods such as fertilizer, aluminum and helium.

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But Iran has effectively closed the waterway since the U.S. and Israel attacked Iran more than six weeks ago, a strike from which a small number of ships through from countries that Tehran considers friendly or neutral in the conflict.

Some vessels got through after paying hefty tolls. A lawmaker on the Iranian parliament's National Security and Foreign Policy Committee told state media recently that Iran was charging some vessels up to \$2 million in transit fees.

President Trump has called that "illegal."

Speaking to NPR's *Morning Edition* on Monday, retired U.S. Adm. James Foggo agreed that's unlawful and also said he considered the U.S. blockade an act of war.

"Technically speaking, a blockade of a country or a country's ability to export goods and services is an act of war," he said. "But it's also illegal to charge \$2 million a ship for transit through the straits, which is what Iran has been doing. And if you extrapolate that to a hundred ships a day and 365 days a year, that's a profit of \$73 billion. That's more than the U.S. Navy got for its shipbuilding budget. So they'd be able to reconstitute those things that have been taken away from them."



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Commuters wait on a platform for their metro train to arrive in Iran's capital, Tehran, on Monday.

Atta Kenare/AFP via Getty Images

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U.S. and Iran talks fail, sides signal they are far apart on nuclear enrichment

The U.S. and Iran failed to reach an agreement in highly anticipated face-to-face peace talks that took place over the weekend in Islamabad. On Sunday, after 21 hours of talks, Vice President Vance said Iran chose "not to accept our terms."

Asked what the major sticking point had been that led to the breakdown in negotiations, Vance said: "The simple fact is that we need to see an affirmative commitment that they will not seek a nuclear weapon and they will not seek the tools that would enable them to quickly achieve a nuclear weapon."

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For its part, Iran said the two sides had "reached an understanding on a number of issues, but ultimately the talks did not lead to an agreement."

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi, a member of the Iranian negotiating team, said Sunday that his country "engaged with U.S in good faith to end war," adding that when the two sides were close to reaching an understanding, "we encountered maximalism, shifting goalposts, and blockade."

The status of the two-week ceasefire, which extends until April 22, is now uncertain. But Vance left open the possibility that an agreement could still be reached, saying: "We leave here with a very simple proposal: a method of understanding that is our final and best offer." He added: "We'll see if the Iranians accept it."

The talks in Islamabad were the first face-to-face engagement between the U.S. and Iran since 2015, when the Obama administration negotiated a nuclear deal with Iran that was later scrapped by Trump. They were also the highest-level discussions since the 1979 Islamic Revolution.

In a Fox News interview on Sunday, Trump doubled down in his stance that Iran should not have a nuclear weapon and said he believes Iran will "come to the table" and give up its nuclear weapons efforts. Asked whether he will continue to "destruct" Iran if the country doesn't give up its nuclear weapons program, Trump said: "If they don't give that plan up, yeah."

On Saturday, Trump said, "We win, regardless" of the outcome of negotiations, adding, "We've totally defeated that country."

Trump wrote on social media on Sunday that the talks failed because "IRAN IS UNWILLING TO GIVE UP ITS NUCLEAR AMBITIONS!"

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Tehran has repeatedly said that its nuclear program is a civilian one and that it has a right to continue to enrich uranium for that purpose.

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U.S. warships pass through the Strait of Hormuz

As the talks between the U.S. and Iran were underway, two U.S. Navy guided-missile destroyers passed through the Strait of Hormuz on Saturday, a U.S. official told NPR, marking the first transit of U.S. warships since the start of the Iran war six weeks ago.

U.S. Central Command said it had begun setting conditions to clear Iranian sea mines planted throughout the waterway to "encourage the free flow of commerce."

Israel and Hezbollah continue to trade strikes

Attacks continued in Lebanon on Monday as Israeli airstrikes hit border villages that Israel says it is seizing from Lebanon in order to create a buffer zone to prevent militant group Hezbollah from firing cross-border rockets.

Lebanese authorities said more than 100 people were killed over the weekend from Israeli attacks.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who crossed into Lebanon on Sunday, said these displaced from southern Lebanon will not be allowed to return to their homes. Israel's Defense Minister Isaac Katz said the goal of Israel's campaign is to destroy houses in the area to prevent Hezbollah from using them.

Their statements came as preparations were underway for Israeli and Lebanese ambassadors to meet on Tuesday in Washington for ceasefire talks, the first direct official talks between the two countries since 1983. The talks are not supported by Hezbollah, which held a rally in Beirut over the weekend, filling several blocks of the capital.

The Lebanese government said Israel has destroyed around 40,000 houses in the past 35 days.

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by clicking the Cookie Settings & Opt Out link on the bottom of the webpage. Your choices will have effect within our website. Lebanese Red Cross volunteers inspect the damage to their rescue ambulances on April 13 at the site of an Israeli drone strike that targeted their headquarters in the southern Lebanese city of Tyre. For more details, refer to our Privacy Policy.

Kawnat Haju/AFP via Getty Images

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The Lebanese Red Cross said that one of its ambulance teams was directly targeted by an Israeli drone over the weekend, killing one paramedic and wounding another. The death brought the number of medics killed to at least 57 in the past six weeks, according to Lebanese authorities. Israel denies it is targeting medics and accused Hezbollah of transporting weapons in ambulances.

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Human rights groups say Iran increased executions

At least 1,639 people were executed in Iran in 2025, according to a joint report by the Norwegian organization Iran Human Rights and Paris-based Together Against the Death Penalty.

According to the report, the figure represents an increase of 68% over the previous year.

A wave of arrests and executions followed the countrywide protests that started in December 2025 and trailed into January.

Mass arrests have also been regularly reported in Iran's state media since the start of the war, with authorities accusing those it finds up of having ties to Israel or aiding terrorist groups.

Betsy Joles in Islamabad; Lauren Frayer in Beirut; D. Parvaz in Van, Turkey; Fatima Al-Kassab in London; and Tina Kraja, Greg Myre and Alex Leff in Washington, D.C.,

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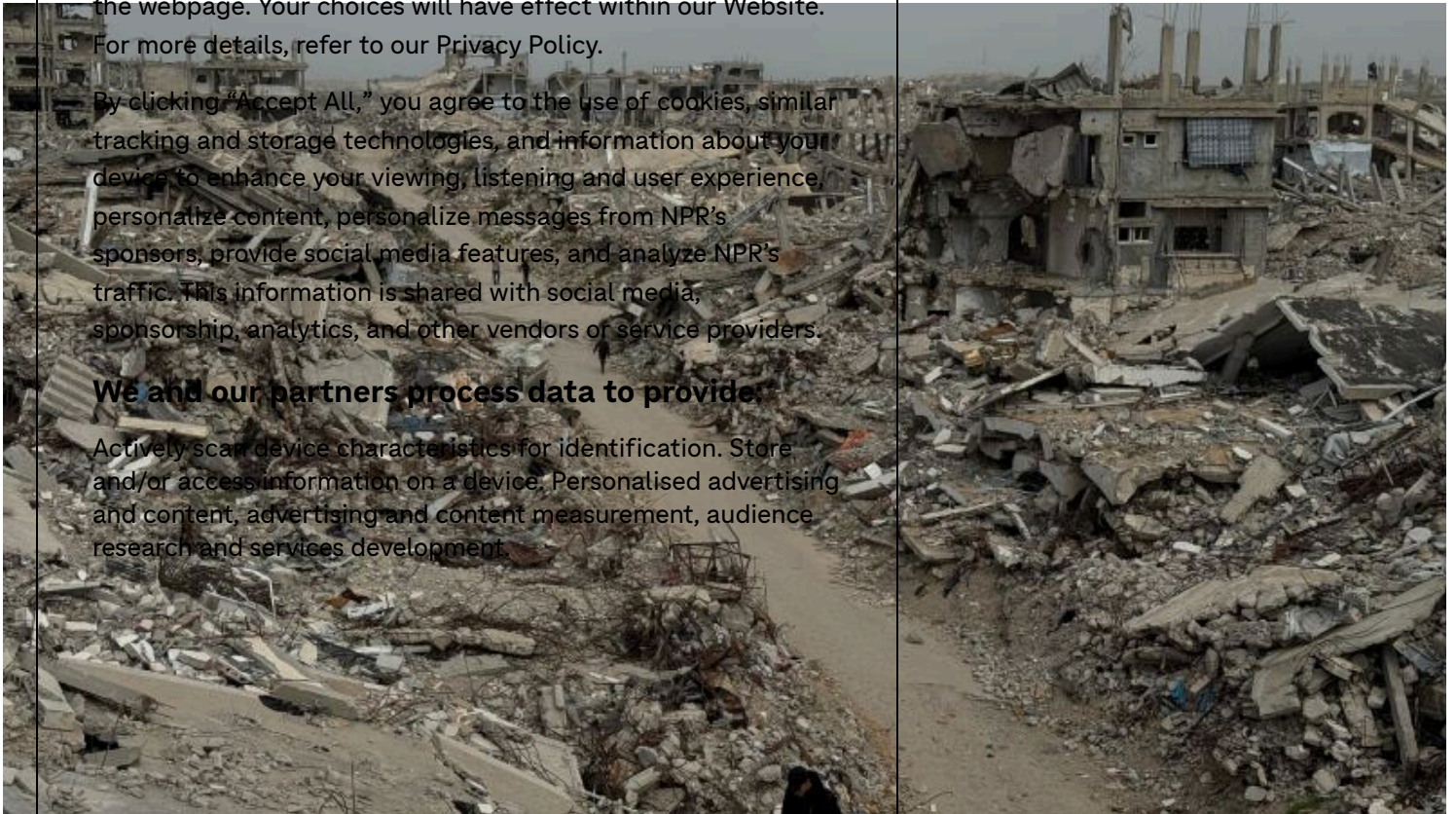
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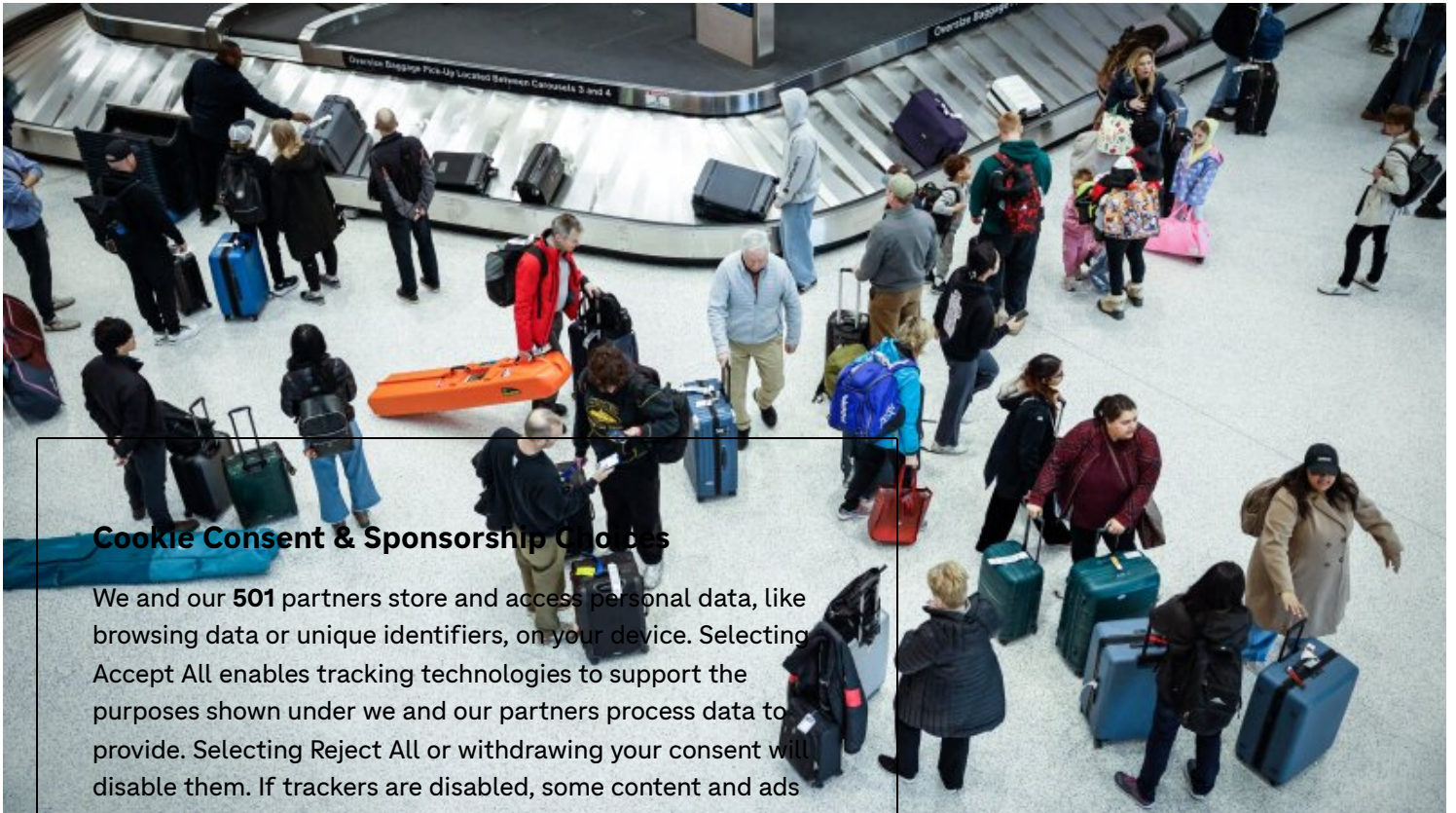
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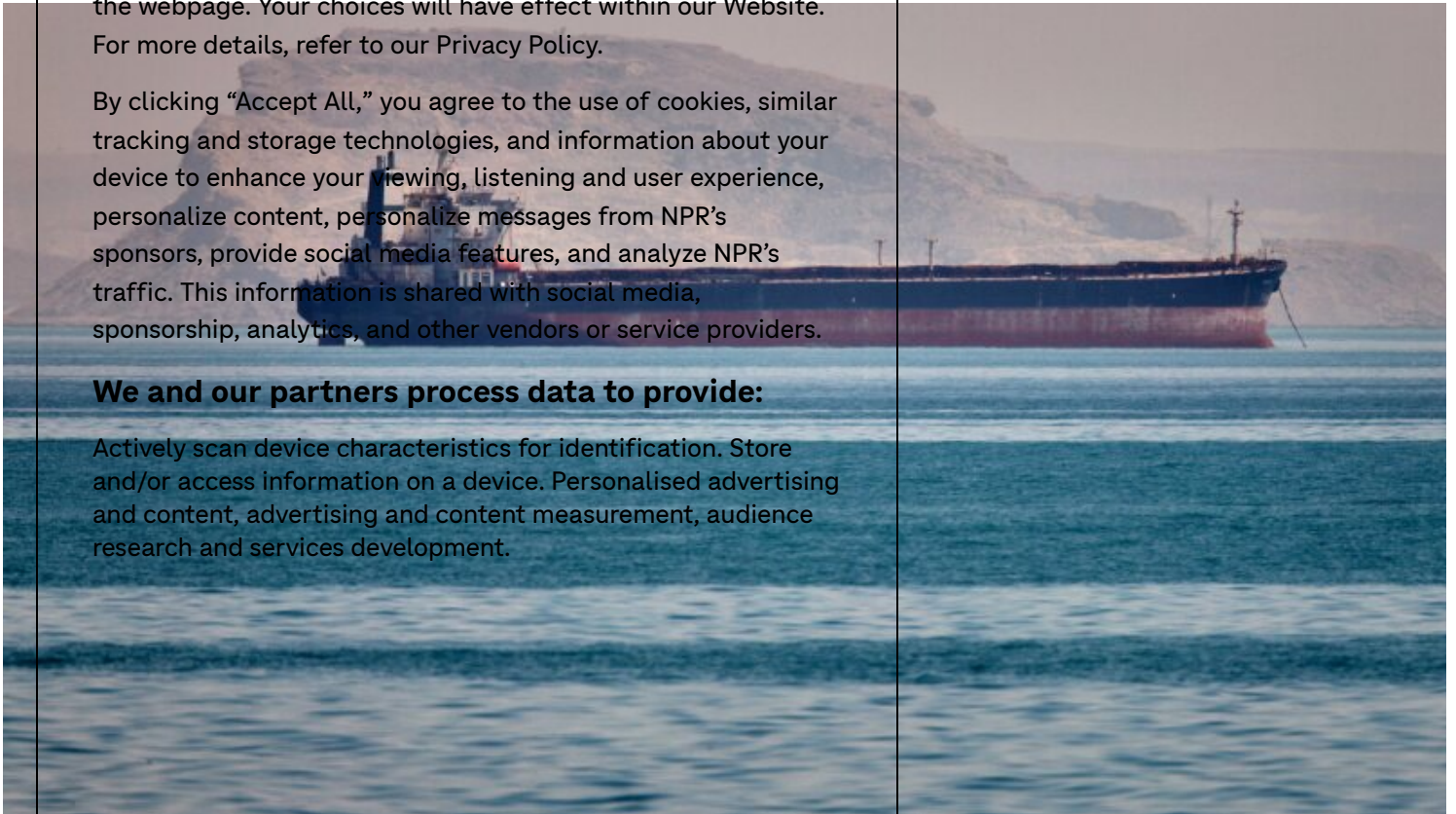
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MIDDLE EAST CONFLICT

Trump says he's paused U.S. effort to guide stranded vessels out of Strait of Hormuz



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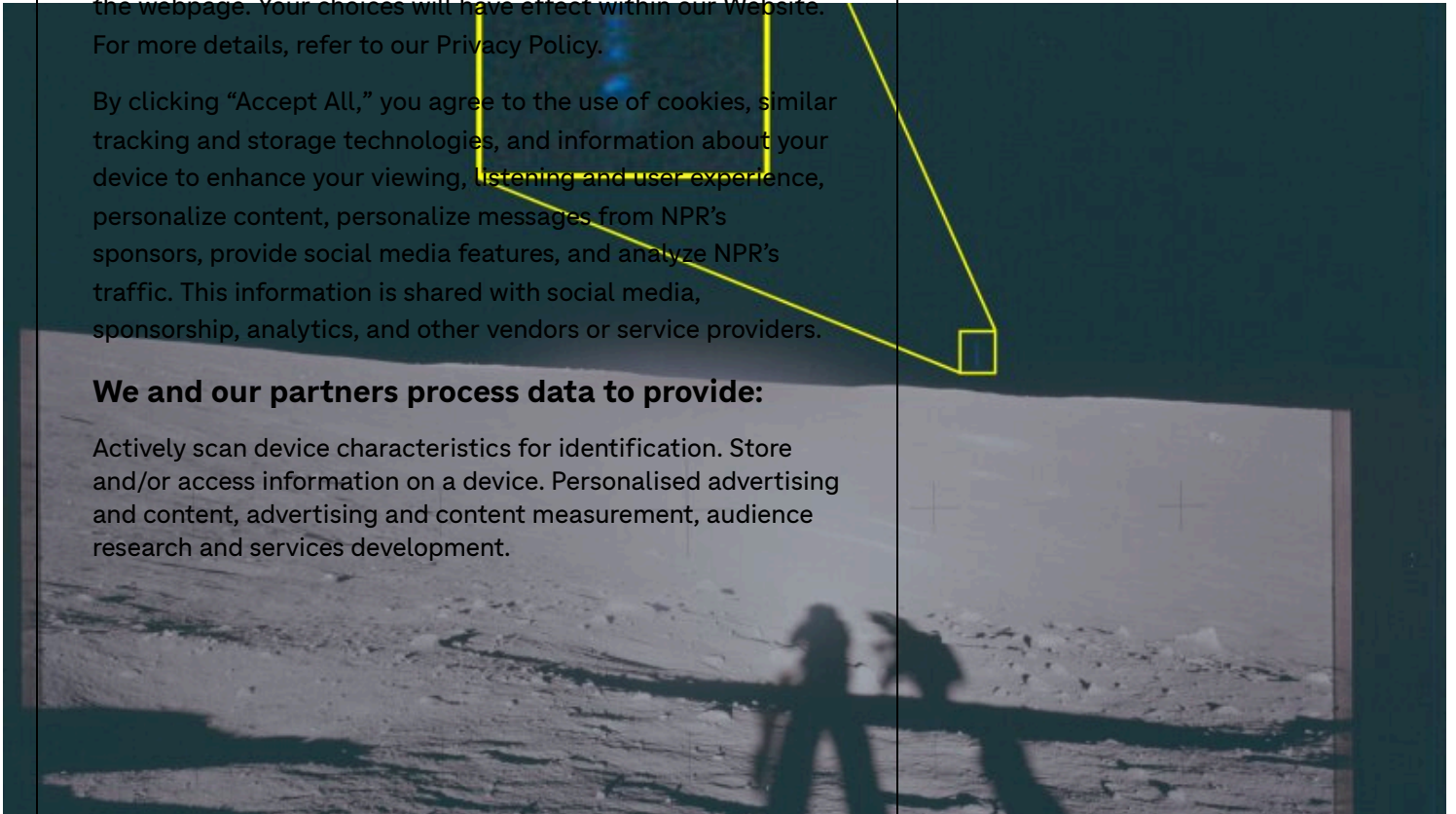
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NATIONAL

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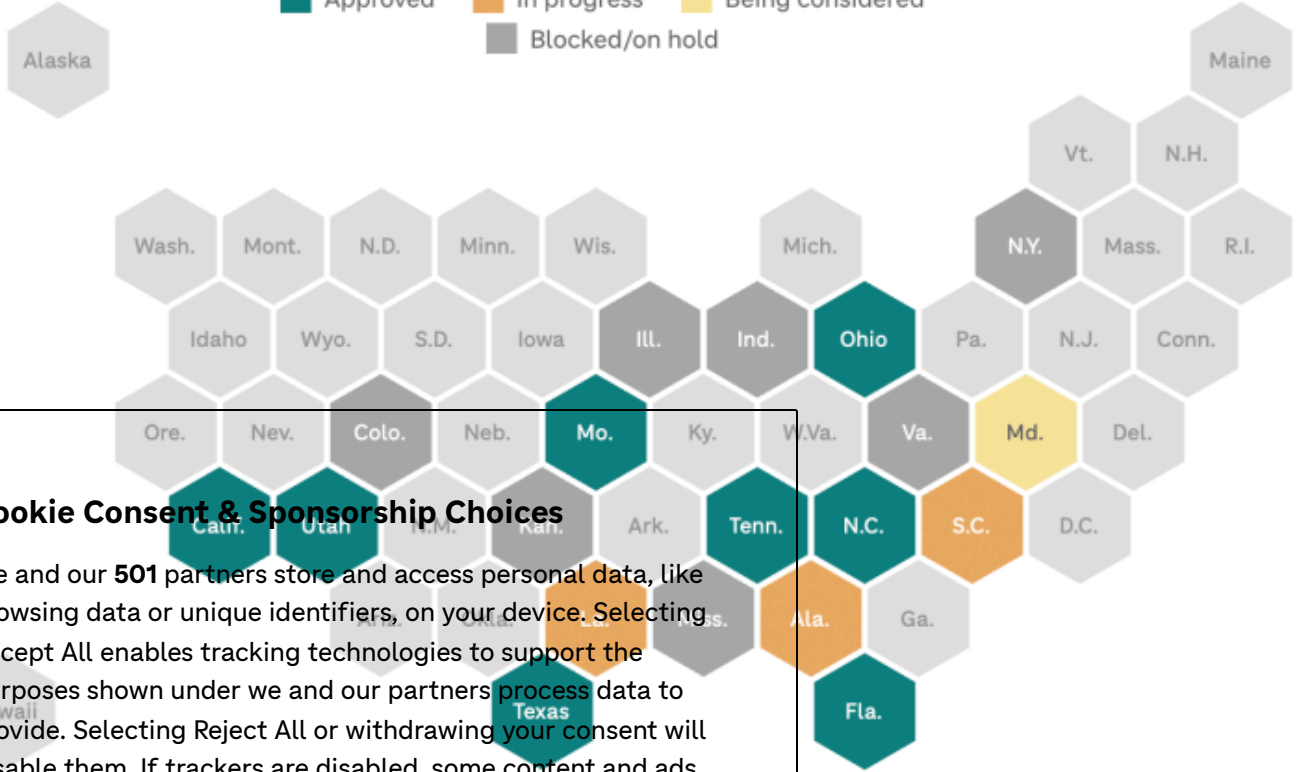
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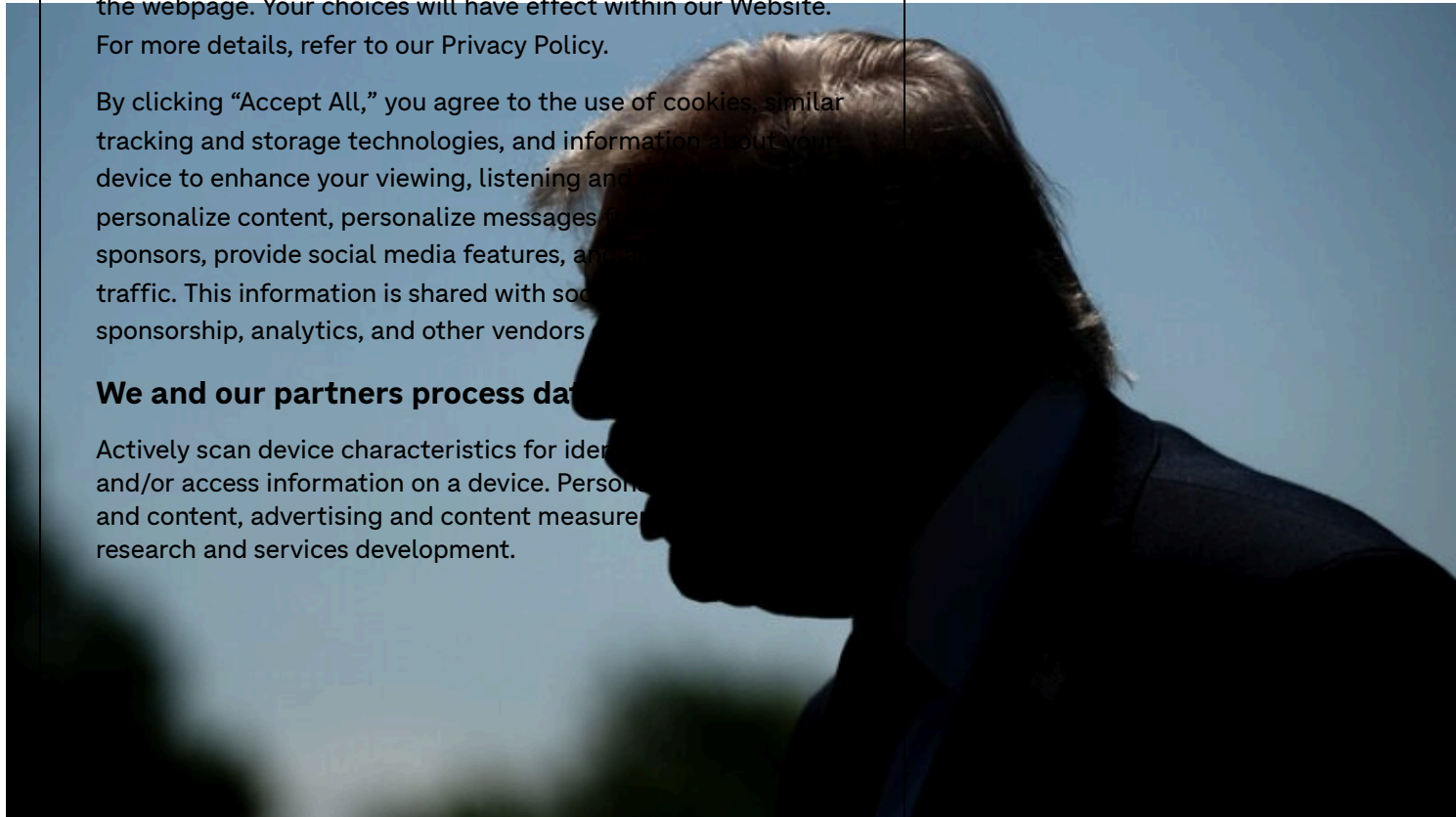
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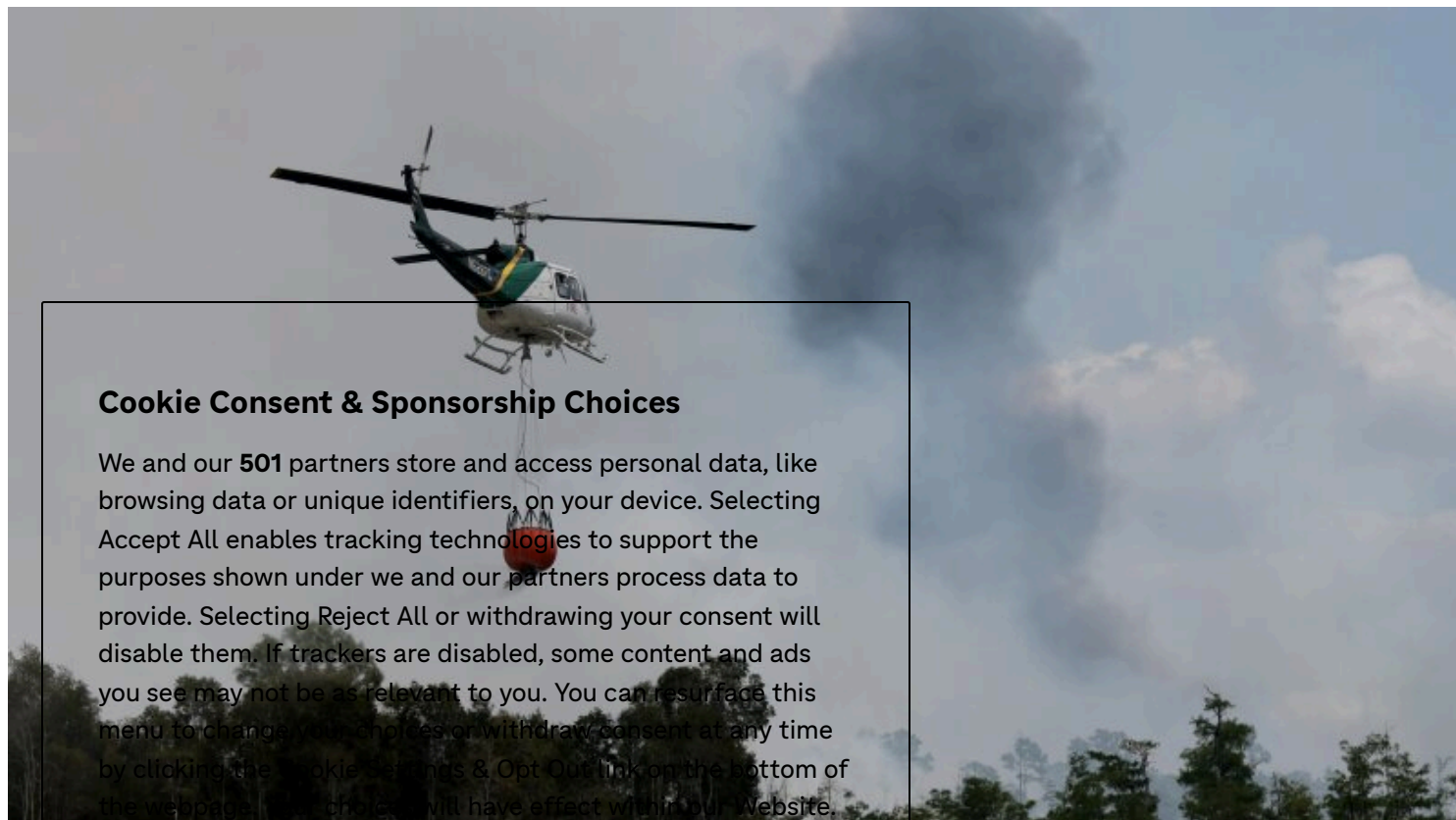
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POLITICS

Trump's Truth Social lays bare narrow obsessions of an extremely online president

NPR Editors' Picks



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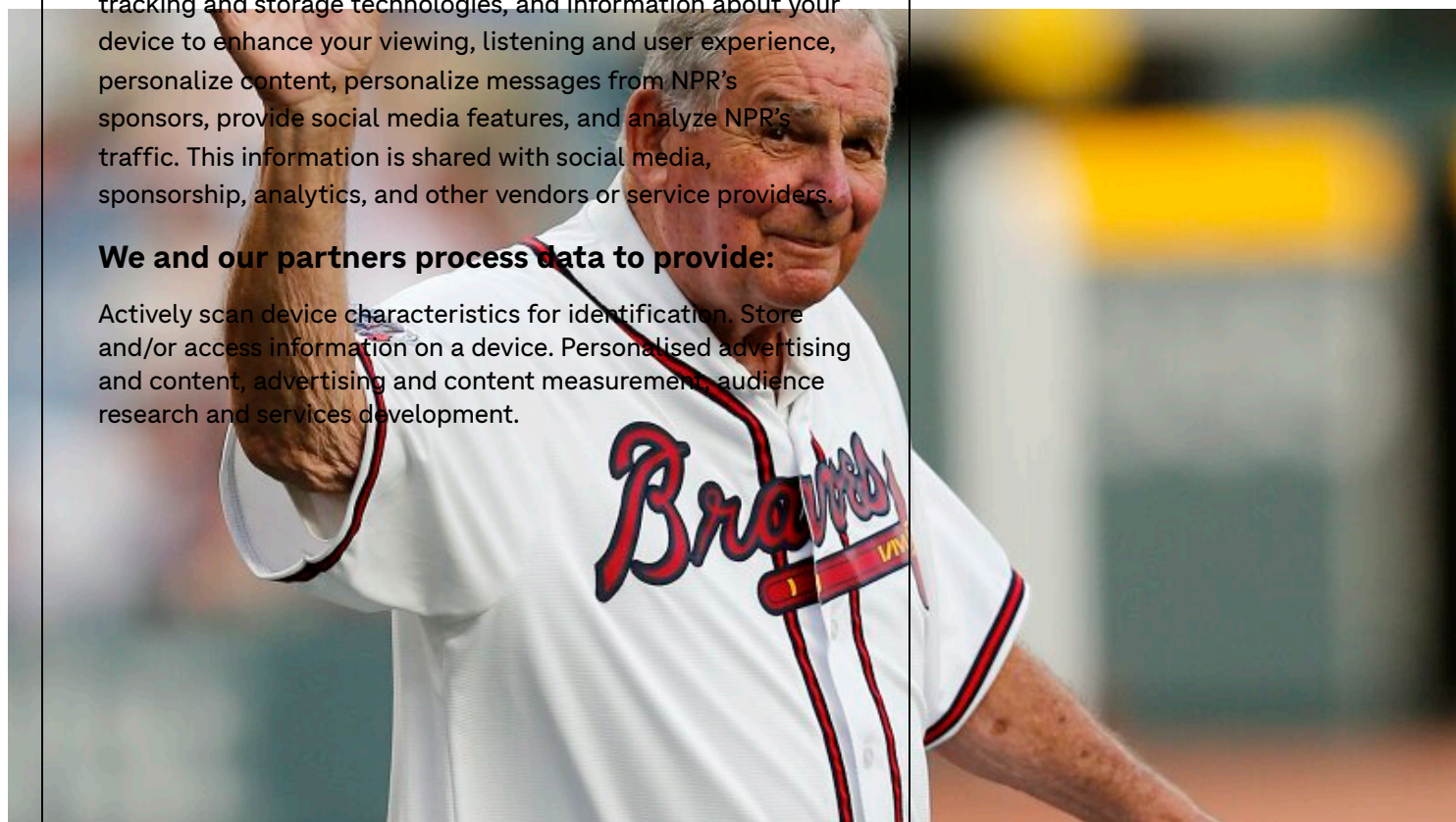
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'We're dry:' The new U.S. Wildland Fire Service prepares for extreme fire season

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OBITUARIES

Bobby Cox, Hall of Fame manager of Atlanta Braves, dies at age 84



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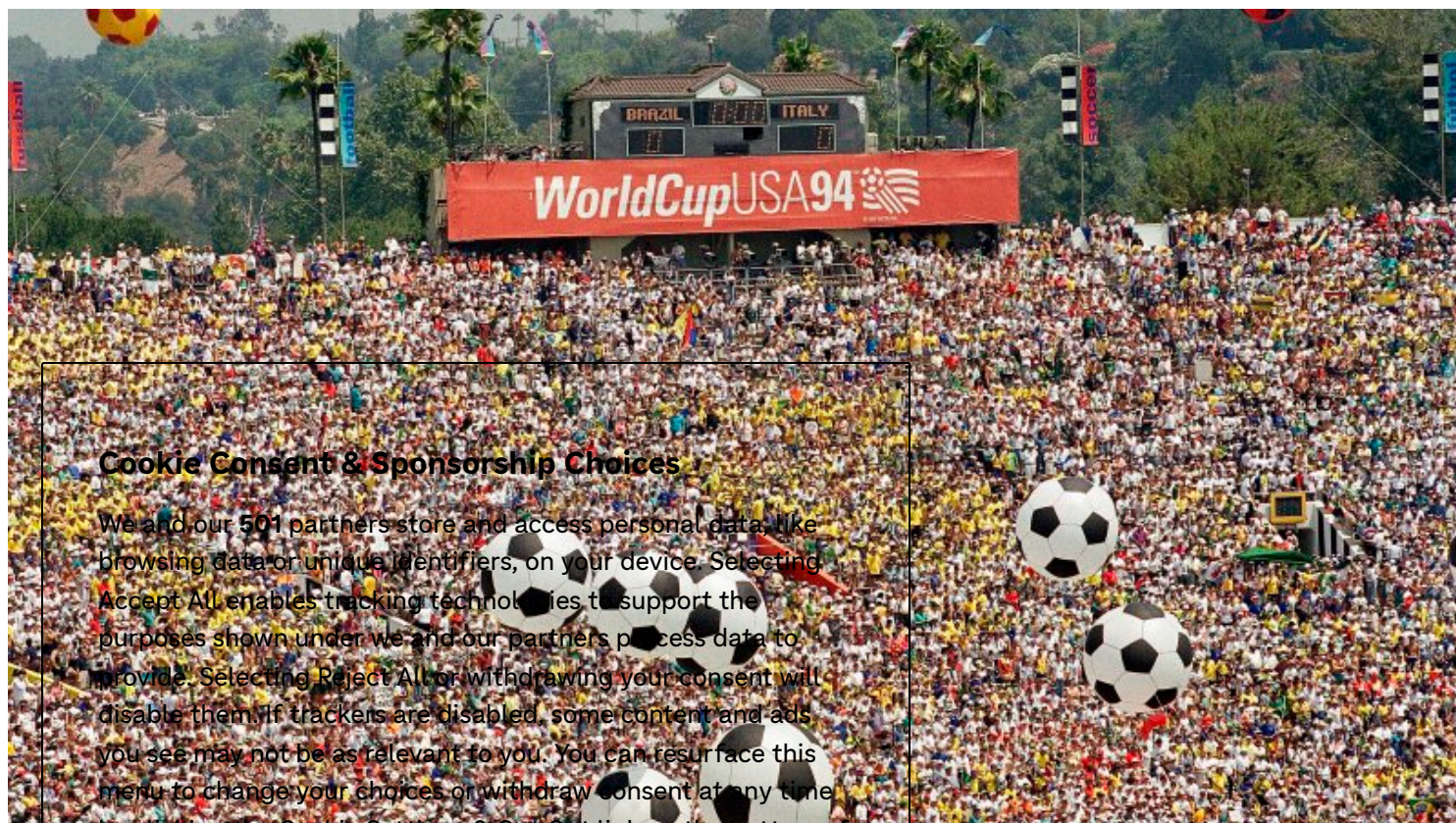
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GLOBAL HEALTH

Why saying hello to strangers can be good for you



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2026 WORLD CUP: NORTH AMERICA

Soccer was once considered niche in the U.S. Then came the 1994 World Cup

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Moscow marks Victory Day with a Red Square parade under tight security

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